

A G E N D A

Thursday 26 March 2015 at 6.30 pm
Council Chamber, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS

1 Apologies for absence

2 Membership changes

- a Membership applications (for decision)
- b Changes of representatives (for information)

3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 January 2015 (Pages 1 - 10)

4 Actions from previous meetings (5 mins)

22 January 2015

- 3 Purchase of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons

Chairman That the Town Forum indicates its support for the Friends of the Commons' plea to KCC to provide a number of safe crossing points to the Commons, through writing to the County Council in advance of the Joint Transportation Board meeting on 20 April; and

That the Town Forum supports the Friends of the Commons in its efforts to preserve the integrity of the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons and urges all interested parties to attend the panel debate on 12 February and, if in agreement, to register their concern at how the Commons are currently managed.

5 Update from TWBC's Cabinet (5 mins)

6 TWBC's Destination Management Plan (20 mins)

Hilary Smith, TWBC's Economic Development Manager, will provide a verbal update report on the Borough Council's Destination Management Plan and recent collaborative work with the Town Forum.

7 Town Forum's 'Green Network' report (20 mins)

Originating out of the Leisure, Culture and Tourism Working Group, a draft cross-cutting report on proposals for a 'Green Network' has been produced. A copy of this has been circulated with the agenda, as a separate document.

Members of the Town Forum are invited to comment on the draft and to suggest any further additions they would like to see in relation to their neighbourhoods. The draft will then be put in final form for approval at the Town Forum meeting on 21 May and submission to TWBC. This will complement the following TWBC policies: (a) the Green Infrastructure Plan; (b) the Urban Design Framework; and (c) the Transport Strategy. It should also help to inform the development of TWBC's next Local Plan.

Mark Booker will lead the presentation on this item.

8 The Town Forum's response to TWBC's draft Parking Strategy (10 mins)

TWBC's draft Transport Strategy 2015 has been the subject of a formal public consultation process, which ended on 15 March. The Town Forum's Transport Strategy Working Group examined the detail of the draft Strategy and, in early February, invited Town Forum members to view the document on-line and feed in their comments to the Working Group. Their formal response has been submitted to TWBC by the due deadline. A copy of this was sent to all Town Forum members as a separate document with this agenda.

Jane Fenwick, Acting Chairman of the Working Group, will lead the discussion on this issue, which will focus on highlighting the key issues and seeking retrospective endorsement of the formal response made.

9 TWBC's Site Allocations Development Planning Document - working group's report (10 mins)

A copy of the Town Forum's response to the Site Allocations Development Planning Document – Submissions draft – has been circulated to all Town Forum members, as a separate document from the agenda. This response has been compiled by a sub-group of the Planning and Development Working Group.

It has been formally submitted to the Borough Council in order to meet the specified deadline for comments, so is being presented to the Town Forum for information.

Alastair Tod, the Town Forum Chairman, will lead the discussion on this item.

10 Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups (5 mins each) (Pages 11 - 24)

Ahead of the following reports, the Chairman will advise on proposals to form a new working group looking at the **Cultural and Learning Hub**.

- (a) Water in the Wells** – Michael Holman, chairman of this working group, has provided the attached update report.
- (b) Leisure, Culture and Tourism** – June Bridgeman, chairman of this working group, has provided the attached update report.
- (c) Transport Strategy** – Jane Fenwick, acting chairman of this working group, has provided the attached update report.
- (d) Planning and Development** – Mark Booker, chairman of this working group, has provided the attached update report.
- (e) Finance and Other Issues** – David Wakefield, chairman of this working group, will provide an update report.

11 Any Other Business

Date of the Next Meeting

Dates of meetings for 2015 (all at 6.30pm)

Thursday 21 May

Thursday 16 July

Thursday 24 September

Thursday 26 November (including the AGM)

(Thursday 28 January 2016)



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Thursday 22 January 2015

Attended: Cllr Bob Backhouse, David Barnett, Cllr Ronen Basu, Lorna Blackmore, Mark Booker, Stephen Bowser, Cllr Peter Bulman, David Bushell, Cllr Mrs Barbara Cobbold, Adrian Cory, Jane Fenwick, Allan Gooda, Alex Green, Tim Harper, Dorothea Holman, Michael Holman, Kyrios Kyriacou, Katharina Mahler-Bech, Cllr David Neve, Peter Perry (sub), Nick Pope, Cllr Catherine Rankin, Cllr David Scott, Kate Sergeant (sub), Anne Stobo, Alastair Tod (Chairman), David Wakefield (sub), Denise Watts, Cllr Lynne Weatherly, Philip Whitbourn (sub) and Cllr Chris Woodward

TWBC officers present: Adam Chalmers (Democratic and Community Engagement Manager), Jean Marshall (Planning Policy Manager), Debra Thackeray (Support Officer, Executive Directorate) and Mike McGear (Democratic Services Officer)

Also present: Cllr David Jukes (Leader of the Council), John Barber (Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons), Cllrs Paul Barrington-King (TWBC Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Sustainability), Cllr Bill Hills (Vice-Chairman of TWBC Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Brian Lippard (RTW Civic Society), Mrs Tracy Moore, Tony Pawson (Warwick Park Residents' Association) and Cllr Mike Rusbridge (TWBC Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Finance and Governance)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were reported from: Sally Balcon, Cllr Ben Chapelard, John Cunningham, Michael Doyle, Will Farmer, Sue Kaner, Bill Kern, Altan Omer, Angela Phillips, Cllr Don Sloan, Mary Wardrop, Victor Webb, Cllr Frank Williams and Pat Wilson.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting dated 27 November 2014, were presented for noting and the minutes of the ordinary meeting held that same evening were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 27 November 2014 be noted; and
- (2) That the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 27 November 2014 be approved.

3. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

27 November 2014

4 Tunbridge Wells Car Club

Transport Strategy WG The working group be asked to consider the Tunbridge Wells Car Club initiative in detail and report their findings to the full Town Forum.

Jane Fenwick, Acting Chairman of the Transport Strategy Working Group, advised that the Tunbridge Wells Car Club had enjoyed quite a successful start. She asked Town Forum members if they had any suggestions for further locations within the town, including any residential 'bases'. It was agreed that Mike McGeary would send an all-Forum e-mail, seeking any additional proposals.

