

MAIDENHEAD TOWN FORUM

TUESDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Philip Love (Chairman), Hari Sharma (Vice-Chairman), Derek Wilson and Charles Hollingsworth

Also in attendance: Councillor David Evans, Councillor Richard Kellaway and Councillor Simon Werner

Officers: Steph James, Wendy Binmore and Russell O'Keefe and Jane Wright

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Derek Sharp and Marius Gilmore.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 5 June 2017 be approved.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed them that it was being recorded.

MAIDENHEAD REGENERATION - JOINT VENTURE

The Chairman introduced the item and explained to the Forum that Maidenhead had experienced two major periods of growth. The first was in 1780 when the first bridge was built, and the second was in 1839 when the Maidenhead Bridge was built. With the coming of Crossrail, Maidenhead was due to experience its third period of growth.

When Crossrail opened in 2019, it was going to take less time to get to Canary Wharf, Bond Street and Heathrow. The electrification of the train line, improvements to the tracks and signally will also significantly improve reliability. This was good news for residents and would increase footfall to the Town. The Royal Borough was home to the 18 top companies and was a town of thriving small and medium sized businesses. The Vitality Index which was an entrepreneurial index, listed Windsor and Maidenhead at the top spot for the second year in a row. The Chairman added that the Borough was in a very privileged position with the redevelopment of four sites which was the largest release of public land. The regeneration was about high quality architecture and design.

The Senior Development Management from Countryside, Zoe gave the Forum a brief overview of Countryside and explained that it was a family run business with two divisions. They prided themselves on their relationships with local authorities and leading on good quality design. They used new architects on each of their projects and used a tender process to keep the designs fresh.

The project in Maidenhead would be run from their West London office which already looked after projects in Slough, Hounslow, Acton, South Oxley and Maidenhead. Acton was a success story as the town was very run down with 80% of residents expressing a desire to

leave the town. Following the redevelopment with the help of Countryside, 94% residents now wanted to stay.

There were four key sites within Maidenhead Town Centre that were to be developed which were West Street, St Clouds Way, Reform Road and York Road. All the sites were to be treated individually but with some cohesion in design between the sites. The redevelopment would provide waterway connections, improve cycle ways and pedestrian connectivity. There would also be new and improved public spaces such as a new civic space / Town Square; new green spaces and pocket parks and improved links to Kidwells Park. Countryside in conjunction with the Royal Borough were also investing in new work spaces with economic uplift, new living and working spaces, apprenticeship schemes and significant construction spending.

Of the new homes to be built, 30% were to be kept as affordable housing, 70% were to be private ownership and there would be an exclusivity period for Maidenhead residents. There would also be shared ownership and affordable renting schemes among the 1,200 new homes being built.

The architect was chosen from Conran and Partners as they had a great vision for the Town Centre regeneration. The architect was from a similar town to Maidenhead and the company had been involved in designing hotels, restaurants, homes and businesses across a range of settings. The company was currently involved in designing the regeneration that was taking place in Portobello Square with a mix of housing types and also refurbishing the Walthamstow Dog Racing Track into residential homes. Conran and Partners were excited to be working with Countryside as they had won several awards and were considered to be a good quality developer; they were also very excited to be working with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

An exhibition of the plans for the Town Centre took place in September 2017 which saw over 700 people view it over three days. A lot of feedback had been received with over 70% of comments very positive. The results of the exhibition were on the Countryside website. There was some negative feedback regarding parking and there were a lot of comments relating to the height of the buildings; as well as on infrastructure and how the joint venture could support more homes. As a team, Countryside and the Royal Borough would be looking at both the negative and the positive feedback and would publish the results.

Countryside had tried to understand the history of the town and what it would be like in the future. There were good East to West connections and there might be an uplift of people who wanted to travel between Maidenhead and London. Maidenhead was changing due to Crossrail which included an uplift in population and an increase in demand for infrastructure. The planning applications had been submitted for the Maidenhead Bowling Club site. Countryside had spent a long time looking at older buildings of Maidenhead that made the Town Centre what it was.

The York Road area public realm quality was not as good as it could be. There were lots of linear Town Centre spaces in Maidenhead, so Countryside were looking into providing a Town Square with fountains, cafes and green spaces. The first design moved to set up the design principles and looked to keep streets as they were but fill in the car parks and make the waterways more of a feature. It would be a predominantly residential area with the Town Hall being in the civic zone. There were lots of different building types with different shops, businesses, offices, tall buildings and shorter buildings.

