

St David's Neighbourhood Partnership

Report of Community Visioning Workshop 'What will it be like to live and work in St David's in 2020?'

22 November 2011



Introduction

The meeting was called by Kelvin Lacy, Chair of St David's Neighbourhood Partnership (SDNP) as an opportunity for St David's residents, groups and businesses to begin to set their Vision for the neighbourhood for 2010 and to discuss current issues (raised at the AGM October 2011) of:

- **Planning applications which may turn more dwellings in St David's into Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**
- **Speed limits and road congestion in St David's as a result of changes to road layouts proposed by Devon County Council and Exeter City Council and pressure on residents' parking**
- **Anti-social behaviour – noise, drugs, crime, litter**

Speakers from Exeter City Council and Devon County Council gave their perspective on these issues and how the community might best engage in strategic planning with their authorities. Present were Richard Short from Exeter City Council, Paul Osborne and Will Pratt from Devon County Council and Tom ? Exeter University Community Warden for St David's. Apologies from Rory Cunningham, Community Liaison Officer from the University and Chris Leisk for Neighbourhood Policing Team. Following the speaker's sessions, the meeting split into three discussion groups of residents, groups, businesses to discuss these issues further, plus any actions that they felt could be taken to address them.

The following notes are of speakers' comments and group's discussions. A summary of the St David's Neighbourhood Community Vision and Priorities 2004 – 2012 is appended. In January 2012 the committee of St David's Neighbourhood Partnership will begin the process of refreshing the Vision and priorities 2012 – 2020.

Speakers

Richard Short, Head of Planning Services and Building Control, Exeter City Council



Richard Short gave a City council perspective on the considerations made on planning applications, particularly in relation to HMO's – houses of multiple occupancy. To start, he explained that in the past 10 years across Exeter the housing requirement has principally been for small accommodation. The percentage spread is as follows :- 30% for 1 person, 40% for 2 people, 20% for 3 and 10% for 4 people and above. In St David's since 2000 there have been 500 additional homes. 95% of which have been flats and there have been 200 student flats taking 700 students.

In relation to allowing or granting permission for a particular type of housing, national guidance from central government has not always been consistent or clear and with no powers to intervene.

Richard referred to the 'Local Development Framework' (see the Exeter City Council website <http://www.exeter.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=9482>) where local community involvement in both establishing the policy and addressing planning matters are very much a part of this newly adopted approach (2005) to city planning. In addition to the local development plan providing a broad strategy to city development, planning will take input from a 'development control plan' produced for the area affected. As part of the new Localism bill, community associations across St James are piloting the creation of such a control plan. This may be a way forward for other neighbourhoods in the future, e.g. St David's.

As he saw it, the difficulty for the city council was bringing together a need to 'encourage maximum density' whilst maintaining 'balance'. In relation to HMO's and particularly in relation to the concerns of residents in the adjoining St James ward the council held a consultation involving 700 houses and has set a specific percentage limit of 20% for HMO's. This is across the ward, meaning that a single street could still theoretically go over to 100% HMO's as long as the ward total did not exceed 20% (St David's ward total currently 13% although known that individual streets are much higher percentage). He explained the Council use council tax exemptions as a way to measure this, but that purpose built properties e.g. purpose built student blocks were not included in calculations.

Will Pratt, Transport and Planning Strategy, Devon County Council



Will Pratt explained the overall strategy taken to mitigate the effects of one way traffic at London Inn Square (beside the former Debenhams and the new Next building). This will increase the traffic in the area by an average of 5%. There will be HGV (heavy goods vehicles) signage to take lorries across the city by preset routes, directional signage to assist road users – encouraging traffic to use Bonhay Road and Union Road in order cross the city. We also learned that In St David's specifically there is now an allocated budget to provide measures in addition to the already agreed flashing 20mph signs.

Will then went on to discuss strategic transport measures across the city. Over the past 10 years there has been a 60% increase in rail usage, 30% increase in bus use and 30% increase in cycle use. There has been a n average 5% reduction in car use – with a 10% reduction along the Bonhay road.

There are plans to build a new railway station at Marsh Barton and to action a Park and Ride facility on the Cowley Bridge Road.

Will received questions about the long running unfinished Richmond Court entrance on St David's Hill and could provide no further updates. An email received from Phil Brock, DCC Councillor indicates that there is a legal stalemate in access provision between DCC and Network Rail.

The 20mph slow down signage for St David's Hill should be appearing in the New Year.