Action point: Mike McGeary to contact all Town Forum members.

4 Purchase of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons

While there was no specific action required from the November meeting, John Barber, Chairman of the Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons, provided an update on the current position regarding the possible purchase of the Commons from the current owner, Targetfollow. He also sought the Town Forum's support in the initiative by the Friends' group to call upon KCC to implement a number of crossing points, to provide easier and safer access to the Commons.

Mr Barber explained how Targetfollow had deliberately triggered the six-month moratorium element of the 'community right to bid' process, through their statement that they intended to offer the Commons for sale. He added that, from detailed discussions with the Chief Executive of Targetfollow, it had become clear that the company was keen to maximise the value of the Commons before their eventual disposal, as well as secure an income stream through (i) charging for existing encroachment and (ii) install a significantly enlarged car park.

Mr Barber advised that a special panel debate had been organised by the Civic Society on Thursday 12 February at the Town Hall, which all interested parties could attend, to hear more detail and, if in agreement, to register their concern at how the Commons are being managed by Targetfollow. He sought the Town Forum's support in this initiative.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Town Forum indicates its support for the Friends of the Commons' plea to KCC to provide a number of safe crossing points to the Commons, through writing to the County Council in advance of the Joint Transportation Board meeting on 20 April; and
- (2) That the Town Forum supports the Friends of the Commons in its efforts to preserve the integrity of the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons and urges all interested parties to attend the panel debate on 12 February and, if in agreement, to register their concern at how the Commons are currently managed.

4 Open Spaces Strategy

Adam Chalmers To report back on when it was expected that TWBC's Open Spaces Strategy would be reviewed.

Mr Chalmers advised that this document would be reviewed in 2016, as part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy Review.

4. UPDATE REPORT FROM LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Cllr David Jukes, Leader of the Council, reported on the following areas of interest:

- (a) **Aircraft noise** – Cllr Jukes welcomed the fact that Joe Ratcliffe, KCC's Principal Transport Planner, was making a presentation to the Forum that same evening on the current consultation on a possible second runway at Gatwick Airport. He added that West Sussex County Council had voted against the proposal and that East Sussex County Council were moving towards the same opinion;
- (b) **Ice rink** – Cllr Jukes was pleased to be able to report that over 36,000 people had used the ice rink over the 2014/15 period;
- (c) **Union House** – The Leader of the Council advised that Union House was now in the ownership of Dandara, with whom the Borough Council had a good working relationship, he added. He advised that Dandara had given an assurance that the existing building would be demolished, adding that they would be holding a public discussion on the future of the site on 27 January, to which all interested parties were invited;
- (d) **Cultural and Learning Hub** – Cllr Jukes advised that progress with the early-stage planning of this initiative remained on track. He added that it was still intended to submit a stage I bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in April;
- (e) **Bayham Road football pitches** – Cllr Jukes referred to the issues raised by Foresters Football Club and their criticism of the condition of the pitches at Bayham Road. He advised that he had discussed this matter direct with the football club and had also talked to the Football Association who had become involved. Cllr Jukes said that TWBC had initiated a survey of the pitches by the Institute of Groundsmen, who had drawn attention to the fact that the site was never intended to be used for sports pitches. An improvement schedule was now in place, Cllr Jukes advised, with the situation being closely monitored;
- (f) **New newspaper** – Cllr Jukes advised that a new weekly free newspaper was being launched in the town, called the Times of Tunbridge Wells, published by Markerstudy;
- (g) **Chalybeate Spring** – At the Chairman's prompting, the Leader of the Council advised that, while there had been a resumption of the water flow at the Chalybeate Spring, it had proved to be temporary. Michael Holman asked whether the same approach as was being adopted at Grosvenor and Hilbert Park – where water was to be pumped into the dripping wells – could be followed at the Chalybeate Spring. Cllr Jukes felt that this remained a possibility.

There were no action points arising from this report.

5. GATWICK AIRPORT – CONSULTATION ON A POSSIBLE SECOND RUNWAY

Joe Ratcliffe, KCC's Principal Transport Planner, was welcomed to the meeting. He provided the Town Forum members with an informative presentation, covering: the growth in air traffic at Gatwick since 2010; the approach routes followed; night-time flights; and the second runway proposal.

Mr Ratcliffe advised that, based upon the detailed evidence KCC had obtained, the County Council would be formalising its opposition to the second runway proposal. He added that it was not expected that a formal decision would be made by the Airports Commission until after the Parliamentary election in May.

Members of the Town Forum raised the following issues with Mr Ratcliffe:

- Cllr Rankin sought confirmation that it was Gatwick Airport's agreed policy to reduce the number of flights over larger residential areas. Mr Ratcliffe confirmed that it was Gatwick's policy to reduce flights over urban areas, adding that it was also their policy to concentrate flight paths on those areas that were not densely populated, as this reflected government guidance. Mr Ratcliffe added that government guidelines stated that the operators should reduce the number of flights over 'areas of outstanding natural beauty' at a height of less than 7,000 feet;
- Tony Pawson asked whether KCC had analysed the householder compensatory aspects of a second runway. He felt that the numbers in terms of the economic benefit to West Kent were too small. Mr Ratcliffe explained that none of the measures being considered (e.g. a contribution of £1,000 towards council tax costs) applied to residents in Kent. Mr Ratcliffe advised that the housing numbers referred to in the consultation documentation were for post-2030, adding that most local authority local plans did not project that far at this stage;
- Jane Fenwick asked what would happen after the close of the consultation period (3 February) and whether there would be any effort to address the night-flight equalisation issue. Mr Ratcliffe advised that, at the end of the consultation period, the results would be analysed and that the Commission was expected to report in the Summer.