In introducing green space, Countryside wanted to create a new space between the Town Hall and the library with bars and cafes. There would be two distinct spaces; with proposals to keep St Ives Road as it was, consisting of a mixed development of flats, houses and town houses. Working with the planning department on heights of buildings with the tallest building proposed being 12 storeys high.

The Maidenhead Heritage Centre could be part of the development with planting and sculptures on St Ives Road. Countryside would like activity such as shops and cafes sited on and along the waterways.

With regards to the West Street area, Kidwells Park could be utilised more, but the dual carriageway currently prevented people from using it. Countryside wanted to extend the feel of the park to the other side of the carriageway and build a new crossing. The current subway entrance and exit could be made much more pleasant with a pocket park to extend the feel of the park.

Countryside proposed placing a taller, thinner building at the end of West Street which would complete the look and would help visitors locate the Town Centre. The proposed height for the building was 18 storeys high with offices placed on the ground floor and residential apartments above. There would be no parking for wider Town Centre use, parking would be for residents only; and no parking ratio had yet been agreed.

In response to residents' concerns regarding parking, Councillor David Evans confirmed that the Borough was looking at imaginative parking schemes as not everyone was likely to own a car due to the changing demographic of the area. He added that the Borough was spending £30m on the redevelopment of the car park at the Nicholsons Centre to increase the spaces to 1,500. Russell O'Keefe, Executive Director of Place stated £12m had just been approved towards public parking. There was to be further investment to support parking in the Town Centre which would create an extra 600 spaces. Modelling had taken place to cover all different scenarios with residential ratios up to 1 space per unit and the Borough was looking at evidence of car ownership within the Borough. The evidence had so far suggested that car ownership in the Town Centre was decreasing with the latest date showing 45% of car ownership. The Borough heard clearly the concerns of residents regarding parking but, the regeneration was at an early stage and nothing had been agreed or confirmed yet.

The Executive Director of Place confirmed that cheaper rail fares and car loan schemes were being looked into and the Borough was also looking at car clubs; Countryside were also providing input as they had extensive knowledge of Town Centre parking issues and car ownership.

Zoe from Countryside stated they had done a lot of schemes where there was zero parking available. They had been looking at sustainable travel vouchers and providing bike racks and secured parking for cycles to residents; they were also in the process of forming relationships with car clubs in the area. Countryside had found the demographic for the Town Centre was first time buyers and they were looking to reduce their costs. They needed to help enable people to not need to use their cars. Councillor D. Wilson stated there was space in the evenings for residents to park in multi-storey car parks, which was another option; all options for parking were being explored. Residents' were very concerned about the potential for families to expand and then require multiple cars. They explained that the area was semi-rural unlike London and every 17 year old would want to drive and own their own car. Countryside had carried out a lot of research into car ownership trends using heat maps. The research showed the closer that people lived to the Town Centre, the less car ownership there was.

Residents raised further concerns regarding infrastructure of the town. More homes and offices were being built but the infrastructure and roads were not changing. In order for the Town Centre to work, the roads needed to be modelled to meet demand. The Executive Director of Place stated there were a lot of infrastructure changes that would be taking place which had been through modelling. Councillor Love explained officers were looking at infrastructure which would be on the next Maidenhead Town Forum's agenda with officers attending to discuss further.

West Street would contain a sign post building that would visually direct people to the Town Centre. It would create a visual impression from different viewpoints.

Residents were worried that developers could buy out of their obligation to provide affordable housing for the Town Centre and wanted reassurances that this would not happen. Marcus at Countryside confirmed they had entered into an S106 agreement and there had been no discussions to buy out of the legal obligation. The Executive Director of Place confirmed the Council was an equal partner so nothing would happen without approval from both sides. The joint venture was totally committed to delivering 30% affordable. Zoe stated that Countryside delivered the highest proportion of affordable housing possible. 50% of their sites in London were marketed as affordable housing and as a company, they whole-heartedly embraced it. Zoe confirmed there would only be 30% affordable housing as Countryside and the Borough were working with planning policy and guidelines; it was a joint decision.

