

# WINCHELSEA TOWN PLAN

## **RECORD OF A MEETING BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND THOSE OF THE NATIONAL TRUST HELD ON MONDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2004 AT THE MT OFFICES, MILL LANE, WINCHELSEA**

Those present: Mr Garry Churchill (NT Area Office, Scotney Castle), Ms Caroline Binder (NT Local Office Winchelsea), Mr Richard Comotto, Mr Dominic Manning, Mr Martin Hogg.

The meeting opened at 1400. Mr Richard Comotto thanked the National Trust for the opportunity of the meeting and explained the programme of work to produce a Town Plan for Winchelsea and the progress made to date. The work of the five working groups so far was explained. It was the Steering Group's intention to hold a New Year consultation to discuss progress with the plan with members of the community and other interested parties, including the Trust. This meeting was intended to be exploratory.

Mention was made of the work to be done on the sustainability of the Winchelsea community, covering such issues as affordable housing, the creation of additional work places and the possibilities for community recycling schemes, including composting 'green organic material'. Opportunities for planting additional trees were also being sought. Among the traffic and transport issues being examined was a concern for improved access for pedestrians and cyclists on the northern side of the Town, which was also relevant to improved visitor access.

The NT was asked how it saw its relationship with the Town. The NT described its links:

- On proposals for the use of its land --- eg the tennis court and New Hall car park --- it sought to respond to the wishes of the community if possible, but it would only act where there was a clear consensus in the Town. In this, its watchword was 'tact'. It could offer little or no finance because of its charity status. While the NT was a substantial local landowner, the NT should not be expected to assume the role of a local squirearchy.
- The NT was trying to develop contacts and working relations within the Town and emphasised the NT's policy of not working in isolation from local communities. It was suggested that the NT might like to participate in an exhibition by local groups planned for the next Town Meeting. This was welcomed by the NT.
- The NT had consulted residents on its local Property Management Plan.
- The NT had established a physical presence in Winchelsea in the form of the local office in Mill Road, which covered the NT's interests from Fairlight to Appledore.
- The NT was planning to hold another Open Day after Easter 2005.
- A newsletter on local activities had been produced.
- The NT had put up notices on local noticeboards to give advance notice of its work, eg the new fencing in Wickham Rock Lane.
- The NT Warden had started a 'guardianship' project at Pewis Wood with the school, which was part of a sponsored national programme. The local project focussed on conservation in the local environment, particularly in local woodlands.

The NT was asked about the role of the Rye and Winchelsea National Trust Association. This is an independent group that support the Trust.

The NT was asked about the proposal for an interpretation centre at Crutches Farm given the distance of the site from Winchelsea. It was no longer envisaged that there would be an interpretation centre at Crutches Farm. The NT had engaged consultants to investigate the feasibility of developing its unused buildings in Winchelsea, particularly the farm buildings at Crutches Farm. A report was expected in the Spring. A range of educational, retail and environmental uses were being considered.

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The NT was also looking at ways to enhance the appreciation of Winchelsea. Two possibilities under consideration were the creation of public access to Blackfriars Barn and the erection of interpretation boards. It was agreed by all any visitor sites or interpretation boards should be sensitive to the natural and town environment and not intrusive.

There was a discussion on the possible use by the Community Office of new technologies such as audio wands or PDA's as ways of disseminating information to visitors about Winchelsea. The NT would be interested in being included in such projects.

Mention was made of the possibility of funding for a monument produced by local craftsmen at the site of the former windmill. Ideas could be collected and tested in the Town Plan. The NT were interested.

The NT was asked if there was space on its property for a community composting project. DM explained the idea. The Cricket Field allotments were suggested.

The NT was also asked to provide sites for the replanting of trees.

The idea was flagged up of a footpath from Sea Road across the the base and up the side of Strand Hill. This would have to be carefully designed so as not to be intrusive, but would provide a much needed pedestrian route between Winchelsea and Winchelsea Beach.

In response to a suggestion by the NT, it was agreed to consult with Mason Palmer at Wickham Manor Farm on issues of mutual concern.

It was agreed that there would be an opportunity for a further meeting with the NT after Easter 2005.

The meeting closed at 15:30.

*31<sup>st</sup> January 2005*