Mr Ratcliffe advised that the other issues which surrounded Gatwick's operations would need to be addressed by 2020. He added that the current number of night-time flights was set until 2017. If Gatwick so determined, they might offer to reduce the number of night-time flights, he advised;

- Michael Holman asked whether the Town Forum members should be asked whether or not they supported the Borough Council's formal position – agreed at its special meeting held on 7 January – of opposing any further expansion of Gatwick Airport. The Chairman, Alastair Tod, agreed that this should be put to the vote at the end of the debate;
- Cllr Ronen Basu asked whether a full impact study had been undertaken on the issue of air pollution, should a second runway be built. He added that many residents locally were supportive of the hub airport proposal. Mr Ratcliffe advised that an air pollution impact study had indeed been undertaken but that this was based on the likely effect much closer to the airport itself.

On the issue of a hub airport, Mr Ratcliffe advised that one centred on Heathrow would be much more costly than at Gatwick, adding however that the economic benefits which Heathrow would enjoy would be much greater. If a new hub airport were being seriously considered, Mr Ratcliffe advised, there would be a great deal of opposition, as witnessed by the Thames estuary proposal. Cllr Rankin reminded the group that the Thames estuary proposal would not achieve any reduction in the number of flights at Gatwick.

In conclusion, Mr Ratcliffe was thanked for his very informative and interesting presentation and the following resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED - That the following decision made by the Borough Council be unanimously endorsed: "That this Council is opposed to any further expansion of

Gatwick Airport and the increased concentration of flight paths, and supports a significant reduction in the number of night flights”.

6. SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

Jean Marshall, TWBC's Planning Policy Manager, advised Town Forum members that the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) had reached its pre-submission stage. She added that there was now a period of formal public consultation about to begin, lasting from 9 February until 23 March; after that, the document would be forwarded to the Secretary of State and a formal 'examination in public' by a Government-appointed inspector (likely to be held this Autumn) would follow.

Mrs Marshall stressed that the public consultation at this stage was focused on whether the document was both 'sound' and in compliance with national planning policy.

Mrs Marshall provided some further context, with a look ahead at the consequences of national government planning policy: she explained how the Borough Council's Core Strategy had been adopted in 2010, which pre-dated the Government's introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This meant that, just as with many other local authorities, Tunbridge Wells had an adopted Core Strategy which was not in compliance with the NPPF. Last summer, Mrs Marshall advised, it became acceptable to adopt a two-stage approach, i.e. to continue with the Site Allocations DPD process, but to start to prepare for a review of the Core Strategy. In other words, Mrs Marshall added, the Site Allocations DPD was stage one towards meeting the Government's current targets, within the 6,000 new homes which the Core Strategy specified, up to 2026.

Mrs Marshall advised that Town Forum representatives had been invited to a number of public exhibitions and workshops taking place throughout February, in order to learn more about the Site Allocations DPD pre-submission document and process.

Members of the Town Forum were then invited to comment on the Site Allocations DPD pre-submission process and on the Core Strategy review, which would begin in the Autumn.

- Lorna Blackmore asked why Tunbridge Wells town had to take a higher allocation of housing than other parts of the Borough. Mrs Marshall advised that it had been agreed in the 2010 Core Strategy that 75% of the Borough's total additional housing allocation would have to be taken by the town, including Southborough. She advised that this was essentially because of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Green Belt status of the vast majority of the remainder of the Tunbridge Wells Borough, which provided a high degree of protection from large-scale development;
- Stephen Bowser asked how many additional homes were required across the town. Mrs Marshall advised that, at this stage, i.e. under the existing Core Strategy, 6,000 new homes would be required in the Borough, up to 2026. She added that, as part of the review of the Core Strategy, that number was likely to increase;
- Jane Fenwick asked whether the Government inspector would take traffic congestion into account when the Site Allocations DPD underwent its examination in public. Mrs Marshall advised that, technically, this element would have been taken into account when the Core Strategy numbers were agreed, based upon the available infrastructure;

- Stephen Bowser asked whether there was any Boundary Commission aspect which would impact upon the Site Allocations DPD at this point. Adam Chalmers, Democratic and Community Engagement Manager, advised that this was a totally separate matter, adding that KCC had called for an electoral review for the county, which would be subject to formal public consultation. Mr Chalmers added that there were no particular issues of concern for this Borough;
- Cllr Catherine Rankin invited Mrs Marshall to say how Hawkhurst Parish managed to have one of its allocated sites removed from the pre-submission Site Allocations document. Mrs Marshall explained that it had not been an officer recommendation to remove one of the sites, but a full Council decision, based upon the representations made by interested groups and individuals in Hawkhurst, where the Parish Council had set out an alternative route for the Parish to achieve its overall total. Mrs Marshall added two notes of caution: first, she advised that the Government inspector would determine whether the locally-made suggestion was acceptable; secondly, Mrs Marshall advised that the originally proposed site in Hawkhurst – a greenfield site – was now the subject of a planning appeal against refusal for housing development;
- Michael Holman sought clarification over why there appeared to be a recommended change of use for Camden Square within the latest version of the Site Allocations DPD. It was agreed that Mr Holman would make written contact with Mrs Marshall about the specific detail;
- Mark Booker referred to the full Council decision made on 10 December, where all reference to a review of the Green Belt had been removed from the pre-submission Site Allocations DPD. He asked if there was any way in which the Town Forum could formally support such a proposal. Mrs Marshall advised that that decision had been incorporated into the DPD, as well as the remaining three safeguarded sites, which were designed for future growth, which would enable the housing numbers to be achieved without going into the Green Belt. However, Mrs Marshall advised that the Green Belt would have to feature in further reviews.

Mrs Marshall next focused on what work the Planning Policy team would address, beyond the Site Allocations DPD stage. She advised that the evidence base work was beginning, starting with the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), jointly with Sevenoaks District Council, looking at future housing needs for the period 2013-2033. Mrs Marshall added that there was a statutory requirement to establish what the 'objectively-assessed need' was for the Borough, based upon population forecasts, the latest of which were due for publication the following month.

To provide some context, Mrs Marshall added that, under the existing projected population figures, it was felt that a further 10,290 homes would be required in the Borough up to 2033, equating to an annual figure of 515. Based upon whatever will be determined as the starting point (once the new population forecasts were published), Mrs Marshall advised that local planning authorities were able to consider legitimate obstacles to achieving that target, such as Green Belt and other designations, which would help in the presentation of a robust case to a subsequent Government inspector. Thus Mrs Marshall was able to advise the Town Forum members that they should not be frightened or intimidated by whatever starting point was presented, under the next stage of the plan-making process. The Borough, she added, would have to accommodate a certain level of housing growth, but there were significant mitigating factors, she felt.

