

Have Your Say On The Future Of The

CIVIC COMPLEX



WINTER 2010 ISSUE 1

There has been a lot of discussion recently about the future of the Town Hall and the civic complex in Royal Tunbridge Wells. However, no decisions on whether to redevelop the civic complex have yet been taken. This newsletter aims to tell you how you can get involved in the consultation we are conducting that will help the Council decide whether to instruct the Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company to progress with drawing up redevelopment proposals.

The Story So Far

The civic complex plays host to many important uses and services for the whole of Tunbridge Wells, but the buildings were designed and built for another age. In addition, investment in a wide range of facilities in other towns in the region, along with the continued provision of large-scale retail and leisure facilities at North Farm, means that there are significant threats to the long-term vitality of Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre.

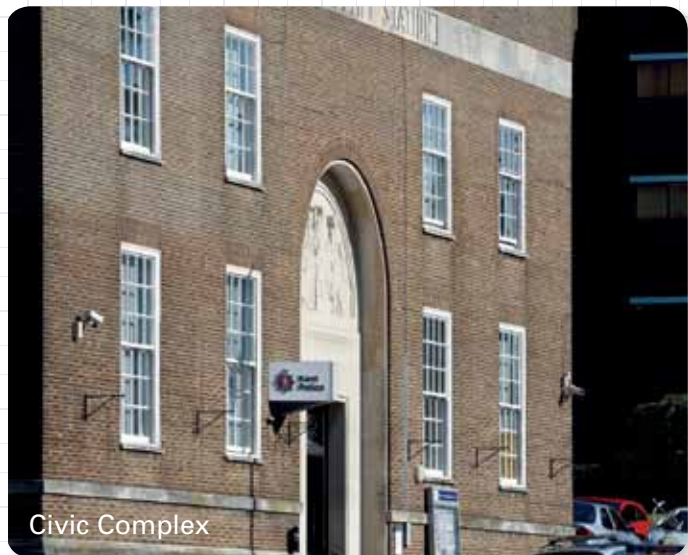
The Council and the Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company (TWRC) consider that redevelopment of the civic complex could be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to:

- Enhance and improve existing facilities;
- Deliver a wide range of new facilities in the heart of the town centre;
- Improve the town centre's overall attraction;
- Help safeguard the town's long-term future.

Whatever decision is reached on the civic complex, the priority is to safeguard the future of Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre; to ensure its continued economic and social prosperity and protect its position as one of the foremost towns in Kent and the town you all love.



Civic Complex



Civic Complex

Your Views

Delivering such an opportunity is an extremely complex process, and many different factors need to be taken into account – one of the most important being the views of the public, residents, shoppers, theatre goers, business owners, employees, visitors and the like.

With this in mind, we are launching a major public consultation exercise to understand the wide range of views that are held about the town centre and its future.

The consultation is designed to provide the Council and TWRC with an understanding of what you think about the town centre and what might encourage you to use it more in the future.

This will then help them to decide:

- whether the civic complex should be considered for redevelopment; and
- if it is to be redeveloped, what uses and facilities should be provided.

