

PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 January 2005

SCRUTINY REVIEW – THE COMMUNITY OF WHITELEY

REPORT OF WHITELEY INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP

Contact Officer: Jacky Adams Tel No: 01962 848356

RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

An Informal Scrutiny Group was set up in June 2003 to investigate concerns raised by a local Councillor regarding roads, parking issues and the provision of local amenities in the community of Whiteley.

Having taken evidence from officers, Whiteley Parish Council, Whiteley Business Forum and Hampshire County Council, the Group has concluded that, in general, both residents and the business community are happy with the quality of life in Whiteley.

However, there remain a number of unresolved issues that could jeopardise this situation unless they are addressed. Key amongst these are road links to the community other than through Junction 9 of the M27, improvements in public transport, pedestrian links to Swanwick Station, provision of additional primary school places within the community, provision of a permanent health centre and the need for a cohesive approach to parking issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet be recommended to approve:

- 1 That a forum be established to promote closer working between all organisations serving the Whiteley community on both sides of the District Council boundary. This could be a formal meeting place for elected representatives, business leaders and community leaders to meet regularly to discuss common problems. Its aim would be to foster good working relationships between the organisations serving Whiteley with a focus on the well being of the whole community.
- 2 That Hampshire County Council be thanked for including proposals for the Botley bypass scheme and be encouraged to consider the future provision of Whiteley Way as soon as possible.

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| 3 | That Hampshire County Council be urged to give priority to the completion of Rookery Avenue and Yew Tree Drive for use by cars and buses as soon as possible. |
| 4 | That the County Council's review of Primary education provision to serve the Whiteley area be welcomed and that Hampshire County Council be urged to carry out a full investigation with a view to extending the existing school when consulted as part of that review. |
| 5 | That the local Primary Care Trust be urged to support provision of a Health Centre for Whiteley at the earliest opportunity. |
| 6 | That the Director of Development Services be urged to work with the Whiteley Business Forum to monitor the situation following the installation of the yellow lines in the Business Park area of Whiteley and advise Cabinet on further improvements required to ensure that adequate and safe parking be available for all users of the business park and for neighbouring residents. |
| 7 | That Hampshire County Council be pressed to take action immediately to provide a direct pedestrian link from Swanwick railway station to Whiteley as this is urgently needed in order to encourage more people to use public transport. |
| 8 | That the Whiteley Business Forum be notified of all new planning applications relating to the Whiteley area. |

RELEVANCE TO CORPORATE STRATEGY

This review was undertaken to establish the degree to which the overall vision for the District, that the City Council shares with other organisations through the Community Strategy, is being achieved in the Whiteley area.

RESOURCES

Establishing a local forum for Whiteley will require staff time to organise and a limited call on budgets to provide a suitable venue.

Other infrastructure improvements will depend on funding coming from or through other public sector organisations, in particular Hampshire County Council. The degree to which action can be taken and the speed with which any improvements can be made will depend to a great degree on resources being made available to this area as a priority over others.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

E-mails received by Councillor Allgood from Hampshire County Councillors in response to his inquiries as part of this review

Miller Associates Market Research into the views of residents and businesses in the Whiteley area

Minutes of meetings of the Whiteley Informal Scrutiny Group

Appendix

Appendix 1 – The Community of Whiteley – Report by the Whiteley Informal Scrutiny Group



Winchester
City Council

**PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
REPORT**

**THE COMMUNITY OF
WHITELEY**

January 2005

SCRUTINY REVIEW – THE COMMUNITY OF WHITELEY

REPORT OF WHITELEY INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Principal Scrutiny Committee decided on 3 June 2003 to set up an Informal Scrutiny Group to review the current situation in Whiteley, following comments from Brenda Hatch who at that time was a councillor for Whiteley. Her comments concerned the roads in the area, parking issues, and provision of local amenities such as shops, schools, community facilities, a library and health centre.
- 1.2 The Group has now concluded its work, with this report setting out its key findings and conclusions.

