

# Hereford Area Plan Reference Group Meeting

## Notes of Meeting

Date: 17th January 2018

Time: 15:00

Venue: Hereford City Council Offices, Town Hall, Hereford

### Attendees:

Cllr P Price (Chair), Herefordshire Council – (PP)

John Jones, HBID – (JJ)

Georgia Smith, HBID – (GS)

Cllr M Lloyd-Hayes, Herefordshire Council – (MLH)

Tracy Morriss, Hereford City Council (Deputy Clerk) and Youth Council - (TM)

Steve Kerry, Hereford City Council – (SK)

Joy Harvey, HVOSS – (JH)

Mike Emery, Care Commissioning Group (CCG) – (ME)

David Sheppard, NMiTE – (DS)

Barry Lucas, consultant for NMiTE – (BL)

Bill Bloxsome, Herefordshire Local Nature Partnership – (BB)

John Bothamley, Hereford Civic Society – (JB)

John Phipps, Holmer & Shelwick NDP Group – (JP)

David Cooper, Holmer & Shelwick NDP Group – (DC)

Kevin Singleton, Herefordshire Council – (KS)

Samantha Banks, Herefordshire Council – (SB)

Victoria Eaton, Herefordshire Council – (VE)

### Apologies:

Richard Gabb, Herefordshire Council

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## 1.0 Welcome, introduction and apologies

## 2.0 Minutes of the previous meeting

2.1 Page 3: brownfield land development – policies need to come forward through the HAP for the development on various land use types in the city for new alternative uses.

2.2 Para. 4.5: update on the Urban Panel Report. It is not yet published. DS to find out when it is due and update the group.

2.3 Otherwise agreed as a true record.

## 3.0 Hereford BID Presentation

3.1 The presentation “Vision for Hereford Area Plan” is circulated with these minutes.

3.2 The HAP should assist in positioning Hereford city centre as a shopping, leisure tourist and university destination of choice. It should be a destination that is fit for purpose and based on its image and culture. To achieve this the HAP should contain policies which allow this to happen; including addressing current obstacles to growth and creating a cohesive destination experience. Obtaining planning permission for a new style of future city centre should be made easier.

3.3 The current city centre retail area will not be needed in the future. It cannot be sustained. Smaller retail units will not be able to compete. The HAP should promote a quality retail area in a smaller, clearly navigable area. This will include promoting frontage enhancements in certain street, such as Newmarket St and Commercial Road. This will encourage a circulatory route for shoppers. Brownfield land development should be encouraged as a priority through the HAP, for the development of various land use types within the city.

3.4 Flexible policies will be required to manage the loss of the service sector and retailers from the previous town centre area. Alternative uses should be encouraged, including, university, quality office accommodation, leisure, residential and cultural uses. This will allow for a new city centre character to emerge, which is fit for the future.

3.5 Car parking: finding alternative uses for small private car parks on the edge of the city centre and building new larger scale long stay car parks on key access routes into the town centre. The current lack of long stay car parking is causing an employment retention and recruitment problem across sectors, including the voluntary sector. The current confusion of on-street parking charging is badly affecting certain shopping streets (Church Street for example). However, a review of certain aspects of the new on-street parking charging is to take place. JH: even charity retail shops are beginning to close because of rents/rates/car parking.

3.6 Transport: current planning policies are based on polluting cars. However, car technology is advancing and it is likely that in 20 years' time all cars will be electric and therefore far more sustainable. This may result in an increase in car use. TM: young people keep on saying that there is insufficient public transport to allow them to get into the city centre and back out again easily. JJ: it is difficult to know how the issue of poor bus services can ever be ameliorated. Rural bus services in a place like Herefordshire are just not viable. There may be Uber style new ideas out there in the future. But in the meantime we need make walking and cycling more attractive around the city, especially for journeys under two miles. We need to be bolder and more ambitious with schemes for high speed cycle only routes for example. This must be based on the acknowledgement that Hereford's roads will not be suitable for bus lanes and that park and ride will never be a viable option.

3.7 Urban living and cultural space: the re-use of upper floors above shops for retail and leisure uses should be made easier through the HAP's planning policies. There should also be identified space for large scale retail units. Office space, university teaching space and accommodation should be linked to car parking.