Cllr Rankin thanked Mrs Marshall for her very informative presentation. She remained, however, concerned with the exponential growth in housing numbers which the town area would have to accommodate, in comparison with the other parts of the Borough. Cllr Rankin felt that one consequence of growth at this rate might be a town that was no longer sustainable.

Mrs Marshall advised that the existing growth distribution (75% for the town area) had been agreed in 2010 with the adoption of the Core Strategy, the review of which would begin in the Autumn. At that stage, she added, it was open for the Borough Council to determine that some rural areas could accommodate growth. The evidence-based work which would help shape that balance was what would be taking place over the coming two years, it was noted.

As part of the next stage, Mrs Marshall added that the Government might proceed with its 'new towns' initiative (e.g. Ebbsfleet) which might have a beneficial effect on the target for Tunbridge Wells. At the end of the day, she added, the town was constrained by national planning policy.

- Jane Fenwick pursued the issue of the distribution of new homes in the town area: would it, she asked, follow the pattern established by existing population growth or would it be the subject of a change in approach within the town area. Mrs Marshall explained that the existing Core Strategy provided for all new development to be a mix of house sizes. In rural areas, she added, there was less of a demand for apartments, thus the range of house types depended upon the locality.

Mrs Marshall went on to say that, with future growth figures – and conscious of the constraints within which the Borough operated – it might be necessary to look at existing Green Belt land; however, she added that there might be a number of small pockets of land which would accommodate small-scale development, thus removing the pressure to consider Green Belt land.

Within the town area, Mrs Marshall advised that the next review might see multi-level new development as an acceptable way of achieving a higher housing target.

Mrs Fenwick asked whether sub-division of some of the existing housing stock could be viewed as part of the solution. However, Mrs Marshall felt that the positive impact of this approach would be very small. She thought it might be more productive to examine opportunities to convert some existing spaces over shops for housing use.

- Alex Green enquired about the likely timetable for the Core Strategy review. Mrs Marshall advised that the timeline the authority would be working to was set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme. That stated that the review of the Core Strategy would begin this Autumn, leading to a likely public consultation stage taking place in the Winter of 2016. Implementation of a revised Core Strategy was, therefore, post-2017, it was noted;
- Tony Pawson raised a number of issues: (i) was there, he asked, a natural resistance to change local government boundaries, which might have an impact on planning policy; (ii) he felt that assumptions about rural areas and their infrastructure might need to be 'health-checked'; and (iii) was it possible, he asked, to change the basis of some of the existing Core Strategy. Mrs Marshall advised that, crucially, a review of the Core Strategy allowed a completely fresh look at its content, thus any previous assumptions could be

re-visited. Some sites would, however, be taken forward into the new, single, allocations development plan, Mrs Marshall advised. Any village being looked at must have the required infrastructure (including public transport links, shops, etc) to support growth, Mrs Marshall added.

Mrs Marshall was thanked for her very helpful and informative presentation. There were no specific action points arising from this report.

7. RESPONSES TO TWBC CONSULTATION ISSUES

David Wakefield, Chairman of the Finance and Other Issues Working Group, presented a draft response which his group had put together, on the following two formal TWBC consultation topics: (a) the draft TWBC budget for 2015/16; and (b) the draft political priorities 2015/16.

Mr Wakefield's draft response had been circulated to the Forum members ahead of the meeting. He sought approval to submit this to TWBC as the formal Town Forum response. However, due to the lateness of the hour, the Chairman suggested that those members who wished to add/change any elements of the draft response should make direct contact with Mr Wakefield, within the following 48 hours.

Cllr Peter Bulman voiced his opposition to the proposal to encourage TWBC to increase their car parking charges. Cllr Mrs Barbara Cobbold was also not in favour of the proposal to charge for replacement wheelie bins, especially as she felt that many such replacements were as a result of theft. She also felt that the reference to the use of S.106 monies should be deferred, pending further details about this complex issue, which the Head of Planning Services might provide.

Jane Fenwick, Acting Chairman of the Transport Strategy Working Group, advised that her group would shortly be examining TWBC's draft Parking Strategy, adding that a draft response to that would be circulated to Town Forum members as quickly as possible.

8. PRESENTATION BY CLLR SCOTT ON ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEMS

Cllr David Scott gave a presentation to the Town Forum on how he felt the problems of the town's congestion might be alleviated. After much research, he had decided to focus on existing and proven technology, basing his proposal on an ULTra driverless pod system, as currently in use at Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport.

Cllr Scott felt that the ideal initial location for such a system was the Pembury Road route into town, with loops to the Hospital and other locations.

- Denise Watts wondered how effective the proposal would be during the peak 'rush hour' periods of the day. Cllr Scott felt that, if the proposed system were single-line, this could double the capacity along that route. He added that he envisaged this working in conjunction with a park and ride system at Tesco in Pembury;
- Stephen Bowser enquired how the required car parking capacity could be met. Cllr Scott advised that his proposal assumed car park space for 320 vehicles. If more were needed, he added, then there was capacity at linked locations for this;

- Stephen Bowser asked whether Public Works Loans Board funding might be appropriate for this scheme. Cllr Scott advised that this was just one possible source amongst a number of others, which were being investigated.

In summing up, the Chairman sought the Town Forum's views on whether the draft motion, set out in the agenda papers, should be supported. (For clarification, Cllr Scott advised that this was just the first paragraph on page 27; the remainder of that page, he advised, was intended to provide clarification.)

RESOLVED – The Town Forum encourages Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent County Council to carry out an assessment of driverless or other innovative transport systems for Tunbridge Wells as a means of easing the impact of traffic congestion on Tunbridge Wells.

9. WORKING GROUPS

Update reports were made from the working groups as follows:

Water in the Wells Working Group – The Chairman, Michael Holman, had circulated an update paper with the agenda, covering a number of general issues as well as his usual site-specific report. Bearing in mind the time pressures at the meeting, he left Town Forum members to read the paper at their leisure and to ask him any specific questions in between meetings, if they so wished.