2. Background to the Study

- 2.1 Principal Scrutiny Committee instructed the Informal Scrutiny Group to consider how the issues raised by Brenda Hatch could be addressed and decide whether to invite representatives from Hampshire County Council and Fareham Borough Council at some future stage. It was agreed that the Ward Members would be invited to attend meetings.
- 2.2 Councillors Davies, Hollingbery, Knasel, Mitchell and Porter were initially appointed to the panel and Councillor Knasel agreed to lead the group. The Panel met on three occasions to set its terms of reference and take evidence on the issues identified.
- 2.3 Following the local elections in 2004, the Panel was reappointed with the following Members - Councillors Allgood, Davies, Cook, Hollingbery and Mitchell. Councillor Allgood agreed to act as project leader. This Panel has met on three occasions.
- 2.4 The Panel has been supported by Steve Tilbury, Director of Community Services, whose staff have worked to help develop the local community at Whiteley and Sian Proudlock, Planning Team Leader with responsibility for the Whiteley area.

3. Terms of Reference and Work Plan

- 3.1 At its first meeting on 16 June 2003 the Panel decided to review the following issues and report back to Principal Scrutiny Committee with appropriate recommendations:
 - history/context including potted planning history;
 - consultations;
 - analysis of current situation;
 - solutions.

3.2 These issues have been explored in subsequent meetings, with evidence taken from Steve Tilbury, the City Council's Director of Community Services, Sian Proudlock, Planning Team Leader with responsibility for, amongst others, the Whiteley area, Whiteley Business Forum and Whiteley Parish Council. Hampshire County Council has also provided written information and the results of surveys carried out with residents and with the business community have also been considered. A summary of the key points raised is set out in the remainder of this report.

4. History and Planning Context

4.1 The Whiteley Local Plan was published by Hampshire County Council in 1987. The plan had been prepared under the guidance of a joint panel of Members of Winchester City Council, Fareham Borough Council and the County Council.

4.2 Whiteley was conceived as a new community on a 'greenfield' site, separate from nearby towns and villages. It lies midway between Portsmouth and Southampton, straddling the boundary between Winchester City Council and Fareham Borough Council. It covers an area flanked by the rivers Hamble and Meon immediately north of the M27 motorway at Junction 9.

4.3 The Whiteley Local Plan stated: "There is enormous potential for an attractive development in a woodland setting" and went on to stipulate the following requirements for the new community:

- 2,600 homes;
- 69 hectares for business parks;
- 27 hectares for industry;
- 16,500 square metres of offices;
- up to 7,500 square metres of shops;
- two schools (one junior and one infant)
- a branch library
- a doctor's surgery;
- a church centre;
- two meeting halls;
- 20 hectares of public open space;
- a new link road connecting the M27 junction with Botley Road (A3051) north of Curbridge.

4.4 It was originally intended that there should be 4,000 homes at Whiteley, but the Local Plan amended this downwards to 2,600 by 1996 because of the slow start to residential development. The intention was to assess the potential for an additional 1,400 homes once the original quota had been completed.

4.5 It was planned that Phase 1 of the project would include the Solent Business Park Stage 1, the balancing lake, roadworks and greenways. Phase 2 planned the residential development to begin with the office campus, the district centre, junior school and further roadworks. Phase 3 would see the completion of homes and offices, the local centre, infant school, the community centre, recreation facilities and the completion of the distributor road to the A3051. The

final phase would include the last part of industry and a new railway bridge to link the community to Segensworth.

5. Current Situation

5.1 Housing Development

5.1.1 Although house building in Whiteley was slow to get off the ground, a substantial amount of housing has been completed.

5.1.2 In the Winchester part of Whiteley 837 homes have been completed, 163 homes have been given detailed planning permission but have not yet been built and a further 35 have outline planning permission.

5.1.3 In the Fareham part of the community 1437 homes have been built and planning permission has been given for 367 homes.

