

Progressing the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The formal consultation closed on 5 February. There were many very supportive comments with helpful suggestions. We are now in the process of reviewing and compiling the feedback.

There were over 200 responses – 32 from representatives of organisations and the rest from members of the public – although the amount of actual feedback is vast as many people commented on more than one element. In addition, JTP and Council officers had over 1,000 interactions with

visitors to the events held around the District during the consultation period.

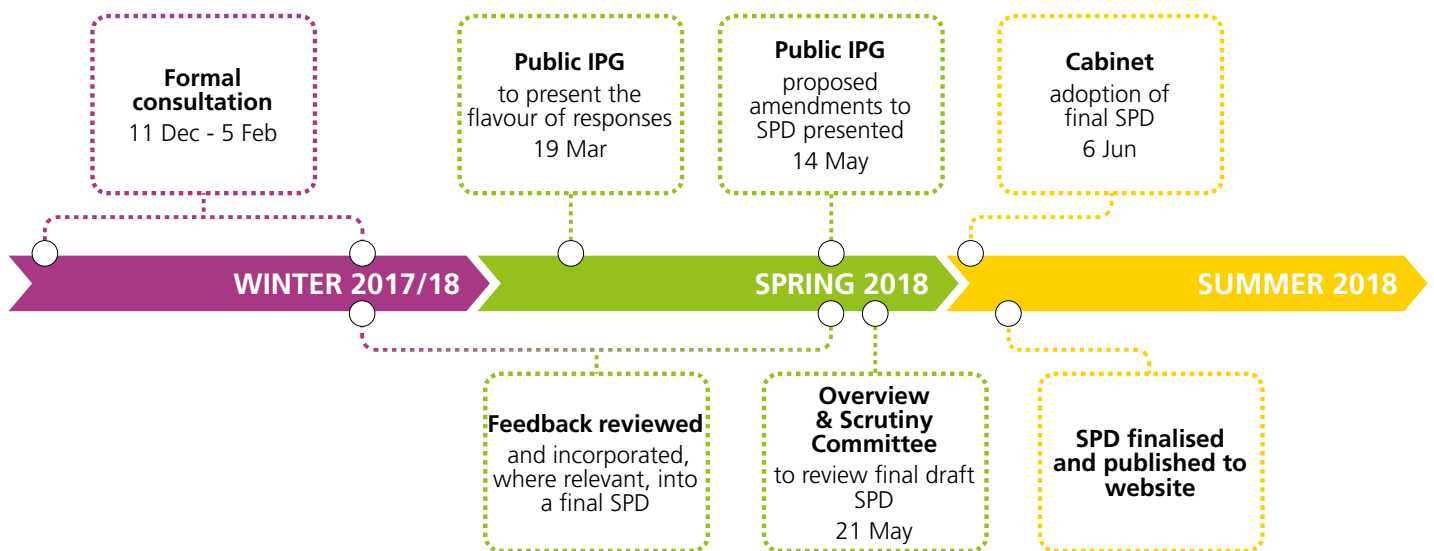
We are working our way through this considerable amount of data but in the meantime, all of the feedback is available to review at: winchester.gov.uk/cwr – however please note it is not themed, simply a list of people's names and their comments.

Some of the comments we received were not about the SPD but were still very helpful and so we are sharing these

findings internally to see how they can be considered within our services.

Once the feedback from the formal consultation has been compiled and accommodated as appropriate, the SPD will progress to its final stage for approval and adoption by the Cabinet in the coming months.

The SPD will be used along with the Local Plan and planning regulations to ensure that any development applications within the area meet these requirements.



THE PURPOSE OF THE SPD

Once adopted, the SPD will be a framework to guide the development of the area. It sets out a vision, objectives, and planning and urban design framework for the future development of the area.

The SPD is a blueprint for the area rather than a detailed design statement. We have, however, received feedback throughout the development of the draft SPD that

people want to be clear about what will be expected and acceptable. We need the SPD to be robust enough so we know what we're getting but flexible enough to ensure creativity.

Throughout this engagement process, we have heard numerous ideas from people that we don't want to miss out on by being too prescriptive at this stage.

We will however commission additional detailed, practical guidance about what is and isn't acceptable for the public realm and buildings and how to ensure that 'Winchesterness' is protected.



ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology is an important aspect of the site and heritage of our City. The Advisory Panel set up last autumn by Winchester City Council, comprising nationally-recognised archaeologists and local specialists, has now reported its findings.

Advisory Panel Chair, Professor Martin Biddle FBA, Emeritus Fellow, Hertford College, Oxford, said: "This site is immensely important both historically and archaeologically. It represents a time slice through the City's history. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn about, capture and preserve the City's rich past, and we must get this right. National planning guidance stresses that preservation should be the primary objective, and the panel shares this view."