RESOLVED – That the progress report be accepted.

Leisure, Culture and Tourism Working Group – In the absence of the Chairman of this working group, one of its members - Dorothea Holman - made a brief verbal report. She referred to a mis-quote by the Kent & Sussex Courier over the work the group had been undertaking in respect of TWBC's re-freshed tourism website. She said that she had not been critical of TWBC's initiative, adding that she and her group colleagues had been very grateful for the Town Forum member feedback provided to date. Mrs Holman added that issues raised had already been corrected and that this work was continuing. She invited Forum members to submit any further comments they wished to, as soon as possible.

RESOLVED – That the progress report be accepted.

Transport Strategy – Jane Fenwick, acting Chairman of this working group, drew attention to an update report she had provided on the recent work of her fellow group members, set out on page 31 of the agenda.

RESOLVED – That the progress report be accepted.

Planning and Development Strategy – Mark Booker, the recently-appointed Chairman of this working group, drew members' attention to the summary of its recent work, set out on page 33.

Philip Whitbourn, who was leading on the Site Allocations element of the working group's remit, summarised their approach to the forthcoming public consultation stage. Dr Whitbourn's paper, set out on page 35, listed the key points which he and his ad-hoc group would use as a basis for their proposed draft response, to be submitted to TWBC by the deadline of 23 March.

Dr Whitbourn also drew attention to the fact that, on 26 January, TWBC's Planning & Transportation Cabinet Advisory Board would be considering a draft Urban Design Framework Supplementary Planning Document, before its release for formal public

consultation. He felt that its significance was that it covered much that the previous Tunbridge Wells Town Plan group (under the chairmanship of the former Leader of the Council, Bob Atwood) had already studied.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Working groups – The Chairman advised that, following his review of the Town Forum's working groups – undertaken in consultation with all their chairmen – it had been decided that he would like to add to their number, with the formation of one tasked with the remit of 'culture'. He said that further details would be provided later but, in the meantime, he asked for volunteers who would like to sit on this working group to make direct contact with him.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 26 March 2015 at 6.30pm

The meeting concluded at 9pm.

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

WATER IN THE WELLS WORKING GROUP

Progress report for Town Forum Meeting 26 March 2015

A. GENERAL

We would like to make several additional observations concerning the **SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DOCUMENT (SADPD)**.

1. Areas of Change (Policies AL/RTW2, 3 and 4)

Each of the three Policies refers to the provision of public art that might include water features as part of a proposed development. We have been informed by Planning that ‘Water in the Wells will be able to get involved as part of the master planning process that each Policy requires from the developer.’ This is welcome news.

2. Land at Royal Victoria Place (Policy AL/RTW19)

Following representation by Water in the Wells, this policy (formerly AL/RTW17) has been amended to state ‘that public art, which may include water features, shall be provided within the development.’

This too is a significant achievement, for it provides a further policy statement to back up any proposals for a water feature in this key central development.

3. Vale Avenue (Policy AL/RTW3)

This includes a reference to transport improvements: ‘developments shall contribute to transport improvements, to include the A26 (London Road/Vale Avenue junction...)’ This affects the Vale Road/London Road grass triangle, which, although technically part of the Common, has long been in the planners’ sights for refurbishment. It is a prominent site and one we have long considered highly suitable for a water feature.

4. Cultural and Learning Hub

Item 3.36 includes the statement: ‘One of its (TWBC’s) key aims is to secure funding and permission to develop a cultural and learning hub based around the current location of the library, art gallery and museum. This aspiration is included within Policy AL/RTW2.’

We are concerned to ensure that public art in the form of water features will be part of this development too.

B. SITE UPDATES:

1. FIVEWAYS. Work on the first phase of the refurbishment is expected to be completed shortly after Easter. We are seeking a detailed plan showing where the necessary services for an eventual water feature have been installed. A TWBC statement regarding the retention of the Clock is still eagerly awaited.

2. NORTH FARM ROUNDABOUTS. Work is progressing for the installation of ducting on two of the roundabouts (opposite John Lewis and at the entry to Great

Lodge Retail Park). Engineer's drawings and cost estimates have been prepared. We are informed that finance for the ducting is in place.

3. KNIGHTS WOOD. We have had very positive discussions with Dandara and have been shown attractive plans for a major water feature in the square forming part of the entrance. These plans have been well received and are being prepared for formal submission to Planning.

4. ROYAL WELLS PARK. The free school building has reached its maximum height. Sketches of the proposed water feature down the central spine of the development indicate the inclusion of rills, spouts, a cascade and a pool.

5. GROSVENOR AND HILBERT PARK. Pipe-work linking the lake to the dripping wells has been installed, but further progress depends on completion of de-silting in the upper lake. Lower down the valley, several trees have been felled in the wetlands. Despite slower than anticipated progress, Friends of the Park are very positive about the work being done.

6. PANTILES: CHALYBEATE SPRING. The trickle of water has increased in volume and dippers are being sought for the summer. We consider it extremely important that investigations by TWBC and Targetfollow continue so as to establish the cause of the intermittent flow.

7. PANTILES: UNION HOUSE. Dandara held their first public meetings on Tuesday 27 January. Several members of the working Group attended the meeting for stakeholders. Two members subsequently met senior representatives of Dandara to exchange initial thoughts on the development of Union House, in particular how the planned water feature on the Union House site might visually and conceptually be linked to the water feature at the Dandara Knights Wood development. There emerged from this very positive discussion a particularly attractive proposal that would serve to link not only these two water features, but others planned in and around the town. Details in the note at the end of this report,

8. PANTILES: SUSSEX MEWS

We continue to investigate the feasibility of opening up a small section of the culvert containing the Grom Brook and covering it with heavy duty glass to reveal the water flowing below.

NOTE: Attractive water features and water linked public art at key points in and around the town will greatly help to create a sense of shared identity. This sense of shared identity would be greatly enhanced if we could incorporate short texts relating to Tunbridge Wells past and present - water, health, wealth, leisure and pleasure - in each of the features. We would greatly welcome suggestions from Town Forum Members.