5.1.4 The situation in Whiteley therefore is

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|-----------------|------------|
| Constructed | 2,274 |
| Due to be built | <u>565</u> |
| Total | 2,839 |

5.1.5 There are two remaining sites for residential development (In the Winchester City Council area) that do not yet have planning permission – a small site within the Whiteley Farm development near the town centre and a second site (owned by Hampshire County Council) on Leafy Lane.

5.2 Industrial and commercial

5.2.1 **Solent 1 Business Park:** Detailed permission has now been granted for some 16.56 hectares, about 90% of the Business Park. There is one remaining site which does not have detailed planning consent. 8.77 hectares has now been built out and occupied. The National Air Traffic Service has a current application for the second phase of their development at 4200 Parkway. This is for two three-storey buildings with car parking and landscaping.

5.2.2 **Solent 2 Business Park:** This site is accessed from Rookery Avenue and goes across the boundary between Winchester City Council and Fareham Borough Council. Outline consents have been granted by both planning authorities. Individual plots have been sold and several applications are expected soon. One of these may include the provision of a doctor's surgery.

5.3

Roads

- 5.3.1 The Local Plan included a road link between Whiteley and the Botley Road to the north of the new development (Whiteley Way), in addition to road links to Junction 9 of the M27. The proposed route for Whiteley Way was to cross 12 different areas of ownership.
- 5.3.2 Hampshire County Council wanted to negotiate the purchase rather than use compulsory purchase powers, using developers' contributions. At the time the level for contributions was set, it was standard practice for land required for such routes to be purchased at agricultural land values rather than at development land values. However, before the land purchase was completed, a High Court test case involving Kent County Council reversed this approach, making the land purchase considerably more expensive. As a result, it has not yet been possible to secure all the land required for the route of Whiteley Way, with the County Council investing in other works to improve traffic flows at Junction 9 of the M27.
- 5.3.3 The completion of the Botley by-pass would help facilitate the completion of Whiteley Way as and when Hampshire County Council can purchase land for the construction of Whiteley Way. Existing plans are for Yew Tree Drive to be bus only when opened. Rookery Lane is subject to land ownership/purchase issues.
- 5.3.4 There is potential for other roads from Whiteley, in particular Rookery Way and Yew Tree Drive, to link directly onto Botley Road. The former has not been progressed because of land ownership issues and the latter is being resisted by Fareham Borough Council to avoid the capacity of the road, which runs through residential areas, being exceeded in the absence of the Whiteley Way link.
- 5.3.5 County Councillor Keith Estlin, the Executive Member for the Environment, attended a meeting of Whiteley Parish Council on 5 July 2004 to set out the background to transport matters in Whiteley and Segensworth. He explained that
- The review of previously considered schemes is being set within the context of the Second Local Transport Plan 2006-11 which will be submitted to the Government in July 2005. It will include a five-year strategy for achieving transport and wider quality of life issues, within the 20-year vision. This will include a new Solent Area Strategy to look at issues from a sub-regional perspective.
 - Key issues which are being considered within the review are accessibility to Whiteley, including links to Swanwick train station, Whiteley Way, Rookery Avenue, Yew Tree drive (bus only link), footpaths and cycle links, the completion of Marjoram Way, improvements to Segensworth roundabout and other schemes.

5.4 Transport

- 5.4.1 Public transport provision in Whiteley is limited, with two bus services that provided an hourly service, finishing at 5.30 pm. There are no direct public transport links to either Southampton or Portsmouth.

5.4.2 The pedestrian walk from Swanwick railway station to Solent Business Park 1 is indirect, poorly lit and takes nearly half an hour each way. There is no direct road link between the station and the Business Parks.

5.4.3 Some businesses are providing transport links for their staff between Southampton Parkway Station and the Business Park. Car sharing schemes are also being developed. However, parking on roads is a concern on the Business Park. The yellow lines installed recently have displaced on-street parking into near by residential roads, with some of this parking raising concerns about road safety.

5.4.4 In response to this review, the Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Ken Thornber, sent the following message:

“The County Council are taking forward a review of transport and access issues in Whiteley and Segensworth. This is being undertaken in tandem as they are closely linked and impact upon each other.”

