

**TOTTON TOWN CENTRE: SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE****1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Corporate Plan "The Heart of the Forest" commits the Council to the enhancement of the District's town centres, to assist their essential role as local community and commercial centres. The adopted New Forest District Local Plan includes a similar objective. Specifically in relation to Totton, the local plan contains policies aimed at improving the town centre's appearance and helping to maintain or improve its commercial vitality against out-of-centre competition.
- 1.2 To explain how development proposals can enhance the town centre, and to set out environmental improvements in more detail, the local plan indicates that the Council will prepare **supplementary planning guidance**.
- 1.3 At the heart of the local plan's proposals for Totton are significant changes to the town centre's transport infrastructure, including its principal road network. The Council has therefore collaborated with Hampshire County Council in:
- commissioning from external consultants in 1997 draft proposals demonstrating how the local plan's proposed improvements might be achieved
  - undertaking in 2000 a programme of in-depth community consultation to clarify local aspirations
  - securing a bid for Government funding for town centre improvements through the Hampshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) (£0.5m 2002-2006)
  - developing a package of broader-based proposals which take account of the outcome of the 1997 and 2000 consultations
  - integrating into this process the resources, both financial and professional, of the County Council's Regeneration of Older Urban Areas (ROUA) initiative.
  - Committing £102,000 of NFDC capital investment to the scheme
- 1.4 The District Council have played a key role in developing the latest proposals, which aim to meet the objectives of the local plan, the local transport plan and the ROUA initiative as well as the aspirations of the local community. The task has been undertaken through a steering group of staff from the County Council, the County Council's term consultants Atkins, the District Council and Totton and Eling Town Council, working in consultation with elected members of the three authorities and reporting to the joint county/district South West Hampshire Transport Panel.
- 1.5 The proposals were set out in September 2002 in the form of a public exhibition and an illustrated report "Totton Town Centre - Urban Design Framework - A Guide for Change and Development (Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance)". The results of wide-ranging public consultation on these proposals were reported on 4 March 2003 to the Transport Panel, which accepted a joint recommendation to seek
- from the County Council, the further development of the proposals and inclusion of appropriate funding in its capital programme from 2004/5 onwards
  - from this Council, the adoption of the Urban Design Framework as supplementary planning guidance.

## 2 THE CONSULTATION PROPOSALS

- 2.1 All members of the Council were supplied with a copy of the draft Urban Design Framework when it was published in September 2002. Its key provisions are:
- A set of principles within which all development and change can be designed.
  - A framework through which all development (large and small), can be designed to contribute towards the shared objectives for a better town centre.
- 2.2 Specific proposals are drawn from both this and those items already contained within the local plan. They include:
- I. A transport strategy that reduces the negative impacts of excessive traffic (particularly heavy delivery vehicles), reconnects pedestrian and cycle links, improves the ability to cross roads and offers opportunities for improved public transport.
  - II. Creating a new pedestrian space in the heart of the shopping core with new buildings opening onto the space and a raft of measures to connect the existing precinct space, Asda, the Civic Centre car parks and the Water Lane area of shops.
  - III. Creating an improved environment for this area with a strongly identifiable character through a bold line of street trees, improved paving, street furniture, hard and soft landscape etc.
  - IV. Providing a more pleasant environment, and entrance to, the Rumbridge Street and Old Totton area through repaving, new street furniture, improved lighting, hard and soft landscape etc.
  - V. Several specific building opportunities, such as those at Water Lane/Ringwood Road, Batts Corner and the Precinct.
  - VI. A long term proposal to relocate the station to the town's heart, which by redeveloping the underused land adjacent to the railway as a transport interchange\* proposes to make this area a destination in its own right and thus improve the connection between the old and north parts of the town centre.
- \*Including; rail, bus, taxi, cycle and pedestrian access as well as allowing a mix of integral commercial development
- 2.3 In order to achieve these proposals some specific alterations to the road network are proposed through the transport strategy maps (chapter 4) and the likely environmental changes are sketched as urban design plans (chapter 5).

- 2.4 Copies of the document were sent to all the persons and organisations listed in **Annex 1** and six weeks were allowed for comment. The public exhibition was held at the following locations, starting at the beginning of the consultation period:

Totton Civic Centre	4 days staffed (including evening and Saturday)
“ “ “	1 week unstaffed
Totton College	1 week unstaffed
Hounslow School	1 evening staffed (school open evening).

The document was made available for sale, price £1, at all staffed exhibitions.

- 2.5 Invitations to the exhibition were sent to all traders within the town centre. Also invitations, by way of a leaflet drop, were issued to all addresses in Totton. Publicity for the event included several press and local radio articles and the draft SPG has been made available on the Council's web site.

