

Winchester: Thinking Ahead

Views from conference discussions

This document contains the views from tables of participants at the Winchester: Thinking Ahead conference on 21 July 2016 about how we build the future of Winchester together.

Names and organisations of those on each table are in the appendix, showing the range of perspectives, from students at the Sixth form college to Age UK, from Stanmore Residents Association to local architects.

Documentation from the conference is at <http://winacc.org.uk/winchester-thinking-ahead>

Table 1

1. What is distinctive about Winchester?

- Archaeology/history: but can still reveal more and link through signage
- Innovative / exciting place to work
- Nature and green spaces
- Needs to embrace change and respect heritage

2. Building the future together

Need a vision for the town centre with distinctiveness at the heart of the vision. A car-free centre, apart from deliveries, disability vehicles etc. Build on the distinctiveness to make it even more attractive, so people give up their cars and use park-and-ride. There needs to be more provision for cyclists.

We want not just a retail experience but an all-round experience including social spaces, especially for younger people, to make the city lively, and spaces used by people.

Encourage independent shops and restaurants - Parchment St could be like the Lanes in Brighton (which the Council owns so they can keep rents low).

Protect the lesser buildings - have a local list of buildings that aren't important enough for national buildings but still need protecting.

Think about future scenarios. Winchester was designed for the horse and cart, not the car. Think what it will look like in 50 years' time, given cultural and workplace trends. Modern building can bring out distinctiveness even more. We need a strong sense of place, within which we can build tomorrow's heritage.

The Council needs to set priorities. It needs political will, and needs to invest in a master plan.

The new central regeneration area (see factsheet 3) may serve as a model for getting vision together.

The centre can't be seen in isolation e.g. Winchester station may be the place for a transport hub rather than Silver Hill.

Setting the vision must be a priority - get the right expertise, harness the city's collective intelligence and be an intelligent client, and particularly important: invest in a master plan. Housing and commercial space are important to this.

Devolution may help - or not. An elected Mayor could contribute to success, as it did in Bristol.

Table 2

1. What is distinctive about Winchester?

Good:

- archaeology / history
- festivals

Bad:

- Traffic
- public transport
- architectural [illegible]
- air pollution

Transformation:

- Efficient public transport
- Heritage for the future
- economy

2. Building the future together

We need to change engagement - change the focus from process to content.

A jury made up of all stakeholders?

Establish the principles and get consensus. Clarify the vision, sustainability needs to underpin everything we do.

Yes, Winchester needs a mayor or sacrificial lamb.

Learn from best practice from Holland, Copenhagen, and our twin cities.

Public transport for city and district - we need to talk about the accessibility requirement of the city, then consider both buses and cars. Need joint decisions with County.

Visitors and residents need fun, leisure, attractions.

There is funding that can be found - need a volunteer work force who can get such funding.

Yes we can!

Table 3

1. What is distinctive about Winchester?

- Setting
- Liveable city - walk to work
- The wide range of historic buildings, and areas full of references to history
- The ability to leave the city quickly and almost immediately be in the South Downs National Park (and, a little further, the New Forest)
- Turnover of new ideas - stimulating
- Good connectivity without the Solent Area, and also direct trains to most parts of the country
- Winchester draws people in; it expects to be visited
- It is commercially very successful and is commercially very strong.

2. Building the future together

Though determined to consider alternatives, the table focused on traffic as the main alternative needed - which led to a discussion about how people who are elected in Winchester can try different things if they want to, and what they can do to bring people with them.

Issues most important in a strategic plan

A strategic plan is needed to address a range of conflicts and find a 'sweet spot' to enable us to resolve them:

- The scale of the ambition; should it be modest or extensive?
- The geographic focus; should it focus on the town centre or cover a wider area?
- Should it go for, or limit growth?
- Should the council show leadership and determine direction (be proactive), or should it be sensitive to the range of feelings and ideas people had (be reactive)?
- Should it focus on the needs of Winchester Town, or the needs of the surrounding area (hinterland)?
- Was it important to produce short-term results, or concentrate on measures that would have greater impact in the long-term?
- What was the best balance between affordability, and more extensive investment to achieve more significant results?
- Transport was a major issue: how far was it feasible or desirable to support current behaviour, or how far should the council pursue ideas to encourage behavioural change, if that would reduce congestion or pollution?

What to do?

