



## Planning Committee

### Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum meeting 28 June 2007

Presentation on the work of the Planning Committee,  
especially in connection with the Local Development Framework

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#### 2. ToR's [online [www.townforum.org.uk](http://www.townforum.org.uk)]

The Terms of Reference of the Planning Committee were agreed by the TF at its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006. Heading the list is the Local Development Framework for Tunbridge Wells, that will replace the existing Local Plan, and the new Framework is to be the main topic of this evening's meeting.

#### 3. Sustainable Community Plan for TWBC 2006 - 2011

Second on the list is the Community Plan.

#### 4. The scope of the Community Plan

The scope of the Community Plan is wide, with chapters on Environment, Economy, Leisure, Crime, Transport, Housing, Health, Social Inclusion and Education. Some of these topics overlap with the work of other Committees of the Forum, so we need to liaise with our colleagues on those matters.

#### 5. Community Plan – Contacts

Our terms of reference also provide for us sending representatives to the Community Plan Partnership, and this brings us into contact with, among others, the West Kent Primary Care Trust, The Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, Kent County Council and the Police.

#### 6. Community Plan – Action Plan

The Action Plan that accompanies the Community Plan raises many issues of potential interest to the Forum, including the development of the Medway Depot site, tackling 'Grot Spots'; improving hospital cleanliness; parking policy and park and ride; a Bus Service Review; pedestrian improvements in our town centre;

#### 7. / 8. retail mix (Bob's DIY, Camden Road; Smith, Mt Pleasant Road)

developing a vision on the retail mix in the town;

#### 9. Junction Schemes

and possible junction schemes

10. for St John's Road / Grosvenor Road,

11. Pembury Road / Sandrock Road,

12. Pembury Road / Sandhurst Road,

13. Bayhall Road / Pembury Road and

14. Carr's Corner, to name but a few.

Our Terms of Reference also provide for the identification, from time to time, of key issues affecting the town and for the undertaking of other relevant tasks when required. Our input into the enforcement strategy was one example of this and also in this category is the emerging

Open Space Policy,

15. Dunorlan Park

16. Calverley Grounds

17. The Grove

18. Hewitt Play Ground

19. Ramslye, verges

20. Trinity Gardens

about which we sent letters on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2007 to constituent Associations having a particular interest in specific parts of the town. We are grateful to those who have responded and would welcome any further contributions as soon as possible.

## 21 Our RECOMMENDATION

to the Town Forum is:

“ That an Open Space Policy Paper, taking account of any responses from Constituent Associations, be sent to TWBC's Head of Leisure Services as an input from the Town Forum towards the formulation of an Open Space Policy by the Borough Council” A suggestion for updating the Council's Byelaws relating to the Pleasure Grounds should accompany the Paper.

## 22. Local Government White Paper

One key issue that has occupied the Committee has been the Local Government White Paper information about which was circulated to the Forum Members for the meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2007.

## 23. Proposal Map

## 24. Local Government White Paper - Recommendation

Our RECOMMENDATION to the Town Forum is:

1. “That the representatives of the Rusthall Village Association, and the Hawkenbury Village Association be asked to sound their members on the idea of a Parish Council for Rusthall, and a Village Council for Hawkenbury, respectively, should the Local Authority be provided with powers to create such bodies in the future.

And 2. “ That with regard to the rest of the town, ideas of Neighbourhood Councils for the residential areas, and a Town Council for the Central Core, be put on hold for the time being”

## 25. Heritage White Paper - Cover

As well as the Local Government White Paper, the Heritage White Paper presented to Parliament in March 2007 has also been considered and a response has been sent to the Department for Culture Media and Sport together with a response to a related Consultation Document from English Heritage. The White Paper, like the proverbial curate’s egg, is good in parts but also very worrying in parts.

## 26. Heritage White Paper

Among the good aspects, it seeks to deliver sustainable communities by “putting the Historic Environment at the heart of an effective planning system” and it encourages local communities “to identify and protect local heritage”.