We've summarised the key points from the report here. The report is also available in full on our website from 20 March: winchester.gov.uk/cwr

The panel's recommendations span: the planning policy and guidance for archaeology in the area; information about the water table and preservation conditions within the area; the archaeological strategy for developers to meet; how the area and any findings will be surveyed and evaluated; construction on the site; and how the community could be involved and the public realm enhanced.



WHAT ARCHAEOLOGY COULD BE ON THE SITE?

The earliest deposits of alluvium and peat probably date back to the Mesolithic period (c.9000 – c.4000 BC). This will be followed by a sequence of later deposits and structural remains dating from the Roman period to the 19th Century. Archaeology could be to depths of approximately 4m (averaging 2 - 3m) and in some places up to 6m deep under the modern surface levels.

The ground in the area is alkaline. This means that conventional archaeological materials such as stone, ceramic, metals, glass and bone will be well preserved. It is likely that deposits of alluvium and peat within the area will be well preserved due to waterlogging and can provide information about the local environment from Late Glacial or Early Holocene periods. But while these may be interesting to understand the environment's development over the years, they contain little or no cultural artefacts.

Earlier construction or excavation work in the area, whether that be utility trenches in the streets or piling for modern buildings, may have disturbed some areas.

PRESERVATION

Although a flexible approach is recommended to managing the archaeology in the site, it is anticipated that preservation on site will form a key mitigation approach. We must do the least possible damage to the buried archaeology and preserve important remains for future generations when new techniques are likely to be available.

Winchester City Council needs to be satisfied, both as a significant landowner in the area and planning authority, that any archaeology work is delivered to a high standard and adequately funded. Where this balance cannot be guaranteed, the archaeology should be preserved in its situation.

Where preservation on site is the best solution, developers will need to incorporate this within the careful design of their ground works and below ground level structures. Archaeological techniques used must be the least invasive, and most productive for information gathering.

A large-scale excavation is not recommended. Not only does national planning guidance stress that preservation

is the primary objective, a 'big dig' would be highly costly, both in terms of the investigations themselves and the subsequent collection and publication of the data. Professor Biddle stressed that the real value of archaeology comes with the publication.

Another key factor is location: where would we excavate? We would not know which area on the site is the most appropriate, and we must not investigate unnecessarily. Professor Biddle said: "There must be a balance between a vibrant modern city, and the city's vibrant past. This is a living community, so we must be realistic in our expectations."



HOW SHOULD WE SURVEY, EVALUATE AND PRESERVE ARCHAEOLOGY?

A variety of modern archaeological techniques are available to developers including:

- **Geoarchaeological borehole survey**
to assess the earth, sediment and deposits on the site
- **Hydrological assessment**
to assess water flow, the water table and saturation levels
- **Ground Penetrating Radar**
a non-intrusive technique that may have the potential to see beneath the surface without digging, although water and below ground structures may create too much 'noise'
- **Shallow site investigations (such as for soil testing for foundation design)**
these could be integrated into the wider evaluation programme with minimal impact to retrieve the maximum information
- **Trial trenching**
to provide key information as part of the evaluation of the site.

Photographic and other records should be made in line with Historic England's guidance. This would create a valuable record of the current Winchester townscape for future generations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENT

Winchester's heritage is of great interest to the public, both locally and wider afield. The CWR project gives us a great opportunity to understand and enhance the historic environment of this area.

Developers will need to include detailed public realm enhancement in their proposals. If discovered, elements of history could be incorporated into their schemes as focal points, public art or other creative treatments to enhance the public realm, create a connection to the City's history and sense of place. A new museum on the site would enable the rich findings anticipated to be gathered from the investigations and elsewhere in the City to be displayed and enjoyed.

As the site is in 'low Winchester', the deposits are waterlogged therefore there will be the presence of a wide range of well-preserved organic products, eg leather, textiles, wood. There are likely to be interesting artefacts and objects, which could be displayed in a museum for the City.

The local community, including various societies or groups, should have opportunities to be involved as the area and developments evolve, and as part of a long-term legacy. This could span site visits, talks and projects, community and volunteer involvement, the creative use of new technologies and social media to engage and involve the public.

ENSURING DEVELOPMENT IS SENSITIVE TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIALS

Archaeology is a key consideration in the planning process and developers will be expected to follow national and local government legislation and policy in the planning application process and throughout development.

Winchester City Council will be carefully considering and robustly scrutinising all plans for the area as they are submitted. Developers will be required to engage appropriately qualified and experienced archaeological specialists. They must also provide Heritage Statements detailing the results of their surveys and evaluations of how development proposals will impact on archaeology as part of their Environmental Impact Assessments within their planning proposals.

Once given consent, planning conditions will require developers to detail how they will manage and preserve the archaeological area or mitigate the impacts of development. This will include details of their proposed groundworks, how they will excavate, a record of the existing buildings before alteration or demolition, a research strategy and how they publish their findings.

