



Civic Complex (NEW Theatre and NEW Council Offices) Draft Planning Framework (consultation: 20 April – 1 June 2017)

RTW Town Forum Transport Working Group - Comments

Q1. Please provide your comments on the Vision and Objectives (set out on pages 16 and 17 of the consultation document):

The Transport Working Group of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum is limiting its response to the transport implications only

Q2. Please provide your comments on the Key Principles (see page 18 of the consultation document):

The Transport Working Group of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum is limiting its response to the transport implications only

Q3. Please provide your comments on the proposed urban framework and public realm framework (set out on pages 22-28):

The Transport Working Group of the RTW Town Forum (TWG) welcomes the opportunities that this Draft Planning Framework could bring for improvement of the public realm for the benefit of pedestrians in particular, and for other NMU travellers in the town centre. However.....

Mount Pleasant Avenue: We have great concerns that the piazza space at the entrance to Calverley Grounds and between the new offices and theatre will be potentially hazardous to NMU users. The nature of park users is that the majority are children and teenagers, parents and toddlers, residents and visitors who will be transitioning from the vehicle-free park space to the public realm. The plans revealed to date rely on this space being the vital turning area for heavy articulated vehicles accessing the theatre on its north side between it and the Great Hall. The space will narrow and the manoeuvres complex, and each turn is likely to take time. Ideally, some marshals would be needed to guide the drivers and control the public every time vehicle access is required. We understand that HGVs will be accessing the theatre, but in addition there will be regular HGV/delivery vehicles servicing the theatre facilities such as catering, and those delivering to Hoopers will also use this access. There is a potentially dangerous conflict here.

The TWG believes that insufficient weight has been given to managing this potentially hazardous interface between the public and vehicles in the piazza area.

Formed in 2005, the Town Forum is a partnership between Residents' Representatives and ward Councillors in the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells, the unparished area of the Borough of Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Town Forum Management Group

Adrian Berendt (Chair); Alex Green (Deputy Chair); Alastair Tod (Deputy Chair); David Wakefield (Finance); Jane Fenwick (Transport); Linda Lewis (Culture, Leisure & Tourism); Mark Booker (Strategic Planning); Michael Holman (Water in the Wells)

Mount Pleasant Road: (P26) The proposals on page 24 for improvements to upgrade pedestrian facilities, street furniture and paving read like a list rather than a strategy for improvement. Whilst the TWG welcome improvements to the public realm, it also acknowledges the work already done for the TWBC Urban Design Strategy, However, conducting such changes in isolation from an overall town centre plan for both the public realm and traffic flows would be unhelpful and not lead to the results that this Draft Planning Framework aspires to.

The use of **Mount Pleasant Ave/ Mount Pleasant Road (P 40)** as the two way entrance and exit to the underground car park will impede the flow of pedestrian traffic significantly on the east side of Mount Pleasant Road and contribute to congestion and pollution.

Pedestrians: (P 26) The TWG welcomes the aspiration ' to increase current low levels of walking and facilitate a shift away from the private car' but we fail to see how this can be achieved when a significant part of this development is to provide underground car park for office and theatre users, as well as for the public.

The limitations to the piazza area described, together with the entrance/exit to the underground car park and retaining vehicle access via Mount Pleasant Avenue and Mount Pleasant Road to the new office and rear for the shops adjacent is unlikely to fulfil the 'pedestrian priority space' that this plan imagines.

Plans for a new pedestrian access to Calverley Grounds at the top of Mount Pleasant Avenue is welcomed.

Parking: (P 28) The TWG regrets the loss of MSCP facilities serving the High Street and southern parts of the town, even though there is an expectation that the new underground car park and extension to Crescent Road Car Park will largely make up the shortfall in spaces overall in due course. However, these changes to MSCP provision which was not planned for in the TWBC Parking Strategy 2016, and only serves to reinforce the imbalance of MSCP provision in the north of the town compared to the south. No proposals are provided in this document to rectify this either with temporary or permanent parking facilities.

The TWG is very concerned that the extension of Crescent Road Car Park by 90 spaces will directly impact on the already over-loaded Crescent Road, Carrs Corner roundabout and the traffic lights at Mount Pleasant Road.