This has led us to join forces with the Civic Society, a constituent Member of this Forum, in the considerable task of compiling a Local List of Heritage Assets. In the words of the White Paper: “Local designation provides a means for local communities to identify and to protect the buildings, sites and spaces that matter to them” Although there are concentrations of statutory listed buildings on

## 27. Pantiles – Bath House

the Pantiles,

## 28. Mount Sion - Jermingham House

Mount Sion and a few other places, much of the character and cherished local scene in Royal Tunbridge Wells resides in the unlisted buildings of interest that make up the main fabric of our Conservation Area.

## 29. Molyneux Court, Mount Ephraim

The importance of Molyneux Court to the skyline of Mount Ephraim, for example,

## 30. Great Hall, Mt Pleasant

impressive Great Hall, opposite the station and some good buildings,

## 31. No 1 Boyne Park

such as No1 Boyne Park by the noted architect E.J. May, a pupil of Decimus Burton.

## 32. Friendly Societies Hall

The former Friendly Societies' Hall in Camden Road was designed by the local Architect William Barnsley Hughes and its foundation stone was laid by Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Louise and

## 33 / 34 / 35 . Camden House

the recently refurbished Camden House effortlessly turns the corner from the Calverley Road Precinct into Camden Road.

It is our intention to submit the completed Local List to the Borough Council; and to invite the Council to adopt its contents.

The danger in producing such a list, is of course, that any omissions may be regarded as of no account. So it does need to be a thorough job.

## 36. Question I – Heritage White Paper – Local List

Question I.

Are there any buildings or other features of interest, especially within the Conservation Area, which you would like to see included? If so, please specify.

## 37. Conservation Areas - map

Even within the Conservation Area there are places that let the town down badly

## 39. Land behind Eridge Rd filling station

## 38. Cinema site - rear

## 40. Conservation Areas – explanation

Conservation Areas are defined in the Planning legislation as areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

## 41. / 42. Grot Spot – twin town signs / top 10

As a reminder this Town Forum has presented on three occasions the issue of 'Grot Spots', the character or appearance of which are in urgent need of improvement.

## 43. Grot Spots - Looking for solutions

## 44 Question II – What is YOUR definition of a "grot spot"?

(One dictionary suggests the following meanings for the word grotty: unattractive, unpleasant, nasty, of poor quality, in bad condition, useless or unsatisfactory)

So, alongside the preservation of buildings and features that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the town we need, also, enhancement of those places where there is an opportunity to turn these "grot spots" into places that will strengthen the town's qualities

45. Map – Areas of Opportunity

46. Map (zoom A)

47. Map (zoom b)

48. List of ‘opportunities’

49. Question III - other opportunity areas?

Have we missed any “areas of opportunity” off the available preliminary map? If so, please specify

We very much hope that our Local List of Heritage Assets and our identification of Areas of opportunity will inform and underpin the new Local Development Framework.

50. Cartoon

Which brings us to the main business of the evening, this most important matter of the LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK for Tunbridge Wells.

51. LDF Document Structure

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 changed the planning system in England. Out went Structure Plans and in, instead, came a legal requirement for Regional Spatial Strategies, in our case the South East Plan produced by SERA (The South East Regional Assembly).

Also being abolished are Local Plans which are being replaced by Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). These are to comprise a collection of documents which together should set out a vision, a strategy and policies for each Local Authority area. The hope is that these will evolve, so far as possible, by local consensus based upon public engagement, which is where the likes of us should come in. The hope, too, is that other local strategies, such as the Community Plan, will tie in with LDFs. Also, there is an idea that results may be achieved, not just by approving or refusing planning applications, but by other mechanisms such as land acquisition, on occasion, and the operational plans of service providers.

52. LDFs Documents

The collections of documents comprised in LDFs are of three main kinds:

- Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
- Development Plan Documents (DPDs)
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

In Tunbridge Wells Borough the Statement of Community Involvement was produced in July 2006. However, it quickly became almost meaningless as the timelines of the Local Development Scheme slipped, partly as a result of the re-structuring of the Council’s Senior Management Team. Also, the new team had different ideas for some of the documents.

