

WINCHELSEA TOWN PLAN

RECORD OF A STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2004 AT THE COURT HALL, WINCHELSEA

The meeting opened at 19:00 with Mr Richard Comotto in the Chair. There were nine members present including two parish councillors (list attached). The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee had been called in order to review the work to date of the working groups and to plan the programme of work over the next three months.

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies had been received from Mrs Siobhan Hart-Jones, Mr David Vaughan and Mr Melvyn Pett.

2. Minutes of the Third Steering Committee Meeting:

The minutes of the Steering Committee meeting on Friday, 1 October 2004 were considered. There was one amendment to note that Mrs Siobhan Hart-Jones had attended part of the meeting. The minutes were then approved.

3. Matters arising:

A reply to our enquiry had been received from East Sussex County Council, regarding access to recent data on road traffic movements on the A259 through Winchelsea. It had been confirmed that there was no data from the recent speed monitoring exercises on the A259 and on German Street. While some data had been collected by the monitoring device on the A259, this was said to be illustrative and incomplete and therefore was not a valid measure of traffic movements.

4. Recent developments on Town Planning Issues

Mobile telephone mast:

The planning application by Orange for a mobile telephone mast proposed for the verge of Roberts Hill had been rejected on the advice on the Highways Authority. It was understood that the National Trust had rejected a proposal to construct a mast on their land used by the Bowls Club. Alternative sites were being sought. Mr Les Parker had been asked by the Parish Council to establish a small working group to recommend a more appropriate site. Orange would be invited to consult with this group.

Traffic signs

The Highways Authority of ESCC had removed a number of unnecessary road signs in Winchelsea. This was welcomed as a great improvement. The Highways Agency had yet to finish their programme of sign removal on the A259.

Terms of reference for the Working Groups

Chairpersons were asked to ensure that terms of reference for their working groups were up to date and to lodge copies with the Secretary as soon as possible in the New Year.

5. Reports from the Working Groups:

Townscape and Landscape Working Group

The working group had met on 18 December and had discussed a number of key issues. Mr Haddock had produced a paper which would be circulated.

Traffic and Transport Working Group

The working group was continuing its investigations in four key areas: public transport, road traffic routes and speeds, safe routes to school and work, and long term strategic transport issues. Reports would be generated in the New Year.

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A259/A2070 Consultation

A submission to the Highways Authority for the A259/A2070 Consultation had been prepared after consultation and a number of contributions and comments by the deadline of 12 December 2004. The submission had included proposals for major regional transport development further inland from the coast, which had originally been submitted by the Wider View Group in the mid-1990s. Recent progress in the financing of the proposed Bexhill/Hastings Link Road might well lead to renewed pressure for further development of the A259 through the Brede Valley.

Other consultations

There had been initial contact with East Sussex County Council over the Local Transport Plan and cyclepath proposals. Further meetings were expected shortly. Concern had been expressed over the prospects for the Rye and District Community Transport services in view of the recent decision by central government to withdraw subsidies to such organisations.

In view of the overlap of interests between Winchelsea and neighbouring villages and towns it was proposed to consult over transport issues with the Rye Council and the Rye Partnership early in the New Year.

Community Working Group

The working group had carried out further work on the refinement of its questionnaire to be issued as part of an information gathering exercise. In addition the working group was to contact other local organisations for insight and information on the extent and nature of Winchelsea's role as a 'service hub'. The information gathering exercises were scheduled to be launched in the New Year.

Recreation and Youth Working Group

A consultation meeting had been held with the local primary school and there had been a useful discussion of linkages between the school and the Town, bearing in mind the small number of pupils who were resident in the Town. Currently the school had a capacity of 150 children of which less than 10% were from the Town, though a much larger proportion came from Winchelsea Beach. It was felt that there were overlapping interests. There was a need for stronger linkages and some opportunities were identified and would be pursued in the New Year.

The working group was still pursuing sources of funds for the proposed 'kick-about' area near to the 'play area'. Several grants had been secured and a commitment for funding had been obtained from Icklesham Parish Council in late 2004. However disbursement of the grant had been delayed and was now thought to be in doubt. If this were to be withdrawn, this would have important consequences for the other grant allocations, which required some 'matching' funds.

Some equipment in the 'play area' had been declared unsafe and had been removed by the Parish Council. There was an opportunity to submit parents' views on the playground and the working group was asked to coordinate a submission to the Council and possibly to arrange a public meeting if this was felt to be necessary.

Tourism and Local Business Working Group

The activities of the working group were currently in transition as the support from the High Weald Area of Natural Beauty/ESCC Office in Flimwell was changing in format. The group would shortly be restructured. Tourism promotion work would continue through ESCC and SE Tourism and a Visitor Information Guide would be launched in early 2005.

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The working group was considering a proposal for a 'landscape feature' utilising local craft and materials possibly at the former site of the windmill on Iham Hill and a 'risk assessment' of Spring Steps was underway by the East Sussex Access Forum, which it was hoped would lead to redevelopment and possibly some rerouting of the path at the bottom of the hill, where it joined Tanyard's Lane. The working group was also pursuing improvements in local rights of way under Icklesham Parish Council.

6. Finance

The Chairman reported that a bank account was in process of being opened with the Alliance and Leicester; the Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and one other member would be signatories. It was hoped that the funds remaining from the Winchelsea Residents Association, which had been left in the care of the Winchelsea Corporation, would be made available to further the preparation of the Town Plan. However no agreement had yet been obtained to that effect.

An outline budget had been prepared in anticipation of the future work programme and to facilitate applications for financial assistance. This was tabled for information. Provision had been made for the printing of documentation and reports of the draft and final versions of the Town Plan. Provision had been made for the expenses of the planned public consultation.

The Chairman suggested that it might be necessary to hire a consultant to help in the design of the consultation given the lack of expertise and the need for innovative methods if all sections of the community were to be involved. He suggested asking a local consultant to talk to the Steering Committee and seeking some idea of the likely cost of using a consultant. Concern was expressed by the Secretary as to the use of a consultant and doubts expressed as to the transparency of the process of hiring a consultant. A frank exchange of views followed.

The Chairman said that applications for financial assistance were being prepared and would be submitted to Awards for All, Action in Rural Sussex, the East Sussex Strategic Partnership and Rother District Council. To these ends, it would be necessary to compile details of all meetings held to date, including dates and times of meetings, names of those attending, start and finish times, agendas and minutes. Members of the Steering Committee were asked to compile their records and submit these to the Chairman.

7. Targets and schedule for future work

It was planned to prepare and publish a newsletter about progress with the preparation of the Town Plan early in the New Year. Each working group would be required to submit a brief account of its work to date (one paragraph for each) and to outline its future activities.

The Chairman said that it was time to begin work on drafting the final report of the Town Plan. This might begin with the material being gathered together for the planned consultation with the local community scheduled for February 2005.

Communication and consultation

Copies of all Steering Committee agendas and minutes were to be lodged in the Community Office where they would be available to the public. It was hoped that an extension of the existing website '*Winchelsea.net*' would shortly be available for this purpose.

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8. Consultation 2005

It was planned to hold a two-day consultation on the Town Plan in February 2005 at the New Hall. Precise dates had still to be agreed. It was proposed that this would be based around a large-scale plan of the Town to be constructed on the floor.

Any other business

The date of the next meeting was agreed; this would be Wednesday, 26 January 2005 at 1900. There was no other business. The meeting closed at 2130.

*Winchelsea Town Plan Steering Committee
2nd February 2005*