5.5 Schools

5.5.1 Whiteley has been provided with a primary school designed to serve the community for children in years 1-2 (infant) and years 3-6 (junior). The school has an entry of three forms a year – thus enabling 90 children to be enrolled each September.

5.5.2 In practice this has proved inadequate for the community and there is great concern to many local parents whose children need to attend school outside Whiteley. Both Whiteley Parish Council and the City Council have made representations to Hampshire County Council about this, and the Parish Council representatives gave this point great weight at their meeting with the Informal Scrutiny Group.

5.5.3 On questions of education, the Informal Scrutiny Group received information from Mr Bob Eardley, Strategic Planning Manager for the Education Department. He wrote:

- “As you may be aware, the County Council’s Executive Member for Education, has met the Leader and Chief Executive of Winchester City Council to discuss this issue and has set out the difficulties we face in making more primary school places available within the Whiteley development area. These stem from the fact that historically only one site was allocated for a primary school and since that allocation was made, the number of homes for which planning consent has been granted has increased considerably beyond what was originally envisaged.
- “We have been looking at options for providing additional primary school places for some time and have discussed the issues with Winchester and Fareham officers. Discussions with Portsmouth Church of England Diocese centred around development of a school and church shared facilities, but this has become less likely following the announcement by central government of a review of voluntary school funding and in particular the demise of the

Partnership for Church Schools (which could have been the mechanism for a voluntary aided school). Informal discussions took place during the summer term with representatives from local primary schools and these will continue in order to determine the most appropriate way to meet long term primary education needs in the Whiteley area.

- “The Executive Member for Education is arranging a further meeting with senior members and officers of Fareham Borough and Winchester City Councils and the Chairman of Whiteley Parish Council next month to discuss the way forward in the light of a report for his consideration in December which will propose consultation early in 2005. Up-to-date pupil numbers and school capacities will be available for that meeting and for the consultation.”

5.5.4 Since that response was received, members of the Parish Council have met with the Leader of Hampshire County Council to discuss primary school education. On 9 December, the County Council agreed to undertake a review of primary education in the Whiteley area, with widespread consultation on a number of options being programmed for early 2005.

5.5.5 The County Council is considering a number of options. Of these, the extension of the existing school appeared to be most feasible and potentially cost effective, notwithstanding concerns raised by the County Council about the resultant size of the new school.

5.5.6 Secondary education is also a delicate issue at Whiteley. The designated secondary school for Whiteley is the Henry Cort Community College in Fareham, although some children also attend Brookfield Community and Language College in Sarisbury and a few attend Swanmore College of Technology.

5.5.7 Parish Councillors have a desire for a secondary school in Whiteley but Hampshire County Council has made it clear that, as both the local Colleges have spare capacity, it has no plans to make additional secondary school provision in the area.

5.6 Health

5.6.1 Whiteley has no permanent doctors' surgery or health centre with health services provided from a temporary building. A site was allocated at the town centre for a surgery. However the doctors have been unwilling to pursue this option. The level of service is considered adequate, but the need for a permanent home for the doctors is considered pressing. This is likely to be solved if the proposal for a health centre in Solent 2 Business Park bears fruit.

5.7 Library

5.7.1 The shopping village was built with an upper floor set aside for a library, if required by the County Council, for a limited period by way of a legal agreement attached to the planning permission. The area is currently served by a mobile library and the County Council has now stated that it is not intending to provide a permanent library.

Shops

- 5.8.1 In addition to a Supermarket, a high-quality shopping village has been built in Whiteley. It consists of outlet shops offering famous brands at up to 60% off high street prices. The 70 shops include ladies fashions, jewellery, menswear, children's clothes, toys, casualwear, sports clothes, footwear, luggage, homeware and leisure, and books. Several cafes are located there.
- 5.8.2 Residents make the point that this does not include day-to-day services such as dry cleaning and banking. The Tesco supermarket provides food but this is considered a small store that does not carry an extended range of goods and services.