Thus, a revised Local Development Scheme emerged in February 2007, and this is the programme currently being worked on

53. LDF Scheme

Of the Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) three are already in place.

#### 54. SPD - Design Guide Alteration

One, on Alterations and Extensions, gives guidance on matters such as overlooking, overshadowing, side extensions, roof extensions and so on. It remains to be seen whether this will need to be revised, if proposals in the recent Planning White Paper become law

#### 55. SPD – “folder”

Another deals with Recreation Open Space

And gives guidance, for example, on children’s playspace in new residential developments.

On a third, concerning Renewable Energy,

Our Housing Committee took the lead in commenting on behalf of the Forum, towards the end of last year.

In the pipeline is an SPD on Affordable Housing, which was the subject of public consultation from 27<sup>th</sup> April, this year, closing 8<sup>th</sup> June. Our feeling on this is that it is the basic policy that needs to be addressed, rather than supplementary guidance.

A further SPD on the re-use of rural buildings is planned for 2008/9 but likely to be mainly of interest to the country areas of the Borough, rather than the towns.

#### 56. Development Plan Documents

With regard to Development Plan Documents (DPDs), there are two that are of current and great interest to us. First there is the Core Strategy, and the second the Town Centre Area Action Plan, or “Master Plan” for Royal Tunbridge Wells.

#### 57. Core Strategy

Work on the Core Strategy is programmed to run from December 2006, with a six week consultation period in November / December 2007, with its

#### 58 LDF Next Steps 7.1 – 7.3

final option by March 2010, following an examination conducted by an independent inspector.

Although the whole Local Development Framework process is still very new, the Planning Inspectorate has this month published a report on Lessons Learnt from Examining Development Plan Documents produced so far. We are naturally keen that Tunbridge Wells should benefit from the experience described and thus deliver documents that the Inspectorate find to be sound, while reflecting local distinctiveness.

The Core Strategy will aim to provide a twenty year spatial vision for the Borough, that is to say from now until 2026, setting out how, where and when development may take place. In this connection the Borough Council produced an “Issues and Options” Report,

## 59 Spatial Strategy

On which we commented before the public consultation period closed on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007.

A key question in devising a Spatial Strategy for the Borough of Tunbridge Wells is where best to put 5,000 new homes

Why 5,000? You may well ask. Well, that is the figure handed down from the Regional Spatial Strategy, through the South East Plan, that was mentioned earlier in this presentation. This makes provision for an annual average of 28,900 additional dwellings in the South East between 2006 and 2026. Some authorities in the Region being required to make much greater provision than us in their Local Development Documents. For Milton Keynes, for example, the figure is 48,000, for Southampton it is 16,300 and for Ashford in Kent 22,700 additional dwellings will be required. Closer to home, the figure for Tonbridge and Malling is 8,500 and for Wealden it is 8,000. As Wealden extends right up to the very edge of Royal Tunbridge Wells, it may be wise to keep an eye on their strategy too.

## 60. Map - constraints

It is no easy matter to absorb substantial new Development in Tunbridge Wells Borough. Our town is surrounded by Green Belt,

## 61. Map - High Weald Area of Outstanding Beauty

And much of the Borough is within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Beauty,

Moreover, Paddock Wood is within a flood plain to the North of the railway line, and partly on the South side too.

However, the figure of 5,000 does not seem quite so bad when outstanding consents are taken into account. In the Borough, as a whole, 1518 consents are outstanding, thus reducing the requirement for new consents over the 20 year period to just under 3,000. Three quarters of the outstanding consents, it should be said, are in the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells; representing a figure of 1,147 dwellings.

## 62. Core Strategy

Happily, there does seem to be some sign of movement away from the old idea of cramming everything into Royal Tunbridge Wells, with its associated problems of "garden grabbing" and strain on the infrastructure.