- The council leader said that they were keen to consider alternatives on traffic.
- They wanted to implement the Local Plan, but not everybody had heard of it.
- An inspector had just completed the Local Plan Examination in Public, and would be making recommendations later in the year
- The Local Plan is not (an) accessible document(s). Need a sort of plan that parallels it, designed for people to understand and drawing on more than the very strict rules of the Local Plan that will be good for dialogue.
- The strategic plan could be disseminated in many ways. PR skills could be used to provide develop extended communications techniques about complex proposals.

- Also need to enhance the role of PR: to go beyond saying simple things to convey complex information e.g. what resources you have, and to explain why the decisions that are made, were made. To open people's minds to a different way of doing things could lead to a richer dialogue and a better understanding of why people do what they do, and how life might be better, if habits changed.
- Too much of the information in Committee reports appears to be propping up a decision that's already been made. If this isn't true, the Council needs to use PR to show that decisions are made on rich information, carefully gathered and considered.
- It was very important for the council to engage people more widely
- The council hoped to enter into a continuing dialogue
- They were keen to build and make available the evidence they were basing their decisions on and fill in the gaps
- They wanted to ensure that people understood that their decisions were based soundly on information
- There was a suggestion that Winchester could benefit from a neighbourhood plan, but there were warnings that it could be an elaborate, complex, and expensive process. The city centre is probably too large for a Neighbourhood Plan.
- There was a need to understand current transport habits
- There was a sense of urgency, and more needed to be done. Piloting could be useful for looking at the impact of e.g. road closures. The Hat Fair and other city centre events involved street closures, and the impacts could be more formally evaluated. We might ensure some of the odd things that happen could be used as a pilot - eg if a road closed for traffic works, closing Jewry St on Bonfire night, Criterion cycle race, hat fair - a cost effective way to develop into pilots and see what the impact is, and what people like. In future there could be other temporary measures to try out ideas.
- Study visits to see what had happened successfully elsewhere could be developed to widen the possibilities for future proposals, and address the fear of change. Holland? Bath?

Table 4

1. What is distinctive about Winchester?

- Setting
- History
- Connections between town and country (anxiety about growth meaning urban sprawl)
- Make more use of the river
- Better public transport within the city

2. Building the future together

- Sharing. The whole process is about people, to create places that are popular, that people want.
- Strategic planning - a polycentric city district incl. Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, even Alresford, connecting those places together; which means building strong

city centres as focus of economies, and activity that people go to and enjoy; then create dependences between them

- improve people's journey e.g. high quality bus. Position park-and-ride to ensure that buses between polycentric centres are commercially viable so they don't need public subsidy.
- That will drive inclusion. Some people are excluded - e.g. people waiting till their next benefit payment arrives; older people with less pension than they expected. They need to be included in a decent community.
- Learn from Dutch planning ideas about how they set standards for design e.g. space standards, long term health benefits - lots of joined-up things that reduce burden on the state.
- Could Winchester be a leading light that seeks and generates self-determination among individuals and reduces reliance the state? Producing future heritage
- And driven by a plan for zero carbon by 2050. The world's most liveable cities are going for this.
- We need to set plans and take action. Need leadership from the top. The leaders who set vision will be remembered. Decision-makers must sign up and understand the vision.
- We need joined-up thinking
- Winchester's leaders have the resource of all the people in this room who can help through proper engagement and process.

Table 5

1. What are the issues for Winchester?

- Young families - no car - not as good as Amsterdam
- Housing crisis - will it lead to a gated community?
- Inclusive

2. Building the future together

- Sympathetic high density developments are needed and can be planned.
- Winchester lacks leadership with vision and charisma to push things through. How can Winchester City Council deliver? How can they involve stakeholders and consult?
- We need an inclusive community. There is need and deprivation here. 30% of Winchester residents are struggling to pay bills. There's no cheap accommodation eg YHA or YMCA. Silver Hill and Station Approach turned down partly due to lack of social housing. Winchester City Council needs initiatives to build housing. We need starter homes.
- Public open spaces are expensive and don't bring in money.
- Would like Design Champions as a way of providing advice on a brief, and guidance on whether what's being developed is right.
- This depends on having a clear master plan for how Winchester could progress at the start, including traffic movement and access.
- Early enough consultation is vital - and it needs to be inclusive. We need to gather comments from different communities not just high profile special interest groups. Though a challenge, this is important. Stanmore is consulted

but remains suspicious - there's a lot of distrust. We need "engagement" not "consultation", with a defined purpose that convinces people of the end result. Engage the less engageable.

