

TO: ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC POLICY COMMITTEE – 20th July 2005

SUBJECT: THE WARWICK MARKET PLACE REVIEW

FROM: THE WARWICK MARKET PLACE WORKING PARTY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To detail the work undertaken by the Working Party set up to consider the decisions, planning, consultation, budgeting, construction and other operational issues relating to the major capital scheme undertaken at Warwick Market Place in 1999 by the District Council and the economic and environmental impacts arising from it.

The terms of reference for the review defined were as to:

- 1 Consider the objectives of the Market Place scheme and whether they had been met;
- 2 Identify any attributable impacts from the scheme and determine whether they were intended or not;
- 3 Consider the reasons for any difference between objectives and actual outcomes;
- 4 Consider whether there were any issues arising from the scheme's implementation that needed rectification;
- 5 Identify any learning points from the scheme's implementation; and
- 6 Make recommendations arising from analysis of the above.

The following questions were asked to be answered by the Scrutiny Committee to help it arrive at its conclusions:

- why was the scheme undertaken?
- what were the impacts of the scheme?
- what issues had arisen from the scheme's implementation, and still required a resolution?
- was the consultation process effective?

2. BACKGROUND.

- 2.1 A Working Party comprising Councillor Mrs Hodgetts, Councillor Holland, with support from Adrian Field (Warwick Town Centre Business Development Manager), Jackie Hart (Warwickshire County Council, Regeneration) and Jaime Hickman (Warwickshire County Council, Urban Design) was set up in October 2005 to consider the Market Place redevelopment. Feedback was also sought on the redevelopment scheme undertaken in Old Square and Church Street which was redeveloped in 2003 where comments were less forthcoming but worthy of note as part of the whole redevelopment process.
- 2.2 A consultation exercise was undertaken in January and February 2005. Among those who took part were the Chamber of Trade, Warwick Society, Warwickshire County Council, Bus Operators, Warwick District Council, Warwick Town Council, numerous local businesses and residents within the area under review and within the town as a whole.
- 2.3 The consultation was by means of a questionnaire to which there were 88 valid responses, 5 focus groups and follow up meetings, letters, emails and telephone calls. The Working Party is very satisfied with the level of consultation undertaken and the variety and quality of the responses received.

2.4 Having completed the review of the Warwick Market Place, the Working Party has identified various issues which are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

3. OUTCOMES REQUIRED.

3.1 The Environment and Economic Policy Committee is asked to consider the recommendations set out in this report.

3.2 To confirm the recommendations set out in this report and propose these to the Executive for adoption at their next meeting. We request that Warwickshire County Council's Warwick Area Committee recommend the findings of this Review on 26th July 2005 or otherwise provide suggested outcomes. The Warwick Town Council will also discuss the review via a report at its Economic and Community Development Committee on 19th September 2005.

Warwick Market Place Working Party

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Survey results and focus group notes received as part of the review process.

Areas in District affected:
Executive Portfolio Area and Holder:

Warwick
Councillor Tamlin

For further information please contact:
Contact Officer: Adrian Field
Telephone: 01926 410815
Email: adrian.field@warwickdc.gov.uk

WARWICK MARKET PLACE REVIEW – RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

1.1 The most consistent theme to emerge from the consultation exercise was traffic and parking enforcement. However, feedback indicates that there are many other aspects to the scheme which have worked well as well as those which have not.

1.2 The *objectives* for the Market Place scheme were as follows and were considered in more detail through the consultation process:

a. Provide a recognisable heart to the town centre (recognised that Warwick's commercial core is fairly dispersed)

It was felt that an extra space has provided a heart but there was a feeling that this space has not been fully utilised.

Consultation also showed that people felt that the redevelopment had provided a large, windswept desolate space and they regret the loss of trees, particularly along the side of Woolworths, and those which had been promised had not been installed. It was noted that some of these existing trees were damaged and so removed.

b. Create a dedicated space for people to breathe

The most successful objective yet had mixed responses with some mixed responses and a lack on consensus on remedies.

