

Hereford Area Plan Reference Group Meeting

Notes of Meeting

Date: 09th August 2017

Time: 15:30

Venue: Hereford City Council Offices, Town Hall, Hereford

Attendees:

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

Steve Kerry, Hereford City Council (Clerk) - (SK)

Georgia Smith, HBID – (GS)

Cllr P Andrews, Herefordshire Council – (PA)

Bill Bloxsome, Herefordshire Local Nature Partnership – (BB)

Joy Harvey, HVOSS – (JH)

Cllr M Lloyd-Hayes, Hereford City Council – (MLH)

John Jones, HBID – (JJ)

John Faulkner, Hereford Civic Society – (JF)

David Sheppard, NMiTE – (DS)

Kevin Singleton, Herefordshire Council – (KS)

Peter Clasby, Herefordshire Council – (PC)

Susannah Gilson, Herefordshire Council – (SG)

Matthew Knight, Herefordshire Council – (MK)

Victoria Eaton, Herefordshire Council – (VE)

Apologies:

John Jones, HBID

John Bothamley, Hereford Civic Society

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1. Welcome, introduction and apologies.
 2. Minutes of previous meeting agreed as a true record. No amendments suggested. Updated on item 3: the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been drafted and is with the Environment Agency for comments and KS will follow up progress and report back at the next meeting.

MLH queried whether the Youth Council would be nominating a representative to attend the Reference Group meetings, and whether this previous suggestion had been followed up. SG confirmed that she has spoken with them and that it initially seems that, rather than having a seat on the group, they could be regularly informed and consulted upon as the plan progresses. MLH asked that SG continues to liaise with them about joining the Reference Group as the development of Hereford is part of their future.

3. Policy Workshop
 - 3.1 KS introduced the first workshop session on town centre matters. The topics covered were drawn up from the key issues raised during the Issues and Options consultation and those raised by officers in order to aid policy formulation.

3.2 The university have commissioned AECOM to undertake a study on the potential ways of achieving a city campus style university within the city. Once this has been completed, university matters will be discussed at a later workshop session.

3.3 (a) Built Environment

- PA and MLH raised the need for a shopfront design policy to ensure that the character of historic buildings are retained and that the city centre is an attractive place to shop, without the monotonous and dominance of the usual chain shop signage. This will help to attract visitors too.
- River Wye: MLH and BB discussed the improvement of access to the river and its increased use, to promote tourism and make better use of this asset. Previous studies undertaken may assist in considering options for new access points to the river banks. PC: utilisation of the river as a visitor attraction should be enhanced by providing good access to it which would increase dwell time in the city and therefore spending. JH mentioned that the need for otter cover has previously prevented the opening up some of sections of the river bank specifically around Castle Green. However, the development of small, niche riverside cafés may be possible and would be positive for the city's increased use of this asset. JF: increased access to the north bank is desirable.
- MK: with regard to policies on the historic environment, these could look to individual buildings (e.g. shopfronts) or more generally (e.g. the promotion of more housing in the city centre, particularly above shops) How would policies for additional residential accesses to the upper floors of commercial premises be formulated? PA commented that this has been encouraged through policy for a number of years, with little success. Often the shop owners do not want residential uses on the upper floors. PC: taking up part of a shop frontage for residential access, when premises are often small will affect the rental viability in terms of value and profit. This may explain their reluctance. SK and JF agreed that such a policy should be included in the HAP. PP queried if there is any existing evidence on the current or historic use of upper floors over shops, or whether this should be investigated. DS: NMiTE have workshop planned with a Historic England Expert Panel to look at the city centre issues, including the use of upper floors over commercial premises for student accommodation. In addition, DS is looking to set up a city centre landowners summit to try to get some support for the greater use of upper floors. The results of this can be fed back to the group.
- MK: The HAP could include a policy for new build developments on vacant and underused city plots of land. Hereford has a background of successfully incorporating modern developments into the historic character of the city. It is all about understanding what is there and developing appropriately. SK questioned the need for the re-assessment of existing Conservation Areas. JF agreed that they are in need of reviewing. BB: if the HAP could provide definitions of the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and develop appropriate policies to go with them, particularly in areas of change, this would be a positive way forward. A total review would take time and cause delays to getting the HAP in place. Perhaps picking one or two to review would be an option. MK outlined