VIABILITY AND DELIVERABILITY

Alongside the work on the SPD, we have been assessing options to ensure the vision can be delivered in a timely and affordable way. This work has now been extended to consider the various ways we can make the vision a reality, particularly for the areas of the site owned by Winchester City Council which currently includes the bus station, Antiques Market, Coitbury House and Kings Walk.

Taking into account commercial, financial and legal considerations, the viability for the various delivery options will be reviewed by Cabinet (CWR) Committee.

All the viability and deliverability modelling has been based around the assumption that the site will be developed incrementally, not all at the same time.

PROGRESS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Throughout the regeneration, we will be looking for opportunities to develop the area in the short, medium and long term to ensure the area continues to thrive for residents, tourists and businesses.

Some of the improvements we are considering include:

- Improve the overall look and feel of the area; this could include new planters and branding
- Work with Winchester School of Art to incorporate artwork on the site
- Refurbish the Antiques Market to meet the needs of the anticipated new arts-based tenant
- Redevelop Coitbury House into modern office accommodation
- Negotiate with businesses interested in taking vacant office and shop space until the buildings are needed for redevelopment

We will be mindful of the balance between spending money on improvements against money needed for the longer-term regeneration.

Members of the IPG are planning site visits to Bath, Oxford and Chester to learn about how these cities have handled redevelopment.

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK THEMES

We were extremely pleased that so many people and groups responded, taking the time to share their views about different aspects of the draft SPD. Planning officers are working their way through all the feedback and grouping it into

themes so our City Councillors can decide how to respond to the suggestions.

A summary of the comments and themes, along with the Council's proposed response, will be presented to a public

meeting of the Informal Policy Group (IPG) in May. Before that, a flavour of the themes will be shared at the public meeting of the IPG on 19 March.

All comments can be viewed at: winchester.gov.uk/cwr

MOVEMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY

Throughout the development of the draft SPD, there has been a parallel piece of work being done in partnership with Hampshire County Council to develop a Movement Strategy for the City of Winchester.

The Movement Strategy is not expected to be complete until later this year and so any comments that relate to it will be passed to the people who are working on the strategy. We will also ensure the co-dependencies between the Central Winchester Regeneration area and the Movement Strategy are reflected in the final SPD to ensure the needs of the Movement Strategy can be accommodated.

Bus stops

We have commissioned an additional study to look into the implications, feasibility and safety of including bus stops in various locations within the CWR area. The study is being carried out by independent transport consultants, iTransport, and their findings and recommendations can be implemented without being specifically included in the final SPD.

Cycling

Feedback included requests for more specific details about the cycling provision, in particular cycle routes and how shared pedestrian and cycling access will be managed.

Parking

We have had contrasting views about the provision of car parking within the CWR area – some people don't want any parking at all in the area (except for disabled spaces) while others want to see no reduction, or even an increase, in spaces. We remain committed to our current parking strategy, which encourages people to park a little further away from the city centre for longer visits enabling shorter stay visitors to park close to the centre. Work to get the balance of spaces, pricing and signage right for the city centre will be reviewed and developed on an ongoing basis.



The Brooks Shopping Centre



Alresford

AIR QUALITY / SUSTAINABILITY

There is a section within the draft SPD that addresses sustainability, air quality, energy, waste, landscape and ecology. However the comments about this topic show a desire to see this area of the SPD strengthened.

RETAIL, MARKETS AND IMPACT ON THE HIGH STREET

There is a common misconception that retail in the High Street is adversely affected by high business rates set by the Council and that there is no need for any additional retail in the City. The Council owns very little of the High Street (around 1/5) and collects business rates that are set by Central Government. The majority of the cost to High Street retailers is, therefore, from rent which is market-led and set by private landlords.

We are aiming to create a vibrant mixed-use quarter that will enhance the City's retail and cultural/heritage offer. It is intended to complement, not compete with, the High Street and the range of space allocated for retail within the SPD has deliberately got flexibility to adapt over time, depending on demand.

We will be commissioning a study to look at future retail trends as part of the Local Plan review that will be starting later this year. This will be used to help to determine the type and amount of retail that will be initially designed.

MUSEUM / CULTURAL CENTRE

The draft SPD identified three potential locations for cultural/heritage and community uses and we are still looking to accommodate a museum or cultural centre within the CWR area. We are having ongoing talks with Hampshire Cultural Trust to see how we progress this ambition.

ARCHAEOLOGY

As expected for such an historic City, feedback included questions and comments about the arrangements for archaeology. Information about the report from the expert Archaeology Panel can be found in the centre pages.

HOUSING

Housing within the CWR area will help ensure the area retains its energy and appeal into the evenings and at night.

Affordable housing is a Council priority and so any residential development will be subject to existing requirements. Our New Homes Delivery Team will work with the IPG and project teams to look at the full range of affordable housing options.

PUBLIC REALM

We have received a lot of comments and queries about the detail of the public realm and ensuring that 'Winchester' is protected. We will be working with JTP to see whether more detail needs to be added to the SPD and what additional guidance should be provided.