## 63. Affordable Housing SPD rural – Parish Housing needs

It is increasingly recognized that the lack of affordable housing in rural areas can be as much of a problem, as it can here in the town. The Affordable Housing SPD envisages a five year rolling programme of Rural Housing Needs Surveys, starting with Bidborough, Brenchley and Frittenden in 2006/07 with Horsmonden, Pembury and Lamberhurst following in 2007/8. Until this work has been done it is hard to put reliable figures on the needs of villages, and thus the degree of pressure that there may be on Paddock Wood, Southborough and Royal Tunbridge Wells. We have noted that Maidstone has produced an Affordable Housing Development Plan Document in advance of the rest of the Core Strategy. With house prices even higher in Tunbridge Wells than in Maidstone, the case for doing the same here could be a strong one.

## 64. Urban Capacity Study

In 2001 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council produced an “Urban Capacity Study” for the Borough. This divided the whole built-up area into 27 “Typical Character Areas” such as “Victorian Artisans Terraces”, “Edwardian Villas”, “Inter-war detached” and “Modern High Rise”

## 65. Urban Capacity Study - 2001 map

For each category there was an Analysis, giving the “potential for intensification”. Unfortunately, there was no public consultation over an exercise that could be of great concern to residents.

In devising a future spatial strategy, therefore, we think that the study should be re-visited and the knowledge of those of us actually living in the built up areas should be taken into consideration.

A further point on the Urban Capacity Study might be the question of density. In the recent Appeal Case on the housing development 69-71 Culverden Down the Council had considered this to be excessive. However, the Inspector discounted this, as the Council had not yet introduced a “yard stick” in response to PPS3 within the Local Development Framework. It may be that the capacity study could be an appropriate place for this to be considered.

## 66. Question IV - Urban Capacity Study's assessment

Are you aware of the 2001 Urban Capacity Study's assessment of your locality in terms of its “Typical Character Area” and its “Potential for intensification”, and if so, are you content with the assessment?

## 67. pan over aerial – 45 sec movie clip, RVP - Sainsburys

Housing provision is but one factor in a spatial strategy and retailing provision is another.

Royal Tunbridge Wells has a long north / south / central spine, extending from beyond Royal Victoria Place in the North, to the Pantiles and Sainsbury's in the South.

## 68. aerial view RVP

Which perhaps brings us to the second important Development Plan Document, namely the Town Centre Action Area Plan, or “Master Plan” for Royal Tunbridge Wells. Work on this is programmed to start in earnest in October of this year, with six-week formal consultation period in August / September 2008. However, we are already in a “lead-in” time to October, so now seems a good time to be feeding in thoughts and ideas, before official thinking has gone too far.

## 69. Shopping Study 2003

In 2003 a Shopping Study of Royal Tunbridge Wells concluded that there was “no material shortfall in Royal Tunbridge Wells” retail offer and no qualitative need for additional retail floor space provision. However, the Study indicated a quantitative need, forecast at 23,480 sq.m. of new retail floor space. This would be very roughly equivalent to another RVP. This may well be out of date.

## 70. Ely Court

The current Local Plan that will be replaced by the LDF with its new Master Plan envisages substantial extensions to the RVP that would involve the demolition and redevelopment of Ely Court.

Situated on the line of the old Ely Lane, this court provides an outdoor sitting out area that is well used in dry weather and pedestrian way of human scale.

## 71. Question V

Do you agree that Ely Court is a pleasant and useful adjunct to the enclosed shopping Malls at Royal Victoria Place and that there is a case for considering its retention in the new “Master Plan” for the Town Centre?

## 72. Market Square – aerial view

The Local Plan also envisaged redevelopment of the Market Square,

## 73. / 74. / 75. / 76. / 77. Market Square

A feature of the original planning brief for the RVP

In times past the square has accommodated a general Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays. More recently, a weekend French Market has been held there.

## 78. Question VI – Market Square

Do you agree that there could be a case for encouraging new retail development to opportunity sites further South along the central spine, rather than extending the RVP and thus further unbalancing the northern and southern ends of the Town Centre?

