

Romsey Forum Romsey Town Hall 21 September 2023 7.30pm

Present: F Akerman, C Barrington Brown, M Black, M Bull, I Bullivant, J Burnage, D Chillingworth, M Cooper, G Darby, C & D Hall, J Jones, I & V Messenger, N Offord, T Oliver, J Parker, F Pilkington, V Price, P Roberts, D Robinson, J Russell, P Sands, C Tilley, F Tripp, G Wilburn. *Chair* M Edgerley, *Minutes* S Smith.

1 Welcome

2 Apologies John Tilley, E Pratt, C Nixson, M & R Robinson.

3 Planning Matters

John Parker explained the revision of the local plan which will cover 2020 – 2040 assessing how much housing will be needed, where it should go, how much land for employment etc. The complete draft is expected in 2024 then it will go out for consultation. JP explained the process then noted planning rules may change.

Current Planning Applications.

Whitenap is going slowly. The outline application is in but has not yet gone to the planning committee.

Oxlease – application for 40 houses was not well received and has been withdrawn, position and access routes were not acceptable.

Ganger farm – developers are “circling like vultures”.

Hilliers may develop some of the container growing area but there is no application yet.

Question: Any news on Wrens Corner, a nesting area for nightingales? MC: it had Japanese knotweed so must be left for a while.

Q: any news on the Edwina Mountbatten Home? Churchill Homes has bought and plan 47 retirement flats. It is awaiting a decision. There was comment on the need for care homes not flats. Planners can only say yes or no to proposals, they cannot initiate.

Q: What is happening with the former HSBC Bank? It has permission to go back to residential use as it was in the 1900s.

Q: About Embley Lane. Policies in local plan were at variance with recent appeals. MC A Judicial review and legal matters are in progress.

4 Short Updates

World of Water Nature campus. Full planning permission is in place. The delay is due to need to achieve required finance. There is a proposal for funding from “The Future Fund”, an initiative to support innovative capital projects in the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership area.

Romsey and District Society. Structure – an executive committee of chair plus the heads of various committees, e.g., Footpaths and Cycleways, Planning, Environment, Events, Public Spaces. It will cover such things as Network Rail bridge and town centre pavements. RDS encourages joint working with the Town Council and other public and private organisations.

Ideas are welcome, email the Chair and see the RDS website www.romseydistrictsociety.co.uk

Town Council. MC stated the TC is aware of tattiness around the town. There is some extra income from the inclusion of Romsey Extra, so a Lengthsman is being appointed to do small works. HCC cannot help, 40% of its funding has been removed and further cuts are coming.

Q: East Wellow is very cut off having no footpath, cycleway, or bus stop. MC: a big infrastructure project would be needed and there is funding for this.

Q: Roadside brambles near Viney Avenue. Some success in getting these cut has come from reporting them as safety issues e.g., pedestrians forced into road or drivers’ visibility being lost. The County council is providing a form of letter for the town Council to use to landowners about overgrown hedges and blocked ditches. If HCC has to deal with these they will charge. MC commented that local bodies need to work together.

5 Romsey Future. Nick Adams King, Chairman

Romsey Future is a community partnership established in 2013. Recently it has been looking at the south of the town centre, felt to need improvement as it is the first thing people see on entering the town. A map of the town was screened showing the area and interested parties - residents, landowners, Aldi, users of the Crosfield Hall, sport and leisure providers and users. The borough was chosen as an area for a Citizens Assembly. 700 applied, 50 were chosen representing the area demographic, ages from 17 to 90.

They were paid to attend 4 weekend sessions and could ask for evidence and experts. The topic was how to improve the area around the Crosfield and Bus Station for the benefit of Romsey.

Seven points emerged.

- An attractive and vibrant centre

- More green space

- Well planned, connected, and accessible infrastructure.

- Improved transport infrastructure

- Community hub

- Integrated transport and parking plan

- Lots of affordable and accessible things in the town centre.

South of Town Centre final masterplan, adopted by the TVBC in 2020 established the principles. They are now looking at public realm works. E.g. Holbrook stream (the only open water), Bus Station improvements and Crosfield Hall options. The proposed plan puts 2 buildings in the area with shops and businesses below and flats above. An angled path between would allow views of the Abbey. There would be a bus area and cycle racks. The Crosfield Hall is planned to move to the Rapids site and will be replaced by a car park. Aldi will build a new store. Currently there is a viability assessment.

There were a lot of questions and views expressed, all leading to lively discussion.

Q: Is it set in stone that Crosfield Hall will move to the Rapids? NAK Yes, 80% of users come by car. We looked at other halls and venues and consider there is capacity there.

Q: Crosfield Hall was given to Romsey for Romsey people. NAK it was given for Council offices originally. The hall acoustics are poor.

Q: Did the architects have the option to consider re-furbishment of the hall? NAK no, they weren't asked. It cannot be refurbished to give what is needed.

Q: This is meant to be funded by the development. Will there be developers for the new buildings and flats? GW, Chair of the Association of Environment Conscious Building, it's not easy to find developers and the planned buildings are not lettable. NAK Consultants have proposals for how the buildings should be used.

Q: Timescale? NAK there are a number of points in Autumn to Spring where funding could become available. The current hall will not be demolished until the new one is built.

Q: Currently daytime users often shop and lunch in Romsey.

Q The hall is moving from the town centre to the periphery. Will there be a bus service?

NAK when the Whitenap development is there it will no longer be the periphery. In terms of accessibility those who live in the town centre will have further to walk but most come by car.

Q: Where will Aldi go? NAK explained more about the re-arranged layout.

Q: Who will go into the flats?

Q: How will you deal with the division between the Hundred and Latimer Street and the new area "cuts the town in half". NAK there will be 2 routes out of the new area, one between Bradbeers and Boots and the other by Home Hardware and Latimer Street.

The Chair called a halt to the meeting because of time. In 2022 officers were elected in November so the election was postponed to the November meeting.

The Forum has no website but is now on the Town Council site. www.romseytc.org.uk

Next meeting Thursday November 30th 2023, 7.30pm