the Hereford Historic Area Appraisal study which is in the process of being commissioned by HC. This will examine the character, potential and history of the various city character areas to inform future development. It will draw on previous studies as well as reassessing areas, looking at views and understanding these in terms of the consideration of future development. This will be a positive measure to assist new developments. The study will focus on five key character areas in the city, which could be expanded further out of the city centre. PC: showed the provisional Core Strategy HD2 policy area boundary to the group. This follows the existing and former railway lines and the river. Within this further definitions to identify the commercial core of the city and the retail frontages are required. MK: Nigel Baker's previous study *A Characterisation of the Historic Landscape of Central Hereford* (2010) provides useful information too. PP agreed that defining character areas of the city would be useful for policy development.

- BB: there is a need for the HAP to consider wider than just city centre policies in the HAP, to improve areas for existing residents. KS assured him that other parts of the city will be addressed at other workshop sessions.
- DS: a greenway linking the railway station to Blueschool Street could be promoted through the HAP. Although, if the Essex Arms site is to be used for student accommodation, then there is also the need to look at new linkages between the Link Road and Conningsby Street/Catherine Street. JF agreed that the access from the station to the city centre along Commercial Road needs enhancing. AECOM's study will be addressing this. PP agreed and stressed that the first impressions of the city are important to those coming here by bus or train and are key to Hereford's success.
- GS told the group about HBID's forthcoming consultation event in Broad Street to show options for new places of interest signage proposed for the city centre.

3. 4 (b) Retail

- PA: Over the last few years the shopping pattern of the nation has changed so much. Online shopping is very common and people tend to shop in town as more of a leisure experience, combining it with coffee/food and socialising. PC: To increase the dwell time in the central shopping streets, there needs to be a wider offer of leisure uses of this kind. The identification of primary and secondary shopping frontages will allow for such increased diversification whilst still protecting A1 retail uses, supported by appropriate town centre uses. JH, MLH and SK agreed that more activity based experiences are needed. GS: Hereford should have a quality shopping experience on offer and the BID support the need to reduce the amount of solely retail floorspace. Defining primary and secondary shopping frontages and having key anchor shops will help. HBID are already considering these matters. PC: any available evidence of good practice or market intelligence that the BID have would be very useful. Also, a change in policy could help to discourage the over-proliferation of certain commercial premises, such as betting shops of the secondary shopping streets.

- Evening activities in the town centre should be encouraged to add to the vibrancy and attraction of this part of town. Although it was recognised that this may also need to be driven by a cultural shift in the way people in England use town centres. DS said that having students residing in the central part of the city would help this.
 - KS said that there an updated or new retail assessment will be required as part of the evidence base to the HAP.
 - JF would like the Berrington Street/Aubrey Street area redeveloped for mixed commercial/residential uses.
 - BB wondered if the Tesco access onto Blueschool Street and the bus access onto the Steels roundabout could be altered. This would depend on the de-trunking of the A49 once the bypass is built and discussions with Highways England would be needed.
 - PP: car parking. Is there a need for any car parking within a 10 minute walk of the city centre? JF: the city needs additional car parking areas to encourage trade. JH: perhaps a year round park and ride service could be promoted. PA: running an effective park and ride scheme would be very expensive to set up and run. PC: some cities have dedicated bus lanes, however the streets are not wide enough here to accommodate those. And limiting car parking centrally could create problems through people parking on nearby residential streets. Then a residents' permit system would need to be set up. The strategic housing sites will, however, incorporate Park and Choose sites to encourage people to use non-car based alternatives. PP: how can you write a policy to make people accept less city car parking? A culture shift is needed.
 - JF: until NMiTE can firm up their proposals it is difficult to formulate policy for the HAP. DS: the university is only one part of the overall picture of Hereford city and how it functions. There must be a balance with other uses and the HAP can guide these. Once the AECOM study has been completed, then the university issues can be better considered.
4. Date of next meeting: 20th September at 15:00 in the Town Hall. KS: after this time, it is likely that the Reference group will need to meet on a more frequent basis to ensure that all the policy areas have been discussed.

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