



Worcester Civic Society: Planning Panel Report to the AGM November 2019

During the last year the Panel has continued its consideration of, and comment on, key strategic policy documents affecting the development of the city in the future. It also considered individual major developments and smaller developments affecting listed buildings and conservation areas in the city through its engagement with the Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP).

Planning Policies

1; South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) Review – ‘Preferred Options’ public consultation from Monday 4th November to Monday 16th December 2019.

The SWDP was adopted in February 2016 and the South Worcestershire Councils are required to complete a review every five years. The SWDP Review will cover the period to 2041. This current consultation sets out the Councils’ draft policies and identifies the sites which they think should be developed for housing, employment and mixed uses. The proposal is for an additional 14,000 homes in South Worcestershire by 2041. In the city boundary there are some small sites carried forward for housing and a few more proposed but the majority of growth is concentrated in three new strategic growth areas at Parkway, Throckmorton, and Rushwick, located around or abutting current or new railway stations.

The Society’s Planning Panel will be holding an open meeting in the Hive (Meeting Room 6) on Thursday 5th December 10.30am – 12.30pm which members are welcome to attend to input their views. Alternatively members can email their views to the Chair of the Planning Panel Dr Heather Barrett (h.barrett@worc.ac.uk).

This is a large document, and the Planning Panel are asking that you focus on the following key issues of relevance to the city in order to provide feedback:

1. Housing related issues including housing needs, scale and location of provision, and quality (size, sustainable design, etc.);
2. Retail and employment issues including scale, location and range of sites;
3. Transport in terms of coping with the scale and location of change, and particularly the need to increase use of non-car modes, reduce pollution, and address climate change;
4. Green infrastructure provision in existing and new areas, together with community and health facilities;
5. Historic environment and design issues, including the role of the city centre and opportunities for improvement.



However, if there are other issues you think we need to respond to then please do pass these on.

Members can view the SWDP documents and make comments on-line at:

https://swdp-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/swdp_review_preferred_options

2; City Centre Masterplan

The final version of the plan was adopted by the City council in July and is now published on the city council website: <https://www.worcester.gov.uk/masterplan>. The final version was not much changed from the original, with minor revisions arising from the consultation report published in December last year (some wording changes and revisions to car parking and the ideas for Hylton Road realignment at Cripplegate Park).

Whilst the Masterplan is an advisory, rather than statutory, planning document, elements of it may go into the revised South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP), as was the case with the previous Masterplan document. Consequently, Panel members continued to scrutinise and evaluate the proposals for each of the city's 'quarters' identified in the Masterplan (Riverside, Shrub Hill/Canal-side and Historic Core). We have continued to develop our ideas for the riverside; not having a cathedral footbridge; retaining and enhancing public open space along the riverside at Copenhagen Street and Croft Road and retaining important views of the railway viaduct, with no dense high-rise building development as proposed and we presented these ideas at the Society's 60th Anniversary Conference in October.

We have also developed ideas for the Shrub Hill/canal area, with ideas for improving traffic movement to and around the area, ideas for canal-side housing and mixed use development and also ideas for the best site for a transport interchange at Shrub Hill, with further development ideas depending on whether Elgar House removed or not. For the historic city, ideas have yet to be fully explored, but key issues are the development of the low-line (a good idea/support), King Street Car Park (not the right place for a car park and would be better developed as part of the city's cultural/heritage offer?), Corn Market/City Walls Road a key space for redevelopment and traffic calming/improved pedestrian realm, Crowngate/Blackfriars – how this might be redeveloped and need for car park in the area and a transport interchange). Transport circulation improvements are key to a lot of the traffic calming/public realm improvements suggested.

3; Worcestershire Passenger Transport Strategy 2019-30

We sent in a consultation response to this document (dealing principally with bus service provision in the county) in September. The Panel's overall views was that this was a rather bland and uninspiring document, largely just setting out the County



Council's statutory obligations and procedures for making decisions on priorities for spending. The document did not really address current deficiencies in public transport service and infrastructure provision, or the significant challenges to be faced over the next 10 years with the proposed growth in housing and potential for increased congestion. Key concerns we identified were the need to provide more concrete detail in terms of key priorities and strategies to achieve these, along with the need for mechanisms for better partnership working between City and County, and with commercial operators and developers in terms of providing funding for improvements and infrastructure development and upgrades. A key issue is the need to tackle city car parking and revisit the idea of park and ride for the city and make it work, as in other historic towns and cities we know about. Equally, there is a need to develop a comprehensive plan for the integration of services (in terms of things such as tickets and timetables) and improvement to the provision of interchange facilities, in Worcester City centre particularly.

The Panel remain concerned about the state of transport planning for the city and note that although the Masterplan has been published, the **City Centre Transport Plan** has not yet been published (although the Local Transport Plan 4 indicated that it would be as soon as the Masterplan was adopted). As noted above, consideration of congestion and pollution issues, traffic flow around the city and transport infrastructure provision are key to Worcester's future development and the successful implementation of planned policies. We also highlighted these issues and concerns in a presentation at the Society's 60th Anniversary Conference in October.

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

During 2018, CAP commented on a wide range of applications, from major schemes to applications for new signage and shopfronts. We continue to review and monitor the impact that our comments have on decision making on schemes within the city. Some of the key/contentious schemes that were considered are:

- **Old Northwick Farm, Northwick Road:** existing permission for houses – revised denser scheme for affordable housing.
- **Pope Iron Road:** 8 new houses – issue of loss of employment land, number of homes and relationship to other buildings in the street.
- **Corner Silver Street and Lowesmoor:** consent refused for extra story on scheme (existing permission for 5 storey scheme – of poor design for this important corner site).
- **Old Infirmary, Silver Street** CAP visit – excellent refurbishment of this historic timber framed building to the rear for serviced holiday apartment rents with may



important features retained and enhanced. Felt it should be recommended for an award.

- **Former Images night club, The Butts** – demolition and new 100 bedroom 7 storey student residence – too much and important site needs consideration (Historic England feedback).
- **Sherriff Street development** – details of the new build blocks in the approved outline scheme. 5 large blocks which appear of poor design, including a car park and a bridge across to Shrub Hill station.
- **Conservation area appraisals** – documents for city conservation areas have continued to be reviewed and ‘refreshed’ this year with the appointment of Rebecca Barnett to replace Julia Shaduwa. Article 4 direction was approved for Shrubbery Avenue Conservation Area in May, Field Terrace draft conservation area appraisal out for consultation in November, revised documents for new area covering Park Avenue, Barbourne and revisions to the Riverside conservation area out for consultation in December. Noted that next year further areas, including the Historic City will be considered.

Dr Heather Barrett, Planning Panel Chair

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