

GBC Master Plan 13/11/2015

Artington Parish Council (APC) supports the development of a Master Plan and this version is a good basis on which to build the agreed plan and the subsequent delivery plan. APC believes the primary goals must be;

- to pedestrianise North Street and the High Street and link them to the river,
- to open up the river from Millmead through to the A25,
- to reunite the North-South and West-East elements of the town whilst improving the traffic flow,
- to remove traffic from the town centre,
- to deliver a transport hub that enables the maximum use of the pedestrianised areas in the town centre and along the river side.

In making the town centre and river people centric the area bounded by the A25, Woodbridge Road, the rail line to Woking and Bridge Street needs to be designated for residential and leisure. GBC should aid commercial units in this area move to designated business parks and industrial sites. This would free up land for housing on brownfield sites and reduce the traffic needing to travel to and through the town. The residential units must be of a higher density than that typical in Guildford, density and risk of flooding is not a barrier to design, quality and desirability (apartments on the banks of the Thames being a case in point.)

APC supports the development of Scenario 1 as the initial phase in delivering the pedestrianised town centre which flows seamlessly to the open riverside. However, not all elements included of Scenario 1 appear practical and indeed Scenario 2 should not be completely discounted, there are elements which could be beneficially included in Scenario 1.

The closure of the Farnham road at selected times of the day does not on the face of it make sense but the permanent closure of Walnut Tree to traffic does. These proposals need to be modelled, by the best modeling available (Urban Design Information Modelling?) to ensure they deliver the benefits expected from proposals which are at best subjective. Also in the modelling the feeder roads and the surrounding villages need to be included to ensure that any benefit in and around the town centre is not at their expense. (e.g. the closure of the Farnham Road will drive traffic off the A31 onto already heavily populated roads through Puttenham, Compton, Artington, Shalford, Chilworth and Albury.)

Infrastructure will be the key to the plan's success, it will be the foundations on which the plan is built. A replacement Town Bridge will be required in phase one of Scenario 1 as will we suggest the restoration of the subway into Debenhams for pedestrians to cross the road and not hold up traffic; the congestion due to the lack of subway is easily observed today and we should learn from experience. The removal of the Friary Bridge will open up the river frontage and access to it. However the proposal to replace it with a pedestrian bridge is questionable if the aim could be to deliver a fully pedestrianised Bridge Street.

If infrastructure is to deliver solutions for the future, traffic will increase and it is not within GBC's gift to reduce it, there needs to be a new bridge to take traffic completely off Bridge Street so that it can be pedestrianised. The new bridge needs to link Guildford Park with either York Road (traversing the river and the rail line) or potentially more beneficially the A25 running along the western edge of Woking rail line (bridging the rail line.)

With the traffic rerouted around the western side of the rail station and Bridge Street pedestrianised there is an ideal opportunity to build a fully integrated transport hub at the rail station to include busses, trains, taxis, etc. from where the town centre and the river would be easily and fully accessible. The station would be further enhanced with the introduction of a raft on which shops and residential units could be provided.

In summary APC believes the key deliverables of the plan must be;

1. a transport hub to be centred on the main train station
2. North Street and High Street to be pedestrianised along with their links to both sides of the river and a transport hub
3. Bridge Street to be pedestrianised to provide the link from the transport hub to the town centre and the open river side
4. it is vital to introduce a new road bridge leading to Park Street to assist traffic travelling both West-East and North-South
5. commercial activities to be moved out of Woodbridge Meadows, Walnut Tree Close and the area between Woodbridge Road and the river, this area should be for residential and leisure
6. GBC to help commercial units move to business/industrial parks to free up brown field for residential build
7. residential units need to have a far higher density
8. proposals modelled to ensure the agreed plan will deliver expected outcomes and the best enduring solution