- We need creativity and diverse development: housing, retail and commercial; green spaces, trees, hard and soft landscaping along routes and between areas and developments, including where and how people move around.
- Highways are key. We must work out how people move around. "Streets open to people where cars are the guests" is an excellent way to challenge and produce something different from what we have today. A priority is joined-up thinking on public transport - walk/ cycle/ bus/ train.
- We have a historic problem that there are no proper bike lanes. Buses for bikes?
- We can cut car parking by 50% in city, with free passes for disabled people and maybe for families with children under 3. Or close 80% of car parking. Have congestion charging as a marker to do something different. Spend the income on buses and bike lanes.
- More innovation.
- Move away from formulaic approach to planning.
- More transparent process in City Council - more openness.
- Improve the design briefing and commissioning process.
- The risk is people who aren't willing to compromise, who have concerns about hidden agendas, and lack of trust. We need a culture of more visibility and accountability, to move on from where we are now and build the future.

Table 6

1. What is distinctive about Winchester?

- History and geography
- Delightful streets round the Cathedral, v. the rest
- STEP = sport, tourism, education and professional services

2. Building the future together

- Why can't Winchester make things happen? Silver Hill is a case study of the problem.
- Large sites with a comprehensive approach hasn't worked for us.
- Why not deliver sites like that in a co-ordinated way but with stepping stones. If you do something really big, you attract attention and trouble. If you do something small, you attract little attention. Get Silver Hill through in 5 easy pieces - which needs to be co-ordinated, not piecemeal.
- Parking: need for initiatives that are small scale e.g. on Sunday pm close roads. Or introduce a policy for a year, then review. E.g. ban parking for month and if everyone hates it, fine - go back.
- So we need a sacrificial mayor who can take the can, a figurehead who doesn't care about having their fingers burnt.
- A new "Winchester 2020" group that balances thinking and power - and has to produce results by 2020 so influences leadership.
- Need to build consensus.
- The tension between leadership and consensus is something we really struggle with in in Winchester.

Table 7

1. What is distinctive about Winchester?

- [illegible]
- Expensive to live here
- Traffic congestion
- The size helps make it pleasant

2. Building the future together

- We want a lot of things - and many of the things we want are in conflict. Residents don't want change; change is essential; changes conflict.
- The main issue on the table was movement / less traffic.
- Yes, pilot schemes, temporary experiments, e.g. closing streets for weekends, deliveries, waste collection. Such experiments must involve Hampshire County Council, and be promoted by Winchester City Council - can have a popular vote - maybe give people ten votes for an experiment.
- Vision is important too. There is a Town Forum vision but it's too embracing, motherhood and apple pie.
- A Neighbourhood Plans for Winchester is probably impossible. And it would take years. Could we find a representative forum of everyone in Winchester? What about neighbourhood plans that are ward based? Make it the duty of each ward Councillor to develop a neighbourhood plan? Involve Residents' Associations?
- Or Winchester City Council's Chief Executive could invite experts from various places to form a think tank independent of Winchester City Council though authorised by it; a Futures Group to debate problems coming up, debate for month or two, then come up with solutions that the local authorities could try out without being Big Brother who impose them on the public.
- Urban regeneration -instead of using our precious landscape setting, almost every example in Winchester has been in-fill, governed by its context. People aren't used to designing a whole area at once. Some said it should be made artificially to look as if done over a period of time. Look at what other cities have done? Could we look at the Victorian model, where landowners would do a master plan, put in drainage and name the roads, then seek plots of various sizes which led to variety?
- The group also considered governance. Bring different pressure groups together to influence how to design a city which led to masterplan that goes beyond the Local Plan. Develop a short, medium and long term strategy including easy wins and something much bigger like building new roads
- Looking at the plan, the eastern end (Winnall) though close to the centre is disconnected by water meadows etc. Make better links to make Winnall better managed and more diverse, with affordable housing incubator units to foster the talent from our universities who can't afford to live or work here.
- Building high - maybe build taller outside the centre -sites can be developed using 3D models.

Table 8

1. What is distinctive about Winchester?

- Transport and access
- Travel service - good to London, not so good from the south
- Safety, low crime
- Professional, a mix of talent
- \Living and working in Winchester
- Congestion

2. Building the future together

1. Develop temporary closures of streets for social activities, maybe on Sundays.

2. A Movement and Public Realm Strategy for Winchester. Identify the areas that need redevelopment.

- Be people-friendly - the London Olympics are a good example,
- Need a person to lead it, not a politician. Multi-disciplinary practices could produce a leader.
- HCC are a problem. They aren't engaging with the transport needs of Winchester.
- The sites could be part of an overall plan. Movement and Public Realm Strategy: Station Approach, Silver Hill, Bar End, Recreation Centre.