Michael Holman (Chairman, 19 March 2015)

LEISURE CULTURE AND TOURISM WORKING GROUP

Report by the Chair

1. Leisure

Mark Booker's report on his work on the Green Network is on the agenda. The Forum owes him a big thankyou for the time and effort he has put into assembling this useful data on walking and cycling routes and identifying opportunities and issues. The project has now been transferred to the Planning and Development Working Group to carry forward. The LCT Working Group remain customers for planned walk-round maps. They warmly support proposals to make it easier for pedestrians to move freely round the town and green spaces.

2. Culture

A new Working Group is to focus on the Cultural Hub, and the future of the Civic Centre complex of buildings. Our 2013 report "*A place of pleasure and resort: Tunbridge Wells and the cultural offer*" offered many suggestions about uses and annexed Dr Whitbourn's conceptual drawings of an evolutionary approach, adapting existing buildings. The Forum warmly welcomed these. His updated drawings are now annexed. Our Working Group believe his practical approach is the right way forward to meet the needs and wishes of local people and visitors to the town, while respecting financial constraints. We suggest the Forum recommends his work as a starting point for the new Working Group.

3. Tourism

It is helpful that the meeting is to be updated on progress on delivering the Destination Management Plan prepared for the Council by consultants to foster local tourism. The Forum report cited above, and its successor "*Tunbridge Wells Souvenirs: what people said*", welcomed this exercise, and supported proposals for structured arrangements to chart a way forward on developing a distinctive Tunbridge Wells image, cooperative commercial initiatives, user friendly information for visitors and cleaning up the street scene.

Annex B summarises the main points in the strategy and action plan approved by Councillors a year ago. That rightly identified that the many tourism and cultural organisations, businesses and local authorities must work collectively to achieve this. As the driving force, an independently-chaired Destination Management Steering Group would set the priorities, inspire and facilitate collaborative action. The Town Forum agreed to be a member of this.

Since then, the Council has taken some useful practical action, notably work to improve the website, help for traders' Christmas shopping campaign, and the Fiveways remodelling. The RTW Retail Forum has a lively website presence, though its members do not meet to discuss and deliver any general initiatives. The Forum have agreed to help identify suitable tourist information points and develop walking itineraries. But it is unclear what is happening on two key underpinnings of the Action Plan, namely:-

- **Agreement and promulgation of the "shared story"** ie the distinctive Royal Tunbridge Wells brand. Hidden Britain, the organisation with which TWBC were working to develop this went into liquidation in December.
- **The Destination Management Steering Group** designated as the overall facilitator, has so far not got off the ground.

We hope to hear at this meeting how both these important problems are being addressed, so we have the needful context and sense of direction for Forum efforts to foster local tourism.

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Destination Management Plan proposals and Action Plan (approved by TWBC April 2014)

Main Points

Vision for 2020: To be widely recognised as an ideal short break destination at the centre of the High Weald offering great attractions and cultural activity and the highest quality environment to enjoy. Tourism businesses will be working together well, developing and promoting the visitor offer with expertise and imagination. They and their local suppliers will be prospering and job opportunities at all levels will be growing

1. Priorities:

- identify and communicate essence of the place- contemporary historic town deep in High Weald and Garden of England setting - as a “shared story”
- develop all- round visitor offer to encourage them to stay longer/explore more
- modern information plan making it easy to plan/book/make the most of the visit on arrival
- strengthen networks of collaboration and innovation in the tourism and leisure sector

2. Target markets

- professional couples and friends
- active empty nesters
- special interest groups
- pure indulgence

3 Product development needed :

- research and consultation with local interests about “Shared Story” and toolkit for all providers to use
- comprehensive visitor information plan embracing website, printed guides, maps, leaflets, signage, plaques.
- enhanced high visibility shopping and cultural offer