3.8 A clear identity for the city is needed, including ideas on streetscape design, city branding, and creative use of available assets. Policies of the HAP should be supportive of new uses and create a balance between building conservation and progress. A management plan should sit alongside the HAP policies.

3.9 JH led a discussion on the increasing need for community transport. Taxis are often refusing short journey jobs, especially in Leominster.

3.10 PP recently spoke to Sir John Peace (Chair of Midlands Connect and Midlands Engine). He was interested in Hereford and its USP (unique selling point). He commented on the obvious lack of a quality central hotel. Query over the future of the Green Dragon. GS: the university presence will assist in keeping hotels in business. DS: parents will need somewhere to stay whilst visiting their children at university. A Premier Inn planning application has been received for development on Blackfriars Street.

3.11 Historic England Urban Panel Report: this is still awaited (*DS to chase up – awaiting this as at 08.03.18*). There is a need to rethink conservation policies to allow for new uses in older buildings. HE will work with the planners to enable that. For example if students are to be encouraged to find accommodation in the city centre, the buildings will need lifts and disabled access. PP: HAP policies will be required to cover this. SK: there is a clear tension between conservation policies and the general promotion of development policies. BB: it should be noted that there is a difference between planning policies and what is dealt with under conservation and listed buildings legislation. Planning policies cannot override other pertinent legislation. BB gave examples of innovative new design (Left Bank, HCS building and the new magistrate's court).

#### **4.0 NHS Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group Presentation**

4.1 Mike Emery gave a presentation on future health planning and the impacts on planning policy. The presentation is circulated with these minutes.

4.2 An overview of the CCG's remit and its budget. The main issues for the CCG are: the pressure of a growing population, how people access health services in Hereford, increasing use of technology and access to Wi-Fi, recruitment and retention of staff, poor transport links, lack of car parking, impact of new student population on healthcare services.

4.3 GP's are currently overloaded and all are based in the towns, leaving a lack of healthcare for rural communities. Can the city's GP's cope with a rising population and new students? ME: appropriate clinical space in rural areas may be possible, for example re-opening branch surgeries. In the city, four or five of the GP practices are coming together to make better use of public sector properties. The use of older buildings, such as those on St Owen Street are becoming less appropriate. A new surgery is planned on the Three Elms urban extension. New students will increase the need for sexual and mental health services.

4.4 Car parking is a big issue when it comes to hospital staff and visitors.

4.5 Key plans for the future include the replacement of the hutted wards at the county hospital, a new medical centre/hub with four GP practices coming together and located close to the transport hub, market town developments (Leominster) and future of vacated former GP sites.

4.6 An increase in social prescribing may impact on the type of services that GP's provide.

4.7 BB: the access people have to greenspace is recognised as important to improving health. ME agreed, it is important to mental as well as physical health. JH: Friends of Caste

Green have recently undertaken a consultation on how people see the future of this area of urban greenspace. The results will be fed into the HAP Reference Group in due course.

4.8 JB: how do NDPs fit in with the CCGs plans? ME: if there is an identified need for new health facilities or services, these will be considered through improved dialogue with local communities, especially in the rural parts of the county. It is important to identify the challenges to the way GP practices work.

4.9 TM: if there are to be new students to the university who come from abroad, will there be a requirement for them to pay for any health care they receive whilst they are here? ME: there is already remit in this place for this to happen.

4.10 SK: Raised the question of the closure of Hillside and the need for adequate provision for intermediate care in the county. ME responded that by developing the GP hub, investing in community health services to enable more treatment and support at home and possibly using a ward at the County Hospital in an intermediate role, the CCG are confident that there would be adequate provision post-Hillside.

## **5.0 University update**

5.1 The area around St Peter Square/Offa Street will be the new university hub. £2.5m of funding is due from the Government shortly. KS: although it is acknowledged that the new HAP or Design SPD policies will not be completed in time for the beginning, there will be emerging policy in place and the existing Core Strategy policies will not per se prevent such developments from coming forward.

5.2 DS: confirmed that there is a pressing need for a link up meeting to be arranged between the university and Hereford City Council.

