

Subject: Andover 5 year Plan and the Masterplan

I would like to comment on the Andover development plans, both the 5 year plan (so far as it impacts Andover town) and the Andover Masterplan. I have read current resume of the revised 5 year plan and the Masterplan document.

calls for; 'redevelopment of Andover should result in it being attractive, vibrant and prosperous', it should 'encourage visitors to linger', 'less retail and focus more on social activities', and 'take account of recent developments in retail'. He also mentions tourism and asks the questions; 'revised tourism policy to be more flexible for new tourism attractions' and 'a policy to be more supportive of innovative proposals'. I cannot argue with any of these objectives, but the Masterplan, which one would assume adds detail to the objectives, does not seem to be related in any way.

The Masterplan is full of buzz words; unique and independent, green and ethical, social and inclusive, and so on which is fine but the actual plan seems to entirely revolve around creating more green spaces, more high quality public spaces, more independent shops, low cost pop up shops and spaces, improving the so called 'lanes', more space around the Guildhall, improving 'access' to the river Anton and for a green spine from the river towards the church. This may well make the place more visually attractive but it will not make it anymore 'vibrant' or 'prosperous' and certainly not attract tourists because there is no tourist attraction in the plan. Currently Andover has no central children's play facility that would attract and encourage families to 'linger' in the town and the Masterplan fails to address this simple but effective means of attracting people.

Perhaps the most significant (and expensive) part of the Masterplan is demolition of the Chantry Centre, moving the Lights into the re-built centre and major road alterations around Vigo Road to aid the creation of the 'green spine'. The green spine will just be another pleasant walkway and surely cannot justify the suggested road changes and vast expense.

Demolition of the Chantry Centre to build new shops, even if they are 'pop up' or 'more flexible', is inappropriate without a plan to attract more people. There will simply be no takers for these shops which is the problem we already have. Re-building of the Chantry Centre would only be justified to move the Lights into the centre to release the land to allow the college to expand. In which case the centre would still need shops but the same conundrum exists, that of lack of shoppers. The Masterplan says that people have indicated that they want more quality shops, but those same people also shop on line and realistically Andover will not be able to attract those sorts of shops.

The fact is that shops and green/public spaces on their own will not make Andover 'attractive, vibrant and prosperous' or attract tourists. At best the Masterplan can be said to make Andover more visually attractive but otherwise it simply does not change the current situation.

So what can be done? Perhaps I can suggest a plan that approaches the problem from a different perspective and may go some way to achieve Councillor Adams-King's objectives.

Alternative Plan

1. Abandon the costly green spin, alterations at Vigo road and wholesale demolition of The Chantry Centre.

2. Demolish the old Magistrates Court, widen the river to create a shallow lagoon with a small waterfall and slope the grassed area outside the Leisure Centre down to the lagoon to create a paddling area for families and children. Create a play area (slides, swings etc) on the car park to the side of the Magistrates Court. This should be free and an example of both facilities can be seen on Chilbolton Common and playing fields. The Leisure Centre could also add occasional extra activities in the area. The area could be called a 'Tropical Leisure Beach' and made to resemble such. This would be a titled, identifiable, free attraction that could be advertised as such that would attract new 'footfall' that would linger and migrate towards the High St. This could go ahead as the first stage of the plan and possibly have the greatest impact. (The Hemmingway plan to modify the 'Gyratory' road near the Magistrates Court would help to distance the 'Beach' area from those roads.)
3. I think most people would agree that the 'Lights' is in need of a new home and this would allow the College to expand. The large shops at the top of the Chantry Centre (ie those running down from the only remaining one, Sports Direct) could be demolished (but not the small shops on the opposite side ie Jenny's cafe side) releasing all the land they occupy plus the car park behind them as the site for the new theatre. The wide area occupied by the table/seating for the Boswell's coffee shop could then be extended all the way down to the road (Chantry St) which would pass the front of the new theatre. This wide boulevard effect would (hopefully) tend to integrate the High St, Chantry Centre, theatre and Leisure Centre/Tropical Beach area more than they are now. This work could be the second phase and could go ahead without disruption to the rest of the town. (Additional note: I suspect that Simply Health is seriously considering their working practices in the light of Covid and the advantages that 'working from home' can have. This may impact their office space requirements such that their building next to the Leisure Centre becomes redundant. This would raise the question of what to do on that site. If the national trend is for less office space then it could be demolished and opened out to be included in the green area around the Leisure Centre/Beach).
4. To further integrate the various parts of the town and add a further 'attraction' a narrow gauge railway could be built to circulate between the various parts of the town. The route might be from the High St, to the Asda car park (visitor coaches?), then back past Wilko's, the Town Mills, past the multi-storey car park to the Beach/Leisure Centre area or perhaps it could also go from the High St through the Chantry Centre. This train could be electric and run by volunteers. In addition a live steam locomotive could be acquired, to normally just be on show, but also actually used on special steam days.
5. To further develop the theme of making Andover an attractive 'visitor town' the Lidl building and associated car park should be acquired. This needs then to be made into a 'living' facility centre where things are happening. One suggestion might be to call it the 'British Sports Car Garage' so it becomes an identifiable attraction that could be advertised. This would of course need to have a small collection of British sports cars but the factor that would make it different to other collections would be that the cars would not be fenced off pristine examples but used cars that can be touched, possible sat in, photographed in and can be seen driving around the car park ie a 'living' museum. Additionally, cars being repaired, engines in pieces would add to the 'garage' feel. Volunteers would run the place and possibly the College could be involved as part of their training courses. If this were to go ahead then collecting the cars now (to be held in storage) would be advisable due to ever

increasing prices and inevitable shortage in the future. This building could hold other engineering associated equipment. In addition to general tourists there are many car and motorcycle enthusiast tour groups who would be attracted to such a facility for a short 'stop off for coffee and a look around'.

6. Many years ago, Andover was an important 'coaching town' and all that remains are what Hemmingway calls the 'Lanes'. These were presumably where coaches pulled up next to hotels and pubs for passengers to 'overnight' or get refreshed before the onward journey. Perhaps this historical feature of the town could be developed into another 'visitor attraction'. This would ideally be set in the High St and one of the 'Lanes' utilised for the purpose. It would require the acquisition an authentic looking Royal Mail coach which is the most iconic vehicle of the period and presumable regularly passed through Andover. A short ride in an authentic looking Royal Mail coach would be a pretty unique attraction, just a horse and cart ride would not do! The additional draw of this type of attraction is that it includes horses, which is an attraction on its own.
7. I suspect from the reading () paper that TVBC council are having second thoughts about the Hemmingway Masterplan in that the plan seems to focus on shops and green spaces whereas () is suggesting 'less retail and more social activities' and even identifies 'tourism' as potential source of visitor to the town. I totally agree with this change of direction and would go further to actively market the town as a tourist destination. We are ideally situated to do this being near to the golden tourist triangle of Winchester/Salisbury/Stonehenge, but we cannot claim to have any attraction sufficient to draw in these people. However we could create a number of unique attractions that together might put us on the tourist map and I have suggested a few. The Masterplan gives us the opportunity to do this if we have the imagination to think outside the box and stop thinking that retail and green spaces are somehow the solution.