Parking was the most commonly raised issue - inability to find parking spaces, unauthorised parking; and the lack of enforcement. More spaces were needed, whilst others recognised that enforcement would make more spaces available for shoppers and casual visitors. The working party agrees with the consensus that the original concept of aiming towards no parking except disabled was good and that this goal should be pursued in stages. Parking regulations must be further enforced.

Whilst part pedestrianisation has improved this the ambience of the square, some respondents specifically criticised the failure to the promised move forward with pedestrianisation from what they felt had been the interim and compromise measure of 1999.

There were also concerns that not all of the environmental issues had been fully addressed. These include the lack of trees and the perception level of vehicular traffic which passes through Market Place as a short cut.

c. Create a busy, lively focal point to draw people in

The questionnaire showed this to be the worst achieved objective - The lack of events and focal points. The Heron Pond is not felt to be a strong draw. Seating was poorly maintained, orientated and located (facing bonnets of parked cars).

d. Form a visual and cultural focus for Warwick

It was found that the Museum could contribute much more positively to the Market Place, a thought shared by its staff.

The Abbotsford building (which since the survey has been sold by the County Council for private housing) was also felt in need of improvement. Planters, location of specific parking areas, and a possible new feature were all proposed by respondents as means of improving the visual focus. Opportunities were not seized at the time of the redevelopment and the most common amongst these was a lack of a central feature.

e. Help to revitalise the town centre and created a place in which everyone can take pride

This was seen as a missed opportunity which has led to a grey, desolate, open space, particularly in winter.

f. Increase people's (both tourists and locals) reasons to linger and return

This was the second worst achieved objective. Issues include illegal parking, seating in wrong place, lack of greenery, poor planting, the abuse of parking restrictions,

g. to provide added value to the leisure offer of the town

More events were required (79% said Market Place was not used to its full potential for events / market).

h. to provide a setting for further retail / leisure / business investment.

Mixed views. The third most acceptable in terms of achievement. Evidence and comment is that vacancy rates are very low, refurbishment of outlets has taken place very successfully but physical constraints hinder new build.

i. Along with Old Square and Church Street, create a well recognised pedestrian link around the town centre for visitors to the town

The objective deemed most successful. Few other comments were made regarding this aspect.

1.21 In general, the opinions of the respondents were that the project did not live up to expectation. It was widely agreed that the area has been enhanced in engineering terms, but fell short in other environmental and cultural respects.

1.22 It was felt that the real benefit had not been achieved because of failures to build upon the initial work, and the failure to justify the exercise by using it for more events for which it had originally been designed.

1.23 Overall, a quantitative analysis found that respondents were more dissatisfied than satisfied for each objective when asked whether these have been met.

1.3 Key Points Achieved

The results of the consultation exercises showed to the Working Party that of the *key points* which emerged from the original Planning for Real consultation, the following had largely been achieved since 1999:

- Encouraged more shops (although more 'everyday' shops were demanded)
- Bus Stops relocated close by, but out of the square
- Improved entrance to St Mary's Church
- Encouraged a café culture
- Improved facilities for events to take place (although more events themselves are demanded)

1.4 Key Points Nearly Achieved

- Ensure the area is maintained, managed and feels safe
- To make a focal point of the Square

1.5 Key Points Not Achieved

- Relocate the Museum entrance
- Make more use of Barrack Street car park (although since the consultation was undertaken, discussions have taken place to seek further ways of utilising this car park when not in use by WCC staff)
- Improve the appearance of the entrance to Shire Hall (although since the consultation was undertaken, a planning application has been submitted to improve access for wheelchairs to conform to DDA requirements).

2 Learning Points Arising from the Scheme

There were more negative than positive comments.

- 2.01 A major conclusion to be drawn from this review and based on the general evidence and feedback presented is that a model for auditing and assessing projects such as this is required to be regular and consistent. It was felt that this review was undertaken too long after the scheme's implementation.
- 2.02 There was criticism of lack of adherence to the original vision, but also of a scheme devised by "consultants" without reference to "residents" The Working Party feel that there is a requirement to reiterate the fact that the original aims and objectives were done through consultation and not wholly through consultants and that the process of consultation had diluted the original concepts. It can also be said that managing people's expectations required more work at the time and immediately after the redevelopment.
- 2.03 What can and what cannot be enforced by the Police in respect of the Traffic Regulation Orders had become a key issue. 69% of people felt that the orders should be more rigorously regulation it had not been adhered to.