## 79. Shopping Annotations – aerial

The Local Plan also removed the shopping notation from Camden Road beyond Garden Road and from Grosvenor Road beyond Upper Grosvenor Road.

Camden Road in particular, complements the RVP with individual shops that are useful to residents, but such as are not to be found among the national multiples in the enclosed shopping malls of the RVP.

## 80. World of Sewing

The World of Sewing, Bob's DIY, Project Engraving,

## 81. Osborne's Locksmiths

Osborne's Locksmiths and

## 82. Ashdown's Shoe Repairers

Ashdown's Shoe Repairers are examples of these useful shops. The same is true of Bayley Wighton's Carpets and other establishments in Grosvenor Road.

### 83. Chairs & Upholstery Shop

### 84. Question VII – Shopping Annotations Camden Road and Grosvenor Road

Do you agree that Camden Road and Grosvenor Road and other formerly designated secondary shopping areas should remain in shopping use, as part of the retail mix on offer in Royal Tunbridge Wells.

### 85. / 86. / 87. / 88. / Between Grosvenor Road and Meadow Road - Post office

Between Grosvenor Road and Meadow Road, however, there is an unattractive area behind the Post Office and this might be looked at in the context of the Master Plan.

### 89. / 90. / Hannover Road leading to Rock Villa, behind Cosmos

There are other unappealing spots too.

### 91. Church Road

Moving south wards along the central spine from the Five Ways, the Town Hall crossroads has been seen as the heart of the town and 90 % of all activities and economy happen within a ½ mile radius.

The abandoned Cinema and its associated empty shops have long been a major disgrace in the Town Centre and it is surely here, above all else, that a well designed building with a strong retail presence is needed.

### 92. Civic Way – Farmers Market

Across the road from the Cinema Site “Civic Way” provides a venue for a valued fortnightly Farmers Market, in a Town Centre where it is increasingly difficult for residents to buy food.

### 93. Civic Way – car park

Between Farmers Markets, however this central civic space consists of an unattractive line of parked cars.

Perhaps the Master Plan could look at the possibility of making better use of this Civic Space;

### 94. KCC Adult Learning centre huts

More use of the Town Hall for public purposes; and a suitable redevelopment of the disgraceful huts behind the Library

### 95. proposal – map

### 96. Calverley Ground Bandstand - scouts

Calverley Grounds is the green lung off the central spine and its focal point is the Bandstand

The future of the Bandstand has been the subject of discussion and, in 2006, Cllr Bullock suggested the Town Forum should consider what submission they wish to make on the Bandstand’s future.

### 97. Calverley - Bandstand, Calverley Grounds Old Postcard

Now, sadly, the structure is a shadow of its former self. It could never the less, become an ornament to the Park once again

### 98. Calverley Grounds – Bandstand – ‘grot spot’

### 99. Band stand – PW Drawing

### 100. Landscape – PW Drawing

And, with some re-landscaping, could provide access to shade for the disabled and covered seating for the café, when not in use for public events.

### 101. Question VIII - Bandstand

Would you favour the refurbishment and better use of the Calverley Bandstand as a feature of the Town Centre?

Other degraded features of the Town Centre are also in need of enhancement, such as the lamp posts in Mount Pleasant, and here our work overlaps with that of the streetscape committee.

### 102. Motor way style lamp posts - Mt Pleasant

### 103. Victorian style lamp posts - Mt Pleasant, Nevill terrace remainder

### 104. Question IX – Lamp posts Mt Pleasant Road

Do you think replacing the Motorway style lamp posts in Mt Pleasant Road and Crescent Road with Heritage replicas would make these two roads more attractive?

### 105. Transport Committee April 2007

Transport issues, needless to say, should be a major consideration in any Master Plan for Royal Tunbridge Wells and the valuable work done recently by our Transport Committee should feed in to the Master Plan process.

### 106. / 107. / 108. Vale Road

In particular, the Discussion Paper on Transport, drew attention to the problems surrounding the Vale Road junction

With the central spine formed by Mount Pleasant and the High Street.