5.3 JB: the potential height of the student accommodation blocks is a concern. KS: work is being commissioned on a new design SPD (a later agenda item).

5.4 PP and JB: the HAP is being developed too slowly. There is a pressing need to move to policy drafting. Can the university provide some must-have parameters for building sizes? DS: once the work has been commissioned, then all relevant parties will work together to make appropriate decisions. Whoever is commissioned will attend the Ref Group meetings.

## **6.0 Historic Area Appraisal**

6.1 KS: this work on this has now been commissioned and the appraisal is due to be completed by the end of March 2018. It will provide planning guidance on conservation and building issues.

## **7.0 Design Guidance SPD**

7.1 KS: Herefordshire Council and the university are jointly commissioning this work to prepare a comprehensive design guidance document for Hereford city centre. This will provide a robust evidence base to be used as a basis for the development of new planning

policies within the Local Plan and providing a supplementary planning document (SPD) to support existing and future planning policies for Hereford city centre. It will help to inform the development of future development projects and proposals within the city, and in particular the development of NMiTE and provide a tool in guiding developers and investors looking to make planning applications.

7.2 BB: will green infrastructure and open space be included within this SPD? KS: confirmed that it would.

7.3 TM: This work could begin by identifying development areas and how different uses can be incorporated within the city in a flexible way. KS: Yes, this will be part of what the SPD will include.

## **8.0 Site Options Study**

8.1 The technical work involving both internal and external consultations are ongoing. A public consultation on site options will begin in February 2018. PP: the Environment Agency is showing an increased amount of interest in the future growth of Hereford city. The organisation has a new approach to responding to consultations and engaging both during the plan making process and ahead of anticipated planning applications.

## **9.0 Neighbourhood Development Plans update**

9.1 Holmer & Shelwick NDP: draft three of the final version of the plan has now been produced and will undergo an informal parish consultation before Easter 2018. There are new defined settlement boundaries for Holmer, Munstone and Shelwick. David Cooper to send these plans for circulation to the group. The NDP group would like to see the site options work for the Holmer area. KS: the Council is happy for this to be shared prior to the formal public consultation, as the technical work emerges (Siobhan Riddle has been notified of this request). Herefordshire Council is also happy to meet separately from the HAP Reference Group to discuss. PP advised that this should remain confidential at this time, since there will be a formal public consultation in April,

9.2 JB: queried whether the local parishioners know that there will be two tiers of development plans covering their area. Do they want to be covered by the HAP? TM: the HAP Reference Group should take account of the wishes of parishes adjoining the city. DC: the neighbourhood planning group for the area is appreciative that Hereford city needs to grow, but that also the identity of the parish needs to be protected too.

9.3 Service such as sewerage need to be fully accounted for. Previously it has seemed as if statutory undertakers such as Welsh Water have not been involved in the historic development of the Holmer area. KS: expressed total disagreement. Welsh Water are a statutory consultee and have always had input into the development plan process as well as being a consultee on planning applications. They are fully involved in the site options work and will be consulted at all stages of the HAP production, just as they had full involvement during the production of the Core Strategy.

## **10. AOB**

10.1 MLH: young people really want to get involved in the future development of the city and the time of the reference group meetings is not appropriate. Later meetings would be better. TM: this has been previously discussed amongst the ref group members. It was agreed that when reference group meetings coincide with school holidays, then a representative of the Youth Council be asked to attend. In addition, officers of the Council attended a Youth Council event and received a good response to their consultation on Hereford's future. However, later starting meetings may be beneficial.

10.2 A motion was put forward suggesting a new start time for future meetings of 4.15pm by Cllr LH. This was seconded by JH and TM. The motion was therefore carried.

10.3 TM: Reported that the Youth Council have asked for better educational support and provision for those with special needs.

10.4 Please could the HAP contain policies or proposals for better use of the river to be made for tourism/leisure? KS: see the HAP Issues and Options Paper and the Economic Vision, where this issue is identified. JH: the clearing of the banks of the river near to the Castle Green has previously not taken place due to the presence of otters.

## **11.0 Date of Next Meeting**

11.1 To be confirmed. Start time to be 4:15pm.