Notes from Discussion Groups



1. Planning Policies and Applications for Houses of Multiple Occupation

All discussion groups were concerned that the huge increase in new housing in the neighbourhood (500 over last ten years, plus 200 student flats) had been mainly built for single people or couples and that therefore the population was un-balanced. One group stressed particularly that planning policy should address 'balance of people' rather than 'balance of buildings'. Concern expressed that there are hotspots in the neighbourhood where HMOs and student flats make up a high percentage of the dwellings in that street. Particularly worried that the number of at the number of HMO applications coming forward presently will exacerbate the situation still further. Discussion about the need to support the continuing viability of the primary school through adoption of family-friendly housing, planning and other policies, and that services and amenities need to be provided – school, play, health centre, community centre and other amenities need to be encouraged to support and encourage a balanced community. Priority should be given to identifying sites or buildings for a Health Centre and an expanding School will need to found.

Discussion took place on how councils make decisions on Section 106 and other monies arising from new housing developments in the area and how the St David's neighbourhood could benefit more directly than it had in the past. Councils were asked to consider and report back on how the community could be more involved in decision-making on this – for example consulting on community priorities through SDNP.

2. Transport – Speed Limits, Road Congestion, Parking

It was felt there is generally too much traffic coming in to the city from mid Devon. Request councillors to press hard re park and ride at Cowley Bridge.

All groups discussed the potential negative impacts of traffic re-routing as a result of London Inn developments – congestion, pollution, excess loading on Iron Bridge as a result of traffic waiting to go over Iron Bridge. Needs clear signage away from St David's Hill, monitoring of traffic flows and adjustments to traffic lights to pull traffic coming down the Hill more quickly (while not making the route more attractive). Concern expressed about pedestrian safety on Iron Bridge – too many vehicles see the Iron Bridge road constriction as a challenge to speed down the Hill and over the bridge. 20 mph speed limit signs need to be put up without delay. Need traffic calming measures on St David's Hill, e.g a platform ramp and road markings at access to Richmond Court where parents with pushchairs and young children are very vulnerable to speeding traffic and poor parking/visibility. Also at Richmond Court entrance there is no access for emergency vehicles at times due to poor parking. School, Community Centre and two playgroups in immediate area so needs action now. Requested meeting to be arranged between DCC, ECC and SDNP to discuss solutions.

Pressure needs to be provided on discussions between Network Rail, Tailor Wimpey and DCC need to move forward now – stalemate over too a long period of time.

The continuous flouting of the one way traffic flow system around Bystock Terrace by cars was also discussed. Flouting causes chaos at peak traffic times e.g. drop off/pick up times for Exeter College. Action - to request a review of the Bystock Terrace one way system by DCC.

3. Anti-social Behaviour

Discussion groups generally felt there were few *major* issues of crime in the area. The police action on drug dealing and burglaries was welcome and residents also welcomed the presence on streets of community police support officers who know the area and many individual residents by name. Groups were keen to be provided with the key contacts (Police

Community Support Officers/ University Wardens/Highways Neighbourhood Team). Action – to provide these community noticeboards and in St David's newsletter.

The main concerns in discussion groups related to noise, litter, graffiti and vandalism. In particular the noise was late night transient noise and noise from parties at residences from music or people leaving late at night. The noise of revellers on weekends was also highlighted as an issue. Students were felt by some, but certainly not all, to represent a serious problem of noise, litter and vandalism, particularly in Richmond Road. It was noted that where problems relating to specific residences have been reported to the university, they have acted and spoke to students about their behaviour. A number of other potential actions were highlighted, but there was limited agreement on these. Some group members in one group were keen on additional CCTV and increased police presence, although the idea of CCTV was also unpopular with some. The key general point made in all groups was that, for any action to be taken, issues should be reported to the appropriate agency, either to University, to Environmental Protection department at Exeter City Council, or to police.

The issues relating to lack of street cleaning, fly tipping and litter were discussed in all groups. The alleyway behind the North Bridge Inn was highlighted as often having litter, partly due to people putting out rubbish early or fly-tipping in the alley, and on North Street and Iron Bridge specifically people tossing litter over the edge of the Iron bridge was mentioned. Some people also highlighted that some garages owned by DCC under the Iron Bridge were often covered with unattractive graffiti, or had been "tagged". In addition, whilst they felt the owner or lessee of these had previously cleaned it off, the graffiti returned within a short period, suggesting this was not a long term solution. Action - To deal with graffiti would it be possible to set up a project, perhaps involving a NEETs group (not in employment, education or training), to paint something attractive onto the garages, so it is not left as just a blank canvas for graffiti.

To deal with litter the idea of having an additional rubbish collection/.street clean for identified litter "hotspot" areas around the neighbourhood – indeed the city. Alternatively, could the people living in these hotspot areas in St David's be supplied with the seagull proof bin bags that are used in other parts of the city (such as certain areas of St James). Extra litter bins on the Iron bridge traffic build outs (where it is narrowed such that only a single vehicle can proceed) could help reduce some of the litter issues.