Councillor Werner stated the worry was the history of developers over the last 10 years showed they always came back to the Council with an argument that affordable housing was not viable. He also wanted to know what the definition of affordable housing was as it was not very affordable for the Maidenhead area; 80% commercial value was not affordable. Councillor D. Evans responded the Council would not be developing sites if there was not the right percentage of affordable housing and there was a legal agreement with the developer in place. Countryside were involved with the development to make money but, it was about getting the balance right. There was also the option of looking at developing smaller units for young people. Councillor D. Evans stated his biggest driver was about giving people, young people living in Maidenhead, the same chances older generations had; getting them on the ownership ladder and he was passionate about doing that. He was aiming to deliver 300 units for young people.

Councillor Wilson stated there was a range of options which fell into the category of affordable housing. They included shared ownership – stair-casing until the occupier owned the whole property, key worker accommodation, discounted rent schemes, pocket flats – smaller units with reduced costs, housing association housing and intermediate rent, all of which could work in Maidenhead. The average salary needed to be multiplied 12.5 times to get on the housing ladder so the affordable housing schemes would all help.

Councillor D. Evans confirmed that a paper was about to go through the Cabinet process regarding schools provision within the infrastructure delivery plan. The paper would give a view on where numbers of school places would be needed and by when. Residents would not be expected to go outside of the Town Centre in order to school their children.

UPDATE ON RETAIL IN THE TOWN CENTRE

Jane Wright gave a brief presentation on the retail update for Members which included the following key points:

- Retail was having a tough time due to a number of factors
- The Town Manager carried out research within the catchment area which revealed there were 11,000 office workers within a 10 minute walk of the Town Centre as well as having quite an affluent population living nearby.
- Maidenhead was losing spend in the town Centre to other shopping towns.
- Up to 98% of the area around Maidenhead had improved while Maidenhead itself had not.
- The Oracle, Westfield, Eden Centre, The Lexicon in Bracknell, Handy Cross and Taplow were all shopping destinations for residents in and around Maidenhead.
- Steph James, the Town Manager and Jane Wright had tried to get behind the Enjoy Maidenhead campaign and that had helped increase footfall.
- The catchment was disillusioned with the Town.
- On a positive note, there were 6m visitors to the Town per year
- Saturday remained the strongest day of the week for spend and footfall
- The busiest location was outside Marks and Spencer and Café Nero
- Maintained perception as convenient, accessible and safe

- Passionate stakeholders, residents and retailers
- There was the added benefit of click and collect and mainly free parking on a Sunday.

Building Blocks:

- The Area Action Plan was adopted in 2011
- Crossrail was arriving in 2019 with lots of area improvements
- Inward investment
- Improvement in the public realm
- Nicholsons Centre had a new landlord in 2015
- Since 2015 there was success in letting empty units
- The new landlords were investing in the Nicholsons Centre
- Kings Walk Mall was being refurbished with planning applications submitted for the entrances

Jane Wright added that it was critical to have appropriate links and for the Town Centre to be cohesive and continue to engage with customer groups. She was committed to making Maidenhead a destination of choice.

Councillor Love said Broadway was boring but, when it was rebuilt, he hoped it would be glass fronted with shopping which will attract a good retailer. Jane Wright stated the landlords used letting agents to find a top level retailer and creating the new space would give the Centre the best chance ever. She added that Top Shop, H&M and River Island all talked to each other and shared data so, that good message was going out in Maidenhead. Steph James stated free parking on a Sunday and events held in the Town Centre were all helping to increase footfall.

Jane Wright stated Argos was owned by Sainsbury's which meant it could move into Sainsbury's when it closes. Click and collect was particularly important to the Town Centre, especially for office staff and workers. Steph James commented that consumer habits had changed dramatically and the Borough needed to look at how the Town managed its offer and embrace its independent and pop-up shops. Steph added she used Amazon but, it was also about experiences in a Town Centre. Jane Wright stated the market had a positive effect which had increased footfall.

Jane Wright responded to concerns about the different areas within Maidenhead not joining up very well by stating there were lots of Town centres that hadn't regenerated cohesively between areas. She felt the new plans and links between Landings and the Nicholsons Centre created a slim link; but they also had to link to the High Street too.

Councillor Love invited members of the public to attend the local Neighbourhood Plan meetings and engage in helping to shape the area; he also requested more involvement from Borough Councillors. He requested a question and answer session on the Neighbourhood plan to be added to the agenda of the next meeting.

ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

- Q&A session on the how the Neighbourhood Plan is progressing
- Affordable Housing in Maidenhead
- Infrastructure, including business and transport
- Area forums

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.20 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....