There are “areas of opportunity” all around this part of the town, which may give scope for some radical thinking.

Pedestrian flows along the central spine are, at present, seriously interpreted by road junctions, not least at Vale Road / Grove Hill Road

## [109. / 110. / 111 Nevill Street](#)

and Nevill Street.

## [112. Nevill Street – map](#)

It would be very good if the High Street, Chapel Place and the historic church of King Charles the Martyr could be re-united with the Pantiles without encountering two sets of barrier rails and a detour from obvious desire line.

## [113 Linking upper town and Pantiles - Map](#)

## [114. Question X - Pantiles](#)

Would you be in favour of carefully planned experimental road closures in places such as Nevill Street and Vale Road, to ascertain how traffic might readjust, or take a different route together?

So, finally, after leaving in the Five Ways in a southerly direction, and crossing Monson Road, Crescent Road, Grove Hill Road, Mount Sion and Nevill Street along the central Spine, we arrive at The Pantiles. This should be the “jewel in the crown” of Royal Tunbridge Wells and the focus of a thriving Tourist Industry.

Sadly, it is not fulfilling its full potential. Traders have been helping to bring The Pantiles to life in recent times and the introduction of periodic traditional market stalls on the Walks has created activity.

## [115. Aerial Fair Ground car parking](#)

However, more could be done to help.

The Fair Ground Car Park, for example, could be short stay for shoppers and visitors. The 281 Town Centre Bus Link could be re-routed to and from Sainsbury's by way of Linden Park Road, with a picking up and dropping off point outside Union Square.

## [116. Union House](#)

When the Union House development took place, it was claimed that the scheme would inject life into The Pantiles but, despite the presence of some good Antique Shops, it remains generally somewhat uninviting.

Perhaps a “Best Western” or other useful Hotel, would be preferable to vacant offices and an empty Hot Tub shop.

## [117. / 118 Corn Exchange](#)

The Corn Exchange scheme too was claimed to be a rejuvenating one for The Pantiles Architecturally it was good, but commercially it never worked as hoped.

The final straw was the precipitant closure of the flagship “Day at the Wells” attraction, without anything better to take its place. Its premises have now stood unused for years, while Tunbridge Wells Museum's excellent costume and picture collections remain in storage.

### 119. faded Tourist sign – Victoria Road, opposite Meadow Road

The future of the Pantiles and of the Tourist Industry in Tunbridge Wells should certainly be addressed In a proactive way in the forthcoming Master Plan.

### 120. / 121 / Union House car park

Car parking seems likely to remain an issue around The Pantiles, as in other parts of the town. However, there may be scope for more than one level of car parking behind Union House

Possibly making use of the sloping site

### 122. car park Sainsburys

### 123. comparison

### 124. empty

The vast surface car park between Sainsbury's and Homebase might also offer scope for decking. The Car Park at Great Hall has shown such structures need not always to be an eyesore. Sainsbury's is on the 281 Town Centre bus link and an enlarged car park could provide a valuable park and ride facility for the Southern side of the town.

### 125. Question XI

Would you favour exploration of the idea of providing more then one level of car parking at Union House and / or Sainsbury's

### 125. / 127 Land behind Eridge Road Filling Station

Close to the Spa Valley Railway attraction is another "opportunity site" that has been an unwelcome "grot spot" for too long. A supermarket has been proposed there but, with Sainsbury's adjoining, that would hardly be filling a pressing need. Perhaps the site might be considered, along with others, in exploring the possibility of an Ice skating rink for Tunbridge Wells.

Clearly, there is much to be done in providing an imaginative, appropriate and realistic Master Plan for Royal Tunbridge Wells. The subject is one which could provide material for discussion all night, but time does not allow that.

So, one last over-arching question, because we want everyone involved in all this.

### 136.. – perambulate Escher

### 137. Question XII – Your input

Are there other relevant points, not covered in this presentation, that you particularly wish us to consider in any views we may be putting forward to the Authorities?

If so, please do let us have them (on separate sheets of paper if necessary)