The TWG notes that this document completely ignores the Torrington car park which is close to the planned theatre and office, and which in the evenings is largely empty. We suggest that a linking bridge from the 1st or 2nd floor of the car park could provide a pedestrian walkway to the east side of the station. We believe that this would be a significant addition to pedestrian flows in this area, and would make better use of the parking available, particularly if it was combined with improvements to pedestrian crossings across Vale Road at the entrance to the station. The night time use of the car park could also improve security in that area.

Crescent Road: (P 25) The plans provided for this area are particularly unclear and the TWG would welcome an opportunity to examine the proposals in more detail. However, the aspiration to improve the pedestrian experience and access on Crescent Road between the car park entrance/exit and Carrs Corner, and the linking alleyway to Monson Road is to be welcomed.

We are concerned, however, that any widening of Crescent Road should not be for the purpose of increasing the speed of traffic flow, and should be part of an overall improvement to the Carrs Corner/Calverley Park Gardens and A264 area currently the focus of a KCC study.

The possibility of new residential properties at the entrance to the car park and along Crescent Road so close to the historic Calverley Park Crescent and Calverley Park will require closer examination when the plans/designs are available.

Q4. Please provide your comments on the key sites (page 34 onwards):

The Hub: (P35) The TWG has examined the proposals for the public realm beside this development which were presented to the RTW Town Forum in May 2017 and found them unacceptable. We have submitted alternative plans directly to Gary Stevenson and the Hub development team. Briefly, the proposals do not provide the 'town square' focus that is needed, and appear to have disregarded the importance to the townscape of the existing historic walls and trees that currently mark the change of levels. We will propose that the area on Monson Road from both ends of Monson Way is pedestrianised to provide a 'town square' capable of giving a relaxed space where arts and performance can occur, and the historic Adult Education Building can be properly seen. The current interface of fast moving traffic and pedestrians moving from Monson Road/Monson Way to and from 'Fiveways' is unacceptably dangerous and this is the opportunity to make radical improvement.

Crescent Road: (P39). The TWG is very concerned that the extension of Crescent Road Car Park by 90 spaces will directly impact on the already over-loaded Crescent Road, Carrs Corner roundabout and the traffic lights at Mount Pleasant Road.

The plans provided for this area are particularly unclear and the TWG would welcome an opportunity to examine the proposals in more detail. However, the aspiration to improve the pedestrian experience and access on Crescent Road between the car park entrance/exit and Carrs Corner, and the linking alleyway to Monson Road is to be welcomed. We are concerned however, that any widening of Crescent Road should not be for the purpose of increasing the speed of traffic flow, and should be part of an overall improvement to the Carrs Corner/Calverley Park Gardens and A264 currently the focus of a KCC study.

The possibility of new residential properties at the entrance to the car park and along Crescent Road in such close proximity to the historic Calverley Park Crescent and Calverley Park will require closer examination when the plans/designs are available.

Mount Pleasant Avenue: P40. Our concerns about the interface between the public and vehicles in this road, particularly in the piazza area have already been expressed in Q3 above.

The use of **Mount Pleasant Road/Mount Pleasant Avenue** as two way access and exit from the proposed underground car park is a cause for concern because of the heavy pedestrian flows on the east side of Mount Pleasant Road which will need to cross this busy exit, and the close proximity of the traffic lights at the Crescent Road/ Church Road/ Mount Pleasant. This short section of Mount Pleasant Avenue is narrow and vehicles turning in and out will of necessity do so slowly impeding the flow of other traffic on Mount Pleasant Road and the flow of pedestrians on that side of the road. Turning right into and out of Mount Pleasant Avenue for the car park would have to be banned because of the proximity of the

junction. Congestion and pollution is likely to be increased as hundreds of cars leave the car park at the same time after theatre performances.

Q6. Please provide any other comments you may have on the document:

This is the agreed response from the Transport Working Group of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum. This group's comments are limited to the transport implications only of this Draft Planning Document.

In addition to the detailed comments above, we have also noted that this document does not pay sufficient attention to the need to improve Active Travel in the town centre, indeed some actions appear to work against this ambition to get more people walking and cycling. Furthermore, it appears to disregard the TWBC's own Parking Strategy.