The failure to enforce the regulation of parking in marked bays arose through inadequate liaison with the police at the planning stage. This had resulted in attempts to improve enforceability through ad hoc additional signing and lining, which was contrary to the original intention of minimising signage clutter.

- 2.04 It was considered that an annual maintenance budget was required following the redevelopment. Its absence has meant that any works required now will cost more than if the area had been subject to regular maintenance. The Working Party considered whether Warwick Town Council take over the maintenance budget. WTC however require Quality Council status before this process can be taken forward.

- 2.05 The re-location of the taxi rank had been a bad outcome of the square. This has now been resolved by returning to the original location. This was the result of post development negotiation which was not resolved quickly enough.

2.1 Positive Impacts:

- 2.10 Significant levels of investment have continued to take place in the area under review because of the investment in Market Place itself.

These include:

Lloyds No1 (Mansfield Brewery) when the vision of the scheme was being worked up £1.6m
Rose and Crown £400k
The Woolpack £3m

This has subsequently played an indirect benefit in other investments in the town centre including the Westgate (£5million), Heart of England Building Society site (£4 million) and the new Grandstand at Warwick Racecourse (£3.5million).

- 2.11 Space has been generated for events to take place.
- 2.12 The area under review is cleaner.
- 2.13 Better bus stop arrangement has resulted from the scheme – though several respondents felt that the bus stops had made the square a focal point before the development which it no longer is.
- 2.14 There is increased footfall overall. This is shown in comparing footfall counts between late June 1999 (pre redevelopment) and early July 2004 the former in sunny conditions and the latter when unsettled. Footfall figures outside Exclusive by Design in Market Place rose from 1144 over a week to 1433. Outside Robert Welsh Studio in Old Square, the figure went from 452 to 1327 over the same period. The figures for the latter location have risen every year between 2001 and 2004 when the last figures were available. Source: (Pedestrian Market Research Services 1999 and 2004).
- 2.15 Events which have taken place have been very successful.
- 2.16 There is an improved visual impact.

2.2 Negative Impacts:

- 2.21 The Review considered that the Mop and Market constrained the design process more than it need have done. There is a need to devise ways of ensuring that the Mop's temporary rides fit around the permanent trees and features.
- 2.22 The Market Square was considered to be soulless and empty on non Market days. It was noted that the consultation was carried out in January when little furniture from the public houses was laid out.
- 2.23 Feedback from the questionnaire in particular suggested that the lack of parking spaces had caused shoppers going to other towns because it was hard to find spaces. The working group consider that this is as much a response to reduced police enforcement, though exacerbated by lack of clarity on what regulations are enforceable.
- 2.24 The improved visual impact has not been reached to its full potential. It is also felt that the planters on Market Square are used more as a traffic management tool than for aesthetics. The lack of trees is also an issue which has affected the visual impact.

- 2.25 There is a perception from respondents to the questionnaire in particular suggested that the inability to find a parking space had caused shoppers to go to other towns. The working group consider that this is as much a response to reduced police funding for enforcement, though exacerbated by lack of clarity on what regulations are enforceable.
- 2.26 The Underground ducting for the Mop cables was not constructed to allow the cables to feed through because the angles of the bends were too sharp. The impact has been that the cables for the Fair continue to lie above ground.
- 2.27 The Atlas Stones have proved to be unpopular.
- 2.28 That there is now a better taxi arrangement in terms of location, although this was not the case immediately and was the result of post development negotiation which was not resolved quickly enough.

2.3 Were these impacts deliberate or not?

41% of people who responded to the questionnaire felt that the impacts of the scheme were deliberate and that the intentions had been good but the execution had been less so.

3. Reasons for Differences between Objectives and Outcomes

In general terms the key points have been met. Despite that, the perception does not reflect this. The evidence from the focus groups and questionnaires found that there were a number of differences between the objectives and the outcomes. The outcomes were considered to be the positive and negative impacts which had arisen from the scheme. The most important reasons are considered to be:

3.1 Aspirations

The aspirations of the brief were considered to be visionary. If an objective was not possible then it should be communicated so that expectations can be managed. The Working Party felt that the scheme was design based and was trying to adhere to objectives which it would never have been able to achieve. As a result, there was a lack of practical vision for how the Square could be used. It was felt that the original abstract objectives were not developed enough to satisfy the Planning for Real exercise.

