

Wincheap 2020 Vision

First meeting, 14 July 2020: Summary

Introduction/background

- Nick outlined the context of any ideas we develop: the upcoming consultation which will update the Local Plan to 2040; various developments in progress; the whole issue of the 4th slip road off the A2 and its route towards Wincheap; the current proposed route is crazy (there's a good explanation of this on the Wincheap Society website: <https://www.winsoc.org.uk/links-documents/campaigns/a2-a28-4th-slip-road/>), and it is now being re-appraised by the Highways England. Nick notes that - because the council has no money and therefore funding for infrastructure comes as a by-product of housing developments, the slip road might not be built for 5, even 10 years.
- We established the boundaries of 'Wincheap' as far as plans for a vision go: to the north, the Great Stour Way and water meadows; on Wincheap road, between the railway bridge leading to the ring road at one end, and the cluster of traffic lights around Dunelm/Morrisons etc at the other; to the south, a bit less clear, but the idea is that as you go further up (e.g. to Zealand Road, Norman Road) the area is less connected to Wincheap road, and people tend to go into the city by a different route.
- The Wincheap Estate is an extremely valuable asset: a large chunk of land, most of it council-owned, in a strategic position very close to the city centre and transport links. A possible development of the whole estate would likely be mainly housing (less demand for retail space and office space now), which could range from social housing (badly needed in Canterbury) to more upmarket units (e.g. apartments overlooking the water meadows) to generate profits for a developer.
- There are a lot of issues caused by 'division of powers' - CCC is responsible for some things, Kent highways (KCC) for most roads, road repairs, streetlights etc, but the national body Highways England is responsible for the A28 (i.e. Wincheap road).

Brainstorming session

- Michael stressed that at this initial stage, we're looking for new ideas, and not (yet) evaluating them on the basis of whether they're feasible, affordable etc. (That can come later.) All ideas can feed in to the proposed long-term vision for Wincheap.

- We broke this down into four headings.

1. Community facilities

- Idea of promoting Wincheap as an area attractive to (broadly speaking) an artistic community
- Currently we lack good spaces for rehearsal (musicians, bands), and venues for performance
- Jubilee Hall is used on Sundays by an evangelical church, otherwise available. But it's a tired and run-down building, very unappealing for any public purpose. Ideally it would be replaced with something much better (lottery funding?), most likely as a Section 106¹ benefit from development of the Estate.
- Canterbury Archaeological Trust recently moved in to the old Adscene building (large redbrick office building on corner of Cow Lane and Simmonds Road). They're still settling in, but they have plans to engage with the public, e.g. doing courses in archaeology, public events. They may also have rooms that could be let out. (We'll talk to the director, Paul Bennett, about this.)
- Non-conformist burial ground (between Jubilee Hall and King's Head): currently locked (you can in theory get a key from the Council) and maintained (badly) by Serco. Could this be opened up for community use, maybe maintained by local volunteers?
- Wincheap play park: currently closed (COVID). Adjoining toilet block would work well as a cafe for parents at the park (need to establish ownership). Also mentioned was a community-owned (and community-run) shop and post office, as in some villages (e.g. Barham). (There used to be three sub post-offices in walking distance of the Jubilee Hall - now there are none.)

2. Streetscape

- A big issue for many: litter, graffiti, and uncollected bins/rubbish make the area look scruffy and uncared-for, not the look we want.

¹ For anyone unfamiliar with this term, a Section 106 agreement is a deal between a local authority and a developer, whereby the council gets funding for improvements (like schools, health centres, roads) as a quid pro quo for giving planning permission.