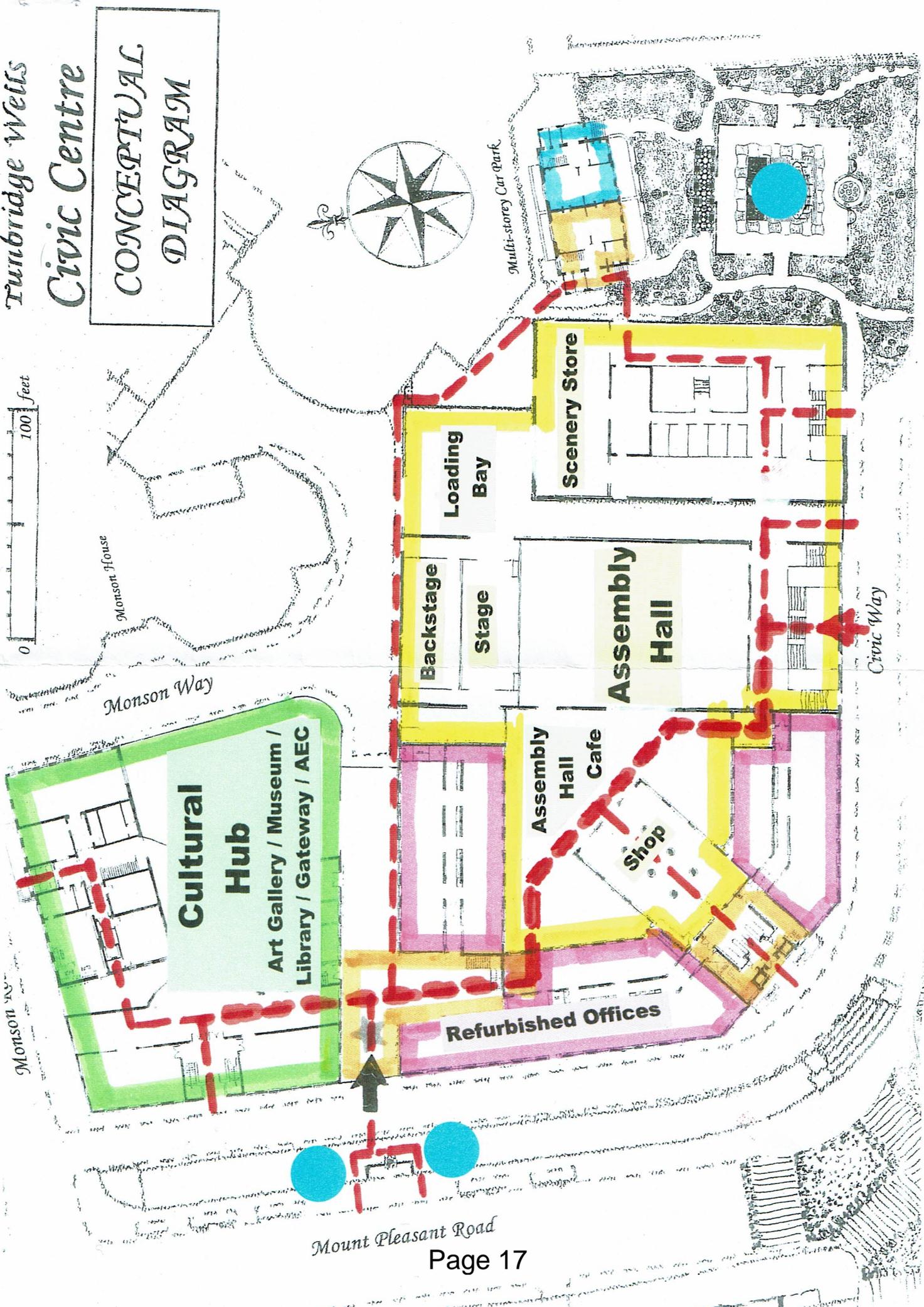
4. Collaboration

- Destination Management Steering Group with independent Chairman, and members drawn from commercial, local authority and other relevant local interests to oversee, prioritise and provide impetus. Also to develop tourist itineraries, hold periodic tourism networking meetings, build contacts and joint activity with relevant interests beyond Borough boundary.

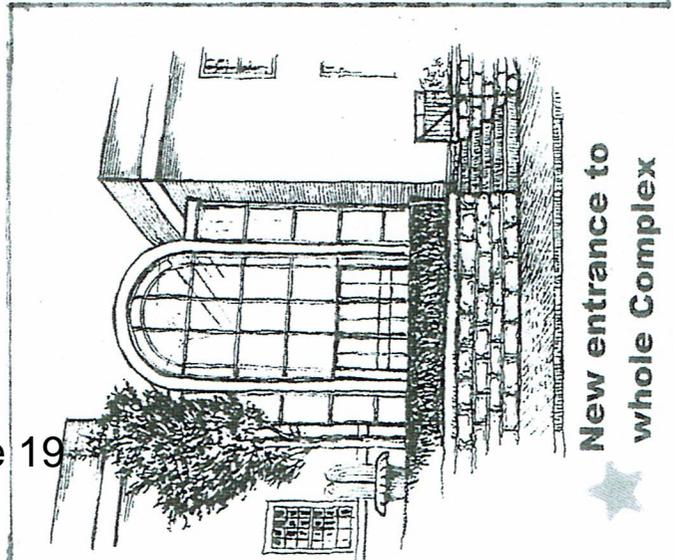
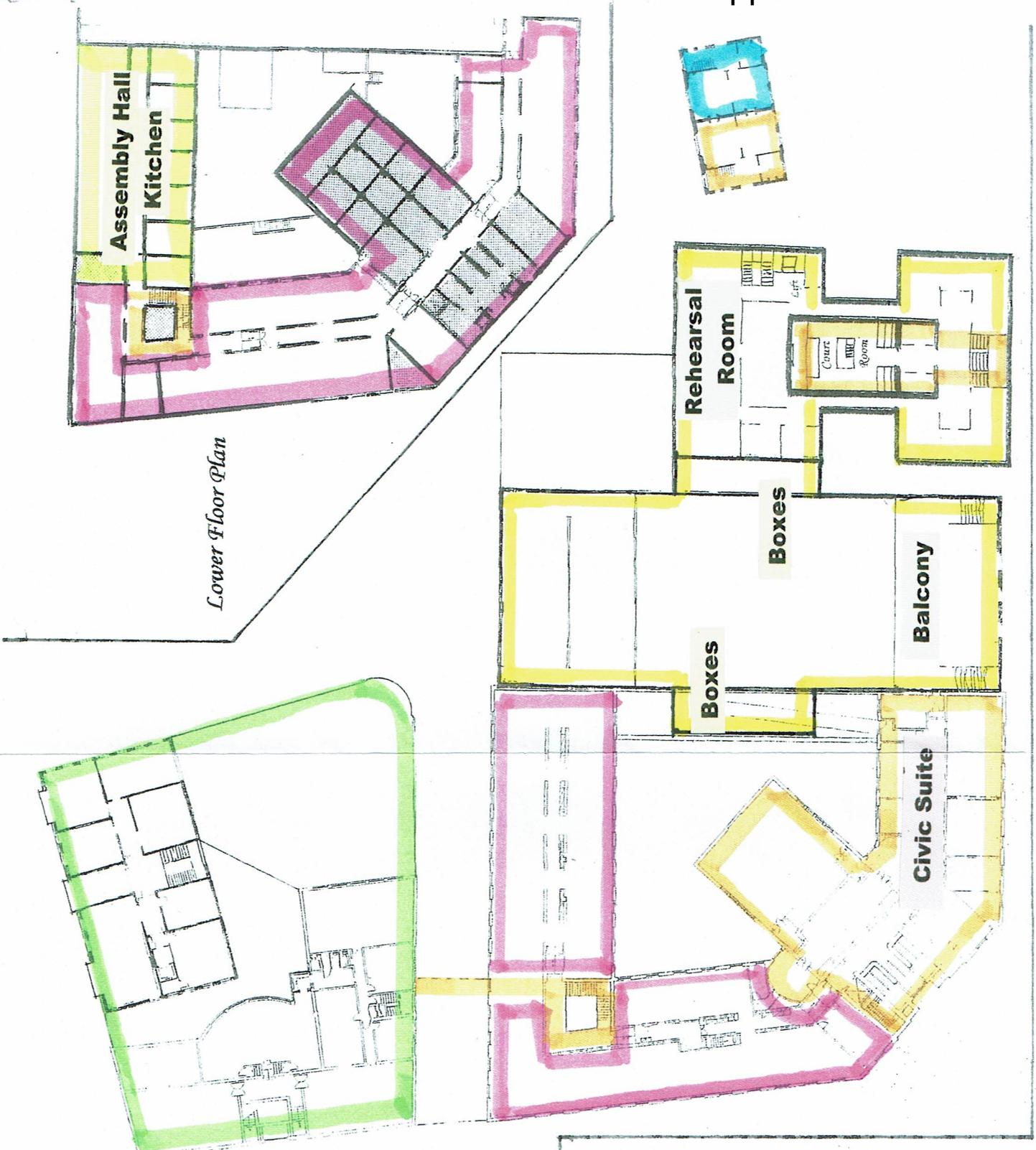
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Tunbridge Wells
Civic Centre