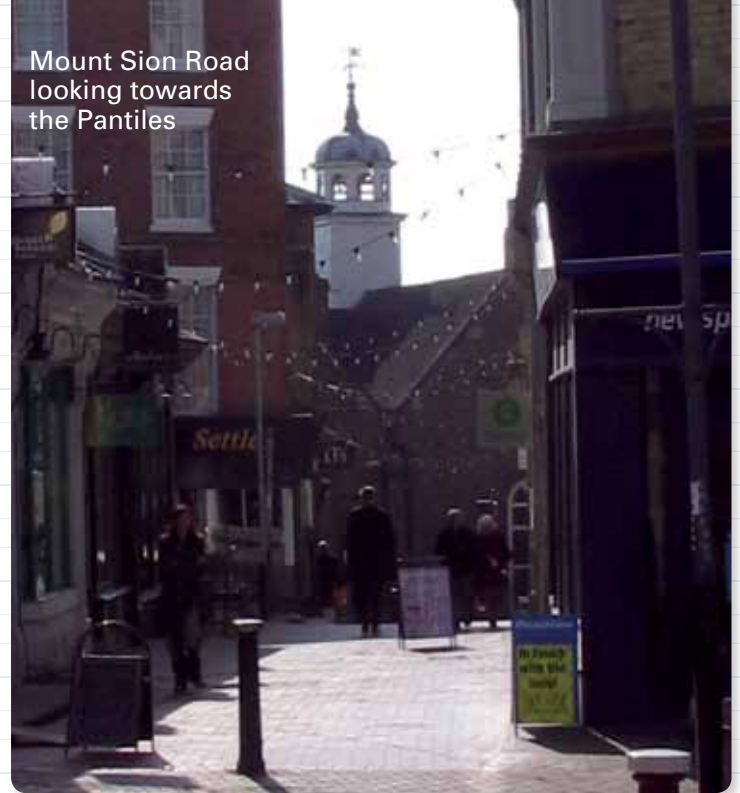
**Get
Involved!**



The back of the civic complex on Monson Way



Decimus Burton villas on Crescent Road



Mount Sion Road looking towards the Pantiles

The Consultation

M&N Communications (M&N) is undertaking a consultation programme on behalf of TWRC to help decide whether the Council and TWRC should progress with drawing up redevelopment proposals for the civic complex.

M&N is an independent consultancy. We will manage the public consultation process, record the feedback received and report the findings back to TWRC and the community.

The Council's five commitments

There are currently no plans for the civic complex. However, the Council has made certain commitments to the public if redevelopment is considered to be the right approach. *IF* redevelopment went ahead, the Council has committed to:

- Provide a theatre at least as good as the Assembly Hall;
- Provide a more accessible and central museum, library and art gallery;
- Ensure the police retain a presence in the town;
- Provide a venue for civic occasions;
- Ensure any redevelopment of the Town Hall is undertaken to the highest standards of design.

As part of the consultation we want to hear what you think about the uses that are currently in the civic complex and what else you might want to see.

What we are consulting on

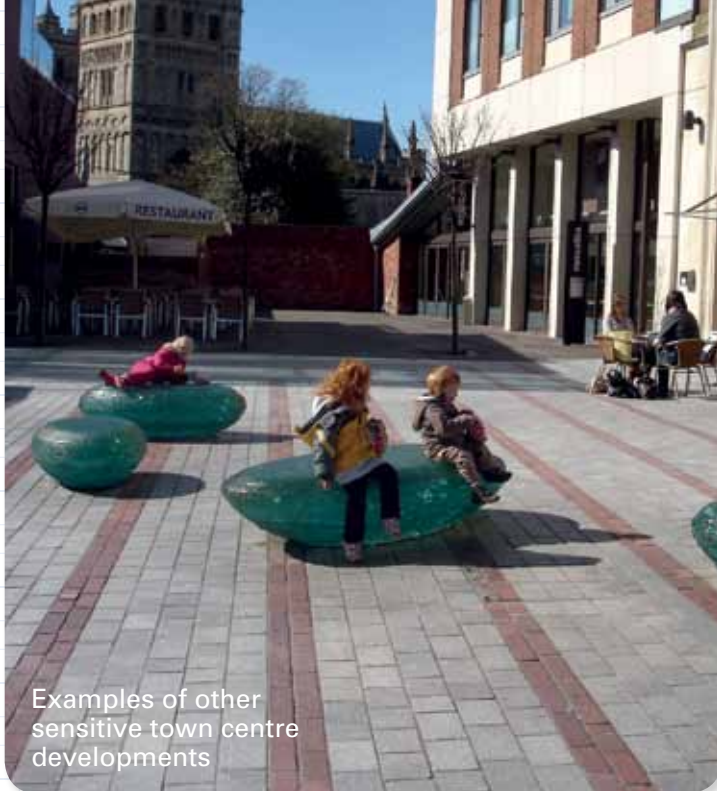
Before any decisions are taken or potential proposals put together we want to get your views on Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre and the facilities and services provided within it.

We have divided the typical uses that are in town centres into five categories and our questions are based on these:

Culture	theatre, music, dance, art, history, culture, film
Public services	police, council services advice services, adult education
Leisure	dining, socialising, gym
Civic	council meeting rooms, open spaces, war memorial
Retail	high street, independents, convenience, food, services



The Pantiles



Examples of other sensitive town centre developments

Get Involved!