### 3 RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Some respondents to the consultation made use of a simple comment form provided with the Urban Design Framework. Visitors to the exhibition at the Civic Centre also received a questionnaire inviting them to rate the proposals against a number of objectives.
- 3.2 The response to both parts of the consultation is summarised in the report at **Annex 2**, which was originally tabled at a special meeting of County Council and New Forest District Council members of the Transport Panel on 28 January. The report also refers to
- a petition with over 1,000 signatures which opposed the loss of car parking space in the Library Road (Precinct west) car park
  - a survey of local residents undertaken by the District councillor for Copythorne South, Councillor Tipp.
- 3.3 A full list of the comments received appears at **Annex 3**, together with officers' response to each one. Where officers consider that a comment justifies a change to the Urban Design Framework, this is indicated by an asterisked note.
- 3.4 As can be seen, the questionnaire responses show a large measure of support for the overall package of proposals. However the comments raise a number of more specific issues which have had to be addressed. Five issues stand out from the comments:
- the loss of parking spaces, particularly the Library Road (Precinct west) car park
  - increased congestion at the Ringwood Road / Maynard Road roundabout
  - details of the traffic management measures proposed in the Testwood Lane area to prevent "rat-running"
  - continuing delays to all road users caused by the railway and the resulting severance between the two parts of the town centre
  - the need for more effective control of heavy commercial vehicles (HCVs).

## 4 COMMENT ON THE RESPONSE

- 4.1 After the mixed reaction to the previous 1997 proposals, the widespread support for the present package is very much to be welcomed. There are however a number of issues, which require further work and this needs to be recognised in the Urban Design Framework.
- 4.2 The revised version of the Urban Design Framework which appears at **Annex 4** incorporates all the required changes identified in Annex 3, together with updating and minor editing changes. In particular it includes the following (paragraph numbers in brackets):
- A commitment to examine further the five issues referred to in paragraph 3.4 above (4.0.4)
  - A commitment to the production of a parking strategy for the town centre and explanation of how it should work (4.8)
  - A requirement for the Ringwood Road – Salisbury Road link proposal to be fully assessed for its impact on air quality and noise levels and accompanied if necessary by appropriate traffic management measures to deal with “rat-running” traffic in adjacent residential roads (3.3.2 & 4.7.1)
  - Replacement of the three maps on pages 22 to 24 detailing traffic management measures by diagrams showing the intent whilst allowing flexibility for the precise detail to be resolved as each area scheme is designed
  - A commitment to ensure the best position and alignment for proposed new railway bridges for pedestrians and cyclists (4.1.0)
  - An explanation of why there is no proposal for a road bridge (3.3.1)
  - Guidance on dealing with air quality issues in the vicinity of the Junction Road railway crossing (4.6.4).

## 5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The main object of the supplementary planning guidance is a significant enhancement of the town centre environment.

## 6 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 Throughout the development of the proposals officers have undertaken appropriate technical consultations as well as regularly briefing the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder, the Chairman of the Economy and Planning Review Panel and local members.
- 6.2 Local members, who have been involved throughout, have expressed strong support for the proposals. However, one Councillor has raised very specific concerns over car parking and these are dealt with in annex 2 page 16 (paragraph 3.7.2).

This and other specific concerns raised by members are to be the subject of further detailed assessments, design and consultation as set out in annex 4 (The A3 SPG document - paragraph 4.0.4).

- 6.3 At an informal meeting of the South West Hampshire Transportation Strategy Panel, local members, together with County Councillors, again expressed strong support for taking the town centre proposals forward. They also agreed that a bridge or tunnel to cross the railway was not viable and should not form part of the proposals. This decision is reflected in the revisions to the SPG under paragraph 3.3.1.

## **7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Council's capital programme includes £100,000 for environmental improvements in Totton town centre. This sits alongside an allocation by Hampshire County Council of £350,000 through the ROUA programme and likely future allocations in its transport capital programme. The adoption of the supplementary planning guidance will provide a framework for the best use of these resources.
- 7.2 The Economy and Planning Review Panel has expressed the view that further resources will be needed as the proposals evolve.

## **8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 This guidance has been prepared with issues of community safety at the forefront of design. The approach, set out in the Council's own SPG 'Design for Community Safety' has been employed throughout. Several of the Guiding Principles are put forward specifically to achieve the ideal set out therein:

*"Active use of streets and public spaces by the responsible majority is the best means of restricting opportunities for the anti-social minority."*

Members of the steering group were consulted prior to the introduction of CCTV cameras. It is intended that final detailed designs will take these into account although some cameras have been designed ready to be moved and acceptance that streets and spaces will not necessarily remain clear is needed so that an integrated approach to crime prevention can be adopted.

## **10 RECOMMENDATION**

- 10.1 That the Cabinet adopt the revised Urban Design Framework (as set out in Annex 4 to this report) as supplementary planning guidance to the New Forest District Local Plan.**

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### **Background papers:**

Totton Town Centre - Urban Design  
Framework: Consultation Draft  
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