CONCEPTUAL
DIAGRAM



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Report from the Transport Working Group of the Town Forum – March 2015

1. **Draft Parking Strategy:** The Transport Working Group has spent the past 6 weeks preparing a response for the Town Forum on this strategy. This document is attached to these papers and will be explained at the meeting. We undertook research locally including visiting all the TWBC car parks in RTW and two new ones in Sevenoaks to compare facilities. We also researched best parking practice around the country and also looked at samples of the 250+ on line responses to see the parking experiences of residents and businesses in Tunbridge Wells.. Our thanks go to Stephen Boswer for the 'number crunching' included in the response to demonstrate our case. Consultation closed on Sunday 15th March and the Town Forum's response was submitted on time both as a document and on-line.
2. **Planning and Transportation Cabinet Advisory Committee:** Meeting held on Monday 16th March, attended by Working Group members who successfully argued that the Committee should defer its decision on the new payment system installed at the Great Hall Car Park on trial before extending it to the other car parks until the views of the public in the Parking Strategy consultation have been considered. The Committee decided to extend the trial period to allow this to take place.
3. **Joint Transportation Board** 20th April: We have requested an agenda item to be included on Carrs Corner roundabout.
4. **Public Transport Forum** 1 April 2015: Will be attended by a Working Group Member.
5. **Carrs Corner:** At the request of a candidate in the local council elections, Peter Perry gave a briefing on the history of the Carrs Corner roundabout and highlighted its continuing dangers.

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Tunbridge Wells Town Forum Planning and Development Working Group

Update report for the meeting on 26th March 2015: Agenda item 10 (d)

The most pressing task of the Working Group since the last TF meeting has been discussion within the ad hoc working group chaired by Dr Philip Whitbourn to agree written representations to be submitted on the TWBC Submission Draft Site Allocations Development Plan Document by the 23rd March consultation deadline. The Site Allocations DPD identifies a large number of sites in the town to meet the remaining growth scheduled under the current Local Plan which runs to 2026.

Submission Draft Site Allocations DPD

The Submission Draft Site Allocations DPD opened for formal consultation on 9th February and TWBC's Planning Policy Manager, Jean Marshall, gave a detailed and informative presentation on the Draft to our last meeting. Working Group members attended a workshop session on the Submission Draft hosted by TWBC on 3rd February and participated in a number of meetings of the ad hoc working party to prepare a response on behalf of the Town Forum. It was agreed that, on this occasion, the Tunbridge Wells Civic Society would enter a separate representation.

At this stage in the process, representations may be made only in support of the proposed allocations or against them if they are felt to be "unsound" ie that they are not positively prepared, unjustified, inconsistent with national policy or not likely to be effective. The scope for further Town Forum comment at this stage was therefore quite limited. Furthermore, the format of the formal consultation process restricted the scope for extensive comment.

The ad hoc working party therefore limited its representations to some key allocations and issues in line with the report made by Philip Whitbourn to the last Town Forum meeting on 22nd January. In particular, our representations assert:

- that the absence of a clear role for TWBC in the development of masterplans for the proposed areas of change such as Crescent road/ Church Road is unsound and that this particular site should be split into two separate components, the Civic Complex and the remaining parts of the site including the multi storey car park;
- that retailing is changing at such a pace that it is unsound to propose definite figures for any phasing of additional retail space beyond 2021 and that such future allocations should become the subject of 5 yearly review. With regard to the period prior to 2021 our representations would favour an extension of RVP rather than any retail development on the area of the Civic Complex;
- that the mapping of the Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas of the town is unsound, not being in conformity with the NPPF: An alternative is proposed.

The full representations will be available for viewing on the TWBC website.

Draft Urban Design Framework

TWBC has published its draft Urban Design Framework Supplementary Planning Document which is likely to go out to formal consultation at the end of April. Members of the Working Group attended a presentation of the draft to the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board on 26th January by the main author of the draft, TWBC's Urban Designer, Alan Legg. The draft sets out a number of key issues and principles concerning the townscape and public realm, its distinctive quarters, movement framework and street hierarchies. It then sets out 16 proposals for co-ordinated improvements to specific areas of the town, including Carr's Corner, St John's Gateway, Mount Pleasant/ Church Road, Crescent Road and the area around the railway station. Our first reactions were very positive as to the concepts but with some doubts as to the availability of finance for the proposed improvements. A further report will be made to the Town Forum in May.

Pantiles regeneration

Members of the Working Group attended an open evening on 27th January hosted by Dandara, the developers of Knights' Wood, who have acquired Union House with a view to its complete redevelopment. Their representatives adopted the same approach as in the early stages of the Knights' Wood development of engaging with the general public to gather a wide range of views before coming back with any definite proposals. However, it seemed that they would prefer a development which involved the complete demolition of Union House rather than its refurbishment, a policy which the Working Group would tend to support. The Working Group would also favour a large residential element on this site, based on buildings of high quality on this key approach to the town centre, while at ground and lower ground floor levels a variety of business uses might be contemplated in preference to the existing retail use, which has always had problems of commercial viability. Representations along those lines have been submitted to TWBC as part of the Site Allocations consultation mentioned above.

Mark Booker

Chairman Planning and Development Working Group