The first stage of consultation is starting now and will run into January 2011. To ensure everyone who wants to input into the process has the opportunity to do so, there are a number of ways you can get involved:

Complete a questionnaire

To obtain an overview of your current views on Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre and the civic complex we have put together a questionnaire – a copy of which is enclosed. You can complete the questionnaire and return it (by 31 January 2011) to the freepost address on the back or hand it in at one of the drop-in sessions (details below) or to the Gateway.

Attend a drop-in session

Over the next few weeks a series of drop-in sessions will be held at various locations across Royal Tunbridge Wells to allow you to meet us, discuss the various issues involved and give your feedback. The drop-in sessions include weekend sessions, to provide everyone with the opportunity to get involved:

Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company: Drop in sessions on the civic complex

Date	Time	Location
Saturday 11 December	9.30-12.00	Unit 15 at The Pantiles
Friday 17 December	11.30-14.30	Exhibition trailer on Five Ways, beside Royal Victoria Place Shopping Centre
Saturday 8 January	9.00-14.00	Exhibition trailer at Farmers' Market, outside Tunbridge Wells Town Hall
Friday 14 January	11.30-14.30	Exhibition trailer on High Street, outside Christ Church

Sign up for a workshop

We will also hold a series of public workshops to discuss specific issues. These workshops will take place in January and February 2011 and you will be asked to register in advance if you would like to attend. Details of times, dates and locations will be promoted widely.

Other consultation activities

In addition, we will also be holding a whole range of additional consultation activities and events with specific community, business and amenity groups and local schools to ensure that all sectors of the community are able to contribute to the consultation.

Website

Information on the consultation and all these events and activities, along with an online version of the questionnaire, can be found on the project website at www.tunbridgewellsregenerationco.org

The Results

At the end of the consultation, M&N will produce a report for the Council and TWRC, and we will publish this on the website as well as providing a summary in a further newsletter and through the local media.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company (TWRC)?

TWRC is a 50/50 investment partnership between Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and John Laing Plc, established to bring the expertise of the private and public sectors together to consider how to make sure Tunbridge Wells meets the challenges of the future by delivering regeneration and development projects across the borough.

1

Why is redevelopment in the town centre necessary?

The Council wants to safeguard the future of the town by ensuring it has facilities fit for the future, protecting and creating jobs and ensuring the town centre continues to thrive.

2

Is this because the Council has decided to move out of the site?

The Council has not made any decision about moving out of its current offices. If it is felt, following public consultation, that the redevelopment of the civic complex might be something to explore further for the benefit of the town, then the Council would need to consider its options. Part of this would have to be the consideration of how all council services could remain accessible for the public.

4

Why, if there are no plans, has there been talk about shops being built?

In any town centre, shops play a key role in the vibrancy and economic buoyancy of the town as a whole. Currently the shop units on offer are not suitable for modern retailers' requirements. Assessments carried out on Royal Tunbridge Wells have shown that there is a significant potential to enhance the shopping choice within the town centre.

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Why is the Council looking at the civic complex for redevelopment?

The Assembly Hall Theatre, museum, adult education centre, art gallery and library are well used, but were all built some time ago when customer needs were very different. The police station is only partially used and the museum only has space to display a small fraction of its artefacts and is not accessible to the disabled or those with pushchairs. In addition, the town centre does not have a cinema or a large full service department store. Not all of the buildings are within the Council's ownership and all public services are likely to be entering a period of significant change and retrenchment associated with the significant cuts in public expenditure. Better, more flexible use of public assets is a key strand of both local and national strategies for dealing with these cuts.

3

Are there plans already for what the redevelopment of the civic complex will include?

Despite speculation and rumour, there are no plans or designs for the civic complex at the moment as no decision has been made as to whether it will be redeveloped or not.

5

Can't other sites be used instead of this one?

If we are to provide the level of investment that is considered necessary, and also to enhance the facilities that are already on the civic complex site, this is the only site in the town centre that could deliver all of this. The Council is very keen for the cinema site to be redeveloped as well, but it does not provide the opportunities that the civic complex could, and is owned by a different organisation.

7

If development happened, how much would this cost and who would fund it?

Until there is agreement that redevelopment of the civic complex should happen and what uses this would include, it is impossible to gauge the investment that this would require. However, in the event of redevelopment, the 50:50 nature of the TWRC would mean that the Council would provide the asset of the site for redevelopment and John Laing would bear the cost and risk of its redevelopment.

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