5.9 Religion

- 5.9.1 A site has been set aside for a church building, but this has not been taken up by the religious authorities. A detailed permission has been granted for the new church. A revised scheme for a smaller building is currently the subject of a new planning application.

5.10 Leisure

- 5.10.1 The Meadowside Centre has proved to be a successful centre for sport and active recreation. It is operated directly by the City Council. Two outdoor tennis courts have recently been provided. The recreation ground to the rear of the centre has two full-size football pitches and a cricket pitch which are all well used. The outdoor pitches are run by the City Council at present and should, in due course, be handed over to the Parish Council in accordance with normal policy in parished areas. A community centre has also been provided in the part of Whiteley that comes under Fareham Borough Council. This is operated by the residents' association under a lease from Fareham Borough Council.
- 5.10.2 A network of play areas was provided for in the original planning brief for Whiteley and this has been implemented successfully. Residents seem satisfied with the nature and location of these facilities and the level of provision is amongst the best in the district.

6. Consultations

- 6.1 In the course of its work, the Informal Scrutiny Group has studied the report of public consultation conducted by Miller Associates in 2002 into the views of residents and business about Whiteley. It has also met with members of the Whiteley Business Forum and representatives from Whiteley Parish Council.
- 6.2 Comments sought from Hampshire County Council are reflected in the section above.

7.

Residents Survey 2002

- 7.1 Miller Associates was commissioned to assess the opinions of residents about the quality of life in the Whiteley area and identify any concerns they had. The study consisted of some initial focus groups, followed by a survey of 500 residents.
- 7.2 Two thirds of the residents were satisfied with the way their local council was running the area. The level of satisfaction in the Winchester part was identical to that in the Fareham part.
- 7.3 The socio-economic profile of Whiteley suggested a resident group demanding in terms of their quality of life. The findings indicated that Whiteley satisfied this demand, with 97% of residents interviewed indicating that they enjoyed a good quality of life. The aspects that most contributed to this were the recreational opportunities, shopping, and the fact it was considered to be a safe area to live.
- 7.4 Even though the road infrastructure was seen as one of the main drawbacks of living in Whiteley, the good communication links it provided with other areas were seen as a significant benefit.
- 7.5 The aspects of the road infrastructure that most frustrated residents were the failure to open up another access road and traffic congestion.
- 7.6 Although the quality of education provided in the primary school was highly esteemed, parents were unhappy with the capacity of the school to satisfy current demand, let alone demand that would come from on-going development.

8. Business Survey 2002

- 8.1 Miller Associates also carried out a survey of the business community. In general businesses were very complimentary about the working environment at the Solent Business Park. It was seen as a very pleasant place to work and offered an environment they would be hard pushed to match in an alternative location. The success of the park was attributed to private contractors and management teams.
- 8.2 Concerns raised were traffic congestion with a single access road to the site, parking, lack of public transport and the scale of future development.
- 8.3 There was also concern at the lack of information from the local authority.

9. Parish Council

- 9.1 The Informal Scrutiny Group met with representatives from Whiteley Parish Council on 20 October. At that meeting, the following issues were raised.
- 9.2 The Parish Council was particularly concerned over both primary and secondary education provision. Many children had to travel to school outside Whiteley, which the Parish Council considered was not acceptable socially and caused

transport problems. A meeting was due to be held with the Hampshire County Council on this subject.

- 9.3 The Parish Council raised concerns about traffic and road links. Representatives drew attention to a recent accident that had taken place in Yew Tree Drive at 3pm, when traffic had not cleared until 9pm. They also suggested that Yew Tree Drive should be opened on to Botley Road.
- 9.4 It was also pointed out there was no direct link from the Winchester part of Whiteley to the Fareham part and so some of the linkages were illogical and lengthy.
- 9.5 They drew attention to the fact that 3,500 people currently work in Whiteley and this could rise to 10,000 so the road situation was likely to get considerably worse.
- 9.6 The Parish Council is in the early stages of work on a Parish Plan for Whiteley and the action plan for this was circulated.

