

Council Response to Feedback from Consultation on Plans for Friarsgate Medical Centre

Introduction

All comments received as part of the public consultation on the plans for the Friarsgate Medical Centre area via the feedback questionnaire hosted on the Winchester City Council website and available on request have been recorded.

All comments received have been acknowledged and considered. A link to the responses in full will be hosted on the Winchester City Council website. A response statement has been drafted for each question to address the main themes raised. Any comment raised in response to one question but that also relates to another question has been considered in the response statement most relevant to that comment. Any comment that falls outside of the scope of the plans for Friarsgate Medical Centre has not been included in the response statements.

Response to comments on the demolition of Friarsgate Medical Centre

In order to implement the new open public space at the site of Friarsgate Medical Centre, the plans set out the plan to demolish the building which has been viewed overall as a good thing. The building, owned by Winchester City Council, has been disused for many years and it was purchased by Winchester City Council and is incorporated into the wider CWR scheme. Whilst the wider scheme is developed, a meanwhile use plan for the area has been run in conjunction.

The implementation of meanwhile uses for buildings within the Central Winchester Regeneration area was recognised in the SPD, which was adopted in June 2018. In the SPD, 3.12.2 states that, 'in the short-term, meanwhile uses are interim public realm improvements are to be encouraged and supported within the CWR area.' Furthermore, 3.12.1 states, 'ensure the momentum for the regeneration process is maintained through visible changes which signal the beginnings of the mixed use quarter'. Following this, in Cabinet Report CAB3106, which was approved in November 2018, work was approved to complete a business case for a meanwhile use work stream. This was following a meeting of the meanwhile use advisory panel on October 16th 2018. At the Cabinet meeting for cabinet report CAB3142, the Meanwhile Uses Advisory Panel (March 2019) updated on the feasibility study, with options and recommendations set to set out by early summer 2019. As a result, work was progressed on creating a meanwhile use for Friarsgate Medical Centre. After consideration of many options, the best course of action was decided to look to demolish the building and implement a public open space, in line with the principals outlined the CWR SPD.

Response to comments on the plans for open space to implemented at Friarsgate Medical Centre

As noted from previous CWR consultations, there is a desire for more green spaces within Winchester and this was a key facet of the design for the open space. The implementation of wildflowers and increasing the biodiversity levels in the city centre were key principals in the design process. We note however that respondents want us to go further with increasing the biodiversity levels within the area. Suggestions of bug hotels, bird feeders and bee hotels will be incorporated into the plans, as well as allocating an area of the open space as a 'community garden', where we will engage with local groups and organisations to utilise this area.

As stated by some responses, sustainability is a key focus for the council. Winchester City Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019 and the council is now committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2024 with Cabinet looking to the wider district to become carbon neutral by 2030. This was one of the defining factors in the design of the open space and c

A thoroughfare will be created from the Broadway to the new open space, via Busket Lane and Busket Yard. The works to Busket Yard have been conducted with the open space in mind and creating a link between the areas. Further works are due to take place over the coming months at Busket Yard.

We acknowledge the desire for more cycle stand provision and the proximity of National Cycle Route 23 and thus, we will amend our plans to increase the capacity for more bike racks/stands within the area.

Response to comments on the use of the area of Friarsgate Medical Centre

We received comments regarding the use of the area once the open space is implemented. It is the Council's desire for this area to become enlivened and invigorated with a series of events and performances throughout its duration of use. Therefore, to further this, the Council has met with various groups, organisations and individuals to ascertain their thoughts and ideas on what we can implement and thus, a brief is being developed to find a partner to help us achieve these aims.

The open space will be open 24 hours a day, 7 days and a week.

Response to comments on the security and management of the area at Friarsgate Medical Centre

We have noted that from many responses the aspect of security in the new area. In the process of designing the park, we have held meetings with stakeholders such as the Police to get their advice on what considerations we must take into account. As a consequence, a lighting strategy was developed and implemented into the park design. It is considered that the new carefully designed lighting and passive surveillance from Friarsgate will help to mitigate security issues. Furthermore, the benches that we plan to implement have been designed to a certain length to avoid being used for rough sleeping.

As the area will become home to a number of plants and trees, a full maintenance programme will be put in place ahead of the implementation of the new open space. This will ensure that the area is well maintained throughout its temporary lifespan. Areas which will be given to local groups/organisations such as the community garden space, will be maintained via an agreement with the groups/organisations prior to them taking on the area.

Response to comments on the alternative uses or ideas of Friarsgate Medical Centre

An idea to make the area a free Wi-Fi zone was also not considered due to the launch of the Council's free Wi-Fi service in September 2020 (WinCityFree Wi-Fi), which includes Winchester Railway Station and all of the High Street, as well as The Broadway, King Alfred statue, Jewry Street and The Square. As such, this area is covered under this service.

Utilising the area for gym or play equipment was decided not to be an option to progress with predominately due to the temporary nature of the area and as such, the budget needed to implement such items. Play equipment including an area to play football in was furtherly deemed to not be a solution due to the close proximity of the road.

The idea of an informative panel such as ones seen at St Catherine's Hill, will be incorporated into the design, and will be placed within the boundary of the open space.

As previously stated, the idea of reusing the building as a doctor's surgery, community centre or for it to be turned into accommodation were all ruled out early on in the process, particularly due to the temporary nature of the area.