Finally, the difficulties for Pack Horse Stores of anti-social behaviour was discussed and groups felt it was particularly important for the community to support their local shop.

4. Next Actions

A report of the meeting will be sent to relevant agencies asking for their feedback on potential actions to address issues and how the community of St David's might be further involved in planning actions to address issues in our area. Following their feedback the next stages in revising the Vision and priorities for St David's Neighbourhood will be taken forward by the SDNP committee in the New Year.

Appendix – Summary of St David's Community Vision and Priorities 2004 - 2012

Our 10 year Vision Statement – what we said in 2004

By 2014

- *'The area of St David's is a community of people living in mutual respect of each other, irrespective of diversity*
- *The style of buildings and the built environment blends the best of the new with the best of the old and there is balance between the buildings and green space*
- *Residents care about and for each other and the area they live in*
- *Community facilities and services have been developed in consultation with local people and meet their needs.'*

Our Priorities

Planning and Residential Development - what we said in 2004

- Joined up development – a strategic approach is required for the whole area
- Family housing needed in balance (harmony) with single person housing
- Government policy is to develop with “High Density” housing in inner city, but we are primarily a residential community which leads to tensions regarding planning policy and the community
- Integrated approach required, with opportunity for input from all members of the community regarding future development strategies
- Treat the area as a residential and not a town centre
- Create meaningful joined-up development with all the agencies, such as having a St Davids Health centre, post office, thriving community centre and school in modern facilities in line with being in a conservation area
- Planning Guidelines emphasise importance of community consultation – so consult!
- New building to conform to the highest ecological standards
- Mix of architecture – quality, contemporary versus pastiche, striking architecture, public art and landmarks, as well as reflecting features of the historic in the new

Parking - what we said in 2004

- Liaison with University needed to ensure that current policies are applied and adhered to
- If there is a trend to ‘car-free developments’ then provision must be made for transportation and for the impact upon on street parking
- People in car-free developments will have visitors, who need to park somewhere too
- We live between two stations; let’s have joined up services of buses and trains – e.g. one bus route from St David’s Station to City Centre also go over Iron Bridge
- Traffic calming particularly at school times, less opportunity for people to park illegally
- Congestion charging – long term solution?
- 20mph speed limit along St David's Hill from ‘City Gate’ to junction with Hele Road

Crime, community safety and anti-social behaviour - what we said in 2004

- There needs to be balance between fear of crime and awareness of crime
- Encourage safer environment for more people to walk on the streets all times of day e.g. dog walking. More people on streets means greater safety for pedestrians
- 1. Focus needs to be on day and late night antisocial behaviour, street drinking, vandalism etc rather than on more serious crime (as there isn't very much of that!)
- 2. Noise pollution reduction and noise vandalism eliminated
- Needle Bins
- Neighbourhood Watch - could these schemes be extended?
- New Development - Police Architectural Liaison Officer to review major schemes in our area to maximise community safety opportunities.
- Encourage "people looking out for each other"

Community Centre - what we said in 2004

- We need one – all times of day and evening, for variety of uses
- Needs better use of facilities and more outreach into the community to encourage people to come in
- Must be facilities for Senior Citizens
- A meeting place for all ages / groups of people in the community is needed. More young people encouraged – a better mix
- Educational activities should be included
- Community needs to be involved in planning and design development of Community Centre Site
- Joint agency schemes should be sought / considered, to make proposals more economically viable eg
- Health Centre / Doctors' Surgery is needed
- Other statutory and / or voluntary agencies looking for a site could use centre. Some private businesses included?
- Centre needs to be financially viable – get feasibility study on possible uses – local authority funded/lottery funded

Environment – Built and Natural – what we said in 2004

3. More green areas – open spaces & trees – and keep those we have
4. Make the most of historical aspects and features– St David’s is on the route tourists walk and drive to the city centre
 - Something beautiful or perhaps stunning in a quality sort of way, outside St David's station as a landmark.
 - Better refuse collection and better education regarding refuse banks and recycling – no bins outside on non-bin days or increase collections, big street corner bins etc.
5. Enforcement of existing regulations re waste
6. Graffiti – graffiti buster team – community service order or local authority funded, with ‘at cost’ contribution from business and residents
7. Street lighting – yes, regarding community safety, but not lighting up the sky at night
8. Public toilets – pay as you use, linked to local businesses
 - Civic pride and cleanliness: community spirit
 - Tidy up and conserve local churchyards
 - Provide local open spaces, some small with seats and trees others with thoughtfully designed multi-use areas – and use public art
 - Create a really "smart" area with sympathetic design of buildings and space to give the essence of Victorian architecture with modern living