10. Business Forum

- 10.1 The Informal Scrutiny Group met with representatives from the Whiteley Business Forum on 20 October. The Whiteley Business Forum has been in existence for six years and earlier this year decided to restructure itself to make it more focused with a number of sub-groups. There is a great deal of interest in the Forum at senior management level.
- 10.2 The key issues identified for business revolved around traffic and transport. Existing public transport was not seen as being responsive to business needs, either in the routes operated or the timing of services. Although it is possible to walk to the Business Park from Swanwick Station, this takes over 20 minutes and is poorly lit in parts. Some businesses have made their own provision for bussing staff to and from Southampton Parkway Station to help attract and retain staff who work at the Business Park. The Business Forum believed that lack of suitable public transport was proving a barrier to recruitment for some businesses, in particular those requiring staff to travel to and from the site outside standard business hours.
- 10.3 Traffic congestion around Junction 9 of the M27 remains a real concern and was seen as a barrier to effective bus links.
- 10.4 It was noted that visitors to the Shopping Village generally arrive and leave outside the peak times for commuting and do not cause a concern to the business community.
- 10.5 The Business Forum was concerned about road safety in light of the number of vehicles being parked on roads. Yellow lines are due to be put in shortly to help address this issue, although this raised concerns about whether there would then be sufficient parking within the Business Park. It was understood that some companies operate a database to support car sharing.

10.6 Until recently, the Business Forum has had little contact with the City Council although has attended the recent launch for key stakeholders of the 'Winchester 4 Business' partnership. They are also to attend another event dealing with the proposed South Downs National Park.

11. Conclusions

11.1 Whiteley is an excellent place to live and a great place for business. Levels of satisfaction are very high.

11.2 It is a difficult place to administer with the district boundary between Winchester and Fareham running through the community. The Parish Council is concerned only with the Winchester part of Whiteley. There does not seem to be any forum for bringing together representatives of Fareham Borough Council, Winchester City Council, Hampshire County Council, Whiteley Parish Council, the Whiteley Business Forum and residents groups to discuss matters of common interest.

11.3 The key concerns remain the road infrastructure, schools, public transport and parking.

11.4 Hampshire County Council is doing its best to resolve issues relating to the roads infrastructure and schools, but nevertheless expectations remain unmet.

11.5 Access to Swanwick station could be improved.

11.6 Better health facilities are needed.

12. Recommendations

12.1 A Whiteley Forum needs to be established to help engender better working relationships between all organisations serving the Whiteley area, in particular because the community straddles the boundary between two districts. This could be a formal meeting place for elected representatives, business leaders and community leaders to meet regularly to discuss common problems. The Cabinet is urged to take the lead to organise an initial meeting.

12.2 Hampshire County Council should be thanked for including proposals for the Botley by-pass scheme and be urged to consider the future provision of Whiteley Way.

12.3 Hampshire County Council should be urged to give priority to the completion of Rookery Avenue and Yew Tree Drive for use by cars and buses as soon as possible.

12.4 The County Council's review of Primary education provision to serve the Whiteley area is welcomed. In response to consultation on these proposals, Cabinet should be urged to press for further consideration to be given to extending the existing school.

12.5 The local Primary Care Trust is urged to support provision of a Health Centre for Whiteley at the earliest opportunity.

- 12.6 Now that the yellow lines have been installed in the Business Park area of Whiteley, Cabinet is urged to instruct the Director of Development Services to work with the Whiteley Business Forum to monitor the situation and advise on further improvements required to ensure that adequate and safe parking is available for all users of the business park and for neighbouring residents. The Economic Development Officer should be involved as well as the traffic management staff.
- 12.7 A direct pedestrian link from Swanwick railway station to Whiteley is urgently needed in order to encourage more people to use public transport. Hampshire County Council should be pressed to take action on this immediately.
- 12.8 The Whiteley Business Forum should be notified of all new planning applications relating to the Whiteley area.