

## **Winchester: Thinking Ahead**

### **The character of Winchester from a planner's perspective**

My background in planning goes back over 25 years working for several local authorities in the South East, Elmbridge BC, Chichester DC, Havant BC.

I have mainly been concerned with dealing with planning applications and appeals but more recently policy too.

As a planner you deal with a wide variety of applications from new housing developments, employment floor space, leisure and recreation facilities and so on in a rural and urban setting.

The job of the local authority planner is to assess proposals on their planning merits, which means applying both local and national policy, and looking at all other relevant matters before making a recommendation to permit or refuse a scheme which is either signed off by a senior officer or decided by Planning Committee which is comprised of local councillors

We also have a responsibility to develop Local Plans which comply with national policy which sets out our vision for the district for the next 15 plus years. It will state what and how much development is needed and where this will be accommodated.

Plan making is evidence based and is a consultative and iterative process involving local communities and parish councils, developers, business sector, government agencies and various other bodies. More recently parishes can draft their own neighbourhood plans which happened in Denmead.

Working in Winchester is rewarding because it is one of the most important historic cities in the country with a rich heritage and culture which takes many forms dating back well over 1000 years.

Winchester is also a challenging place to work because of this. All cities need to evolve and move forward or else they risk going backwards. The challenge is therefore safeguarding everything that makes Winchester such a special place whilst ensuring it achieves the development needed to keep it a vibrant and prosperous city.

This is the challenge and having a clear vision is a starting point and can shape everything that follows. This is what the Council seeks to deliver through its Local Plans and other planning strategies.

Simon Finch, Assistant Director (Environment), Winchester City Council.