
Town Centre SPD.docx

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From: Louis Murray [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 September 2017 07:07
To: Planning Policy Internet
Subject: Gosport SPD Consultation

To : GBC Planning/Policy

Please find attached my responses as part of the consultation on the Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Louis Murray
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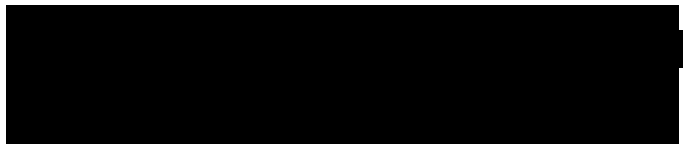
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Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre SPD.

Selected Responses to the consultation.

By

Louis Murray



Comments by development area.

Area 1. The Bus Station precinct.

The requirement for appropriate redevelopment of this area is endorsed. However, whilst the concept of a “vision” is important, this abstraction needs illustration by a series of contrasting design briefs for Area1. Similarly the notion of “interchange” needs amplification. Does it include a redeveloped and relocated taxi rank? A local/national bus/rail/ferry ticket office? Public service minibus stands? A rented cycle park? A fully enclosed and weatherproof passageway to the ferry pontoon? A carousel of bus passenger loading bays? An insertion of a geometric pattern of footpaths?*

- The suggestion to extend the Falkland Gardens walkway across the seaward end of Endeavour Quay is impractical.

Area 2. The Gosport Waterfront.

A difficulty here is that “vision” and “change” have been anticipated by private interests and capital. To wit : Endeavour Quay, the Aldi retail complex and the adjacent McCarthy and Stone residential block in the Clarence Wharf area. Such companies are well-ahead of design and functioning for re- planned municipal futures. There are other long established economic and commercial functions hereabouts – the Gosport Ferry maintenance base comes to mind – that cannot easily be modified because they require the immediacy of a waterside location. Simply put, things will have to fit around what is already there. There is though, some scope for improvements to pavement access and landscaping in this area. The idea of a “gateway” to the town in this vicinity is

also interesting. Ditto a “landmark” building. But – in the case of the latter, what might it be?

Area 3. Royal Clarence Yard.

This area has undergone long, episodic, and sometimes fragmented periods of re-development since the MOD relinquished control. The ‘town within a town’ is almost complete in terms of the built estate. But the commercial and social functions of RCY remain at best a work in progress. Shops and restaurants in particular have led an ephemeral life, and other small businesses have yet to take effective root. The place often looks and feels ‘child empty’. A certain type of demographic seems to characterise the residential units. Are the people who live there all to get old together? More attention and stimulus needs to be given to human interaction in this area and to a more visible form of ‘practising’ community. This may be, in part, facilitated by improved footpaths through to museum, leisure and heritage assets. There are still some semi-derelict and fenced-off buildings in RCY. It is with these that arguably a re-energised potential for mixed-use best lies.

Area 4. North of the High Street.

The west side of North Cross Street certainly needs a facelift and investment. Currently, there are ‘dead’ spaces here and this should be a priority location in any plan for the rejuvenation of the town centre. Re-creation of the small public open spaces, such as that on the corner of Mumby Road is necessary. North Cross Street has one or two well-established businesses, but other shops come and go. The social –psychological environment is significant here. Currently, North Cross Street has the feel of a charity shops backwater. It is not even used much as market space or community event territory otherwise placed in the adjacent High Street. As identified in the SPD the current “North Loading Area” is problematic. A new through road may help. The residential blocks proposed for the Masonic Hall area require further architectural description and amplification. Is the masonic Hall, a useful events venue, to be demolished?

Area 5. The High Street.

The redevelopment of the High Street requires focused, concentrated and imaginative planning. As a practical priority, the proposal to utilize empty spaces, particularly at first floor level above shops, is highly desirable. Attention in the form of repainting, brickwork and masonry is needed on facades and roof lines. Consideration should be given to “vertical gardens” above the public houses and restaurants especially. The proposed “evening economy” – badly needed – around a “cultural square” with a hotel and leisure complex adjacent, needs to go beyond theorising. Leisure companies in particular need incentives to locate into town centres. ‘Footfall’ is all important here.

Area 6. South Street.

