



Summit Successes

Working together for a better town

Reviewing Planning Controls Working Group

The Andover Summit was organised by Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) and held in November 2012. The Summit brought together a range of interested parties to agree a set of priority actions to improve the town. The actions were then taken forward by a set of working groups. The Reviewing Planning Controls Working Group was created to examine the current policies covering the town centre to see if it is possible for it to become a more multi-functional area enabling public services, leisure and housing to sit alongside shops.



The members of the working group are:

- **Paul Jackson**, Head of Planning and Building Service, TVBC (Project Lead)
- **Councillor Karen Hamilton**, TVBC Councillor
- **County Councillor Tony Hooke**, Andover MOT & Servicing
- **Graham Smith**, Planning Policy Manager, TVBC

The following recommendations have been agreed by the working group and are now being developed.

Town centre planning policy reviewed

- TVBC policy has been reviewed to see whether retail change applications have been refused and if so, whether the policy needs relaxing.
 - Research showed that since 2006 a total of 29 applications for a change of use for retail units were received. All but one of the applications were approved. The application refused was due to insufficient evidence.
 - The group confirmed that the current TVBC policy was not having an impact on the alternative use of retail units and was not preventing businesses from setting up in the town.
- The group reviewed how swiftly the Council responds to planning applications in the town centre to understand whether the process is timely and supportive of business.
 - It was confirmed that TVBC generally met all national targets in relation to responding to planning applications.



Signage for businesses

- TVBC is working with Hampshire County Council and will shortly be consulting with local businesses to create finger pointers and communal advertising boards. These will be placed at suitable locations to direct people to businesses off the main street.
- The group is developing a way for the Council to support local businesses in their applications to display signage in the town centre.
 - Duty planning officer hours have been extended from 9am to 1pm Monday to Friday, in both Andover and Romsey, to help and advise businesses in submitting an application to display signage.

Town centre boundary and retail use

- The group reviewed the boundary for the town centre to see whether it is the correct limit for retail use and whether it should be expanded to include more leisure within the town centre.
 - Work to investigate the current town centre boundary is now being undertaken as part of the review of the Local Plan. This will establish whether an expansion of the boundary to the north of the town, to include leisure facilities, is needed.
- The current policy relating to primary use of ground floor units was investigated to see if it needs adjusting to be more flexible to encourage more leisure use, restaurants and night time economy.
 - The group noted that this is being considered as part of the Local Plan review and consultation. It was noted that applications are considered on a case by case basis and that the Council does not have the authority to refuse an application to stop certain types of shops opening (e.g. cannot limit the number of a particular shop).
- A review of planning restrictions on the Chantry Centre opening hours.
 - The review established that there is no restriction from a planning control perspective with regards to the opening hours of the Chantry Centre.

For further information on the work of the Andover Summit please visit our website www.testvalley.gov.uk/andoversummit or call us on **01264 368000**