- In theory, property owners are entitled to six free graffiti clean-ups a year, but the council is slow to act (lack of funds). Also the problem that it has to be the *owner* who reports the problem - and it's not always easy to find who that is. So graffiti stays around.
- Solutions? Nick says: keep making a fuss, Contact council whenever there's a problem. Enforcement looks difficult but we do plan to get the local PCSO involved to see if this can be improved. Other methods may be more promising:
 - deterrence: e.g. anti-graffiti paint; someone mentioned cities where they have classical music playing in subways
 - community clean-ups: either using young people doing community service, or a local volunteer group (as already happens for litter-picking)
 - engagement: identify main taggers and 'convert' them into street artists, provide dedicated areas for this (Sian mentions a 40-metre board they're putting up in Kingsmead for this purpose.) There's a street art project on these lines in Bristol - always worth looking at success stories from other councils. Could involve business sponsors, maybe Wincheap Primary School, and mentors from the art college?
- Rubbish collection problems (e.g. people in HMOs² putting wrong bags out, which then don't get collected).
 - Rick mentions a scheme operating in the St Michael's Road area (off Forty Acres Rd): community group is in contact with the community liaison officer at UKC (most students in that area are from UKC - may be more from Christ Church in our area). Jointly they do leaflets for HMOs, especially at start of new terms - doesn't solve everything, but a definite improvement. We could try something similar.
 - Serco is losing its rubbish-collection contract next spring, and collection is moving in-house - may be more opportunities to influence them, e.g. get them to collect 'wrong' bags
 - Also mentioned: idea of seagull-proof bags (as used in Herne Bay), worth looking into. Seagulls only thrive (especially on Wincheap Estate and nearby areas) when they can scavenge on dropped food litter etc - if we solve that problem, the seagulls will go elsewhere.
- Positive ideas for improving the streetscape:

² Houses in multiple occupation - typically a lot of bedsits in one house.

- ideas include installing benches, planters with flowers, painting lamp-posts, bunting: 'guerrilla gardening' groups ('just do it' and see if anyone objects)
 - green corridor into the city, with properly separated cycle lane, pavements separated from road traffic by planting
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3. Green assets

- These include the water meadows and Great Stour Way (an even more important amenity in recent lockdown); orchards and public paths through these; local parks and green spaces, however small (e.g. the one on Martyrs Field Road).
 - Sian mentions value of forming very local 'Friends of' groups, gives you more leverage when talking to Council
 - Main need is to identify all green assets in our area (know what we have), protect (keep an eye out for plans to remove trees etc), and enhance
 - Love Hambrook Marshes (volunteer group taking care of the Great Stour Way and surroundings) always welcomes volunteers: details at <http://www.lhmcio.org/>
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4. Traffic and air quality

- Clearly a major issue: we all enjoyed the peace (and cleaner air) in the early part of lockdown. How to make that more permanent?
 - Current plan is for traffic coming off new 4th slip road from A2 to be routed around Cow Lane then Simmonds Road, rejoining Wincheap at Maiden's Head, with outbound traffic still going down Wincheap (now a one-way street) - full of problems and unlikely to happen for years anyway
 - Long-term solution is to change the route of the A28, so it goes through the Estate and ideally under the railway line to join the ring road - freeing up the Wincheap road to be largely traffic-free. Anything on this scale requires major development of the Estate to generate funds for big road improvements. Something on these lines could go into our long-term vision
 - In the shorter term, ideas include: traffic calming on Wincheap, separated cycle lanes, tree planting, more crossings (including between Station Road East and Aldi), deterrence through speed cameras - the idea being to make the Wincheap road less convenient for drivers, so they opt for Simmonds Road instead (some already do)

- On cycle infrastructure: KCC got a portion of new government funds for encouraging cycling and walking, but not much came to Canterbury and it's already allocated to other areas (e.g. Crab and Winkle way). CCC does have a long-term plan for extending the city's cycle lane network (but usual shortage of money). Any vision we develop should include serious joined-up cycle lanes separated from motor traffic, so people feel that cycling is safe and pleasant.
- possibility of rentable city-bikes or electric scooters
- trucks parking throughout Wincheap Estate (tachographs mean they literally can't drive when they've completed a certain number of hours, so have to rest up): Derek mentioned idea of getting them to use the Park & Ride instead (which has toilets available), with a small charge to provide for cleaning etc.
- Park & Ride buses: contract renewal coming up, want buses to move to electric or hydrogen, not diesel. Contractors likely to resist (on cost grounds)

5. Next steps

- This doc is a very rough summary of what came up at our meeting - basically, everything we scrawled on the flipcharts. For the future, we would like to keep this group together and expand it (we already know several others who are keen to get involved).
- The short term need is to develop a a collective response to the local plan consultation, which closes on 30th September. (We'd also encourage everyone to submit their own individual responses.
- Later we could form smaller working groups for the different topics we identified, to make progress on the vision.