The recognition that South Street has potential more than the sum of its car parks and side streets is long overdue. Much of South Street requires “de-concretization” and there can be little argument against the demolition of the stated poor quality buildings that exist there. The small shopping centre is all but dysfunctional and its courtyard space is underused. Indeed, the down-at-heel character of this place works against ideas such as “evening economy”. Replacement garden undercrofts and ‘avenues’ could well be a helpful alternative. But South Street also needs to turn inwards on a much broader socio-economic front to embrace, and become integrated with, the High Street.

Area 7. Trinity Green.

There is an underused asset here – the Millennium Time Space. Its potential as a public events venue and a community forum has never been fully exploited. A programme of events should be made on a yearly basis to make full use of this open space. Low rents for group use by musicians, small ‘amdram’ theatre companies, and heritage walk-talks would all help. Similarly, the administration of this place by the nearby Tourist Office could be easily accomplished. The more general proposal to ‘open up’ harbour viewing (given that nothing short of demolition can be done to the tower blocks) could be facilitated by this. Similarly, the building of a surfaced footpath right around Bastion 1 just above water level is desirable. In general terms, the beautification and greening of the Trinity Square area is desirable.

Area 8. Haslar Marina.

Can much more be achieved in marina development in Gosport? The industry has grown dramatically in the past 10 years. The desire to 'push' marine industrial activity in a town with along maritime tradition is understandable. But are benefits measurable in terms that council tax paying residents can fully appreciate? I remain unconvinced. Much maritime industry is highly specialized and caters for elite markets. However, the car parks and older boat yards off Haslar Road (facing Haslar Lake) constitute a good development site. Footpath access in particular on the Haslar Lake frontage, to link up with Walpole Park is desirable

There is an additional consideration .The idea of "guest moorings" is an odd one given the extensive marina facilities that already exist on the Gosport waterfront. Indeed, there are now issues of 'mast pollution', 'wind in the rigging noise', and over-crowding of water spaces that distort sight lines and clutter the foreshore. Whilst acknowledging the importance of the marine economy to Gosport, it seems important not to overindulge it or to view it as some kind of economic panacea in the absence of serious industrial development elsewhere in the town.

Area 9. Gosport Lines.

The concept of a 'linear park' to re-create the route of the Gosport Lines (walled fortifications) is a good one. Indeed, it may be the most realizable of all the suggestions in the SPD. Routeing the walk through the currently fenced Arden Park (MOD) recreation ground and alongside the oil depot beyond Mumby Road will be challenging. But the link to the Millennium Bridge via this route would be a considerable asset. Why not locate the surfaced footpath on top of new embankments that simulate the old town walls?

Additional Considerations.

- a) I accept that the SPD is largely about the town centre waterfront. However, consideration ought to be given to extending/enclaving the area boundaries to include the Hardway and Elson foreshores. Monks Walk in this area is underused but potentially important as both a nature reserve and public open space,
- b) Much is implied about the tourist industry in the document as a major contributor to the Gosport economy. Yet – there is in existence a funded organisation called Tourism South East. It is largely ‘invisible’ in the town and contacting it is fraught with difficulty. The role and function of Tourism South East in respect of the SPD proposals needs to be made much clearer.
- c) Footpaths. There are several references to these in the SPD document and a general view expressed is that pedestrian activity is a ‘good’ thing in and around the waterfront. I agree! However, voluntary organisations are already ‘ahead of the game’ in this respect. To wit : The Gosport Society urban “town trails” series of booklets – a very successful series. GBC ought to build on such voluntary (and privately funded) initiatives. They make no call whatsoever on the public purse. Certainly existing footpaths need all- weather surfacing ,better signposting and connectivity.. Obstructions to sight-lines should be removed where possible. Eg. The large and unsightly metal plate at the seaward/Falklands Garden promenade end of Endeavour Quay. It is unnecessary and blocks the view across the harbour. It makes enthusiast photography of Royal Navy ships – a big activity in Gosport – such as HM Queen Elizabeth, that much more difficult.
- d) Sensory gardens and Local Nature Reserves. There is additional scope for these. There is a good example of the latter (a private development) on the north shore of Forton Lake. It is a good model for others that could be located elsewhere in the SPD area. Similarly, the envisaged ‘re-greening’ of downtown Gosport, pleasant enough at present around Walpole Park etc but with limited plant varieties, could include aromatic and exotic plantings to be enjoyed by people with sensory disabilities as well as adding colour and variability to the townscape.