3. Overall Plan for the City.

- Involve stakeholders like the BID, Town Forum, University, WCC, HCC, the City of Winchester Trust, WinACC, Cathedral, Winchester College.
- A mix of uses. Walkable in the centre, compact.
- Deal with traffic. Cycling needs promoting.
- Trans good to London (but one person reported them being unreliable to Pole).
- Safety is important. Low crime rate, important for students and the parents of students.).
- Many talented people in Winchester.
- Park and Ride doesn't work because of the congested roads. And it's easier to get to Winchester Centre than Oxford's.

Appendix - participants by table

Richard	Blackman	WinACC
Mark	Courtice	Theatre Royal
Peter	Critoph	Adam Architecture
Kim	Gottlieb	Winchester City Councillor
Terry	Gould	
Emily	Grace	Peter Symonds College Geography student
Barbara	Guthrie	Bushfield Camp
Judith	Martin	City of Winchester Trust
Chris	Turner	Winchester Business Improvement District
Table 2		
Janet	Berry	Labour
Patrick	Davies	City of Winchester Trust
Nicki	Elks	Winchester City Councillor
Phoebe	Little	Peter Symonds College Geography student
Ken	Macartney	Winchester Business Improvement District
Guido	Ospedale	AR Design Studio
Frank	Pearson	Winchester City Councillor
Jonathan	Pierce	University of the Third Age (U3A)
Angela	Sealey	WinACC
Phil	Turner	
Richard	York	Winchester Chamber Music Festival
Table 3		
Rachel	Aron	Stanmore Community Association
Phil	Gagg	WinACC
Stephen	Godfrey	Winchester City Councillor
Keith	Hatter	Winchester Access for All
Keith	Leaman	City of Winchester Trust
Jonathan	Spencer	Forestry Commission
Tony	Stoller	WinACC
Catherine	Turness	Winchester Business Improvement District
Susan	Wilson	Adams

Table 4		
James	Byrnes	Winchester City Councillor
Jo	Crocker	Churches Together in Winchester
George	Ferguson	speaker
Kelsie	Learney	Winchester City Councillor
Richard	Lewis	City of Winchester Trust
Kate	Macintosh	City of Winchester Trust/WinACC
Lisa	Matthews	Arup
Mary	Tiles	City of Winchester Trust
Caroline	York	Winchester Chamber Music Festival
Table 5		
David	Ashe	CH Design Partnership
Emma	Back	Winchester Sport Art and Leisure Trust (SALT)
Shione	Carden	City of Winchester Trust
Mike	Elks	
Chris	Higgins	City of Winchester Trust
Peter	North	Trinity
Rachel	Platt	WinACC
Andrew	Rutter	
Steven	Smallman	Pro Vision Planning and Design
Peter	Spelman	
Table 6		
Paul	Bulkeley	SNUG architects
David	Chafe	North Stanmore Residents Association
Colette	Cherry	University of Winchester
Julian	English	Rotary
Nick	Falk	speaker
Ed	Francis	e.francis architects ltd
Chris	Gillham	Friends of the Earth
Jenny	Hobbs	Cathedral/WinACC
Kayleigh	Richter	University of Winchester Student Union Ethical & Environmental Officer

Steve	Tilbury	Winchester City Council Corporate Director
Anne	Weir	Winchester City Councillor
Table 7		
Michael	Brownlow	
Mike	Caldwell	Winchester Independents
Michael	Carden	City of Winchester Trust
Simon	Finch	Winchester City Council Asst Director Environment
Simon	Hake	Charters Commercial
Caroline	Horrill	Winchester City Councillor
Belinda	Mitchell	University of Portsmouth school of architecture
Harry	Sampson	University of Winchester Student Union President
Mike	Simpson	Age UK Mid Hants
Victoria	Weston	Winchester City Councillor
Table 8		
John	Beveridge	City of Winchester Trust
Rose	Burns	Winchester City Councillor
Mark	Butt	University of Winchester
Edward	Fennell	Hyde 900
Matt	Gilks	Dutton Gregory
Liz	Kessler	Winchester City Councillor
Alan	Lovell	Hampshire Cultural Trust
Chris	Lapsa	Gisborne Investments Ltd
Philip	Piper	Piper Whitlock Architecture
Jane	Rutter	Winchester City Councillor
Hannah	Scott	Trinity