3.2 Parking

That the parking enforcement issue was not clarified between agencies.

3.3 Finance

- 3.31 There was and continues to be a lack of finance to organise events. The maintenance budget was discontinued.
- 3.32 There was a lack of staff resources. It was noted that there was only a part time Town Centre Manager until May 2004.

3.4 Engineering

There were also unexpected issues such as the service pipes located in an area where trees were due to be planted.

4. Issues, Learning Points and Recommendations

4.1 Parking:

- 4.11 Issue - Vehicles have continually parked illegally in Market Place and the western section of Old Square due to Traffic Regulation Orders which are not enforceable.

Learning Point - That greater communication between the relevant authorities was required. The working group have established that a system of parking in marked bays only is enforced in several historic towns, and, in fact, works in Castle Street. Greater dialogue with the police should have been undertaken before the scheme was implemented.

Recommendation – That effort be put into resolving these issues in the context of a scheme for parking in marked bays only throughout the town Centre, so that the original vision of a de-cluttered townscape can be achieved.

Recommendation - The Working Party would want to resolve these issues with in the context of the reworking of the Traffic Regulation Orders for Market Place. This will give a uniform regulated zone throughout the town centre and ensure that the original aims and objectives of this aspect are adhered to. These should be incorporated into the introduction of decriminalisation and will be a tool to controlling traffic through the Square.

- 4.12 Issue - Making more use of Barrack Street car park.

Learning Point - Schemes cannot be implemented in isolation. There must be continuing input to follow up identified issues.

Recommendation – Work with WCC to investigate ways of encouraging people to use Barrack St car park at weekends and evenings. Improved signage of when it can be used by the public is felt worthy of exploration. For increased night use, improved lighting and CCTV should be considered.

4.2 Traffic and Pedestrians:

- 4.21 Issue: The consultation suggested that there was support for a further move towards pedestrianisation in Market Place. Actions should concern the time of access and the feasibility of closing the Square on Saturdays.

Recommendation: It is suggested that these views are conveyed to the officers involved in the Traffic Management Scheme and Decriminalisation.

- 4.22 Issue – The planters which run north – south on the edge of Market Square are felt to be in place for traffic control purposes rather than for environmental reasons.

Learning Point – Traffic Regulation Orders need to be enforceable.

Recommendation - Once Traffic Regulation Orders legally allow the enforcement of parking in marked bays only, locate the planters for design reasons rather than as a physical traffic control.

Enforce the closure of the Market Place from the Turpin statue to the Insurance shop every Saturday for the market. There is an existing Traffic Regulation Order in place to do this.

- 4.23 Issue - The vehicles which access Old Square towards the Abbotsford were not adhering to the aims of the restricted access. The feelings towards what should be implemented were extremely varied on this particular subject.

Learning Point – Limited access is difficult to enforce.

Recommendation – The Working Party supports the ultimate removal of all traffic from Market Place during core business hours. They recommend that closure of the Market Place end of Old Square between 10am and 4pm with consideration to having the spaces on the old taxi rank for disabled parking.

- 4.24 Issue – The pedestrian ‘loop’ which was an aim of various redevelopment schemes in the town to link up Market Place, Church Street, Old Square, High Street and Swan Street was not felt to have worked to its full potential partly as a result of the zebra crossing not being close enough to the junction of Church Street / High Street / Jury Street / Castle Street.

Learning Point – Schemes must take a holistic approach to their objectives.

Recommendation – Feed this view into the Traffic Management Project.

- 4.25 **Other Recommendations - Warwick District Council are to explore the potential of allowing residents with parking permits to park overnight in specified off street car parks.**

4.3 Features:

- 4.31 Issue – Lack of a focal point. The Herons have enhanced the front of Shire Hall but do not act as a focus for the square

Lesson Learnt - There was a lack of a visual focus to cause people to linger.

Recommendation - Write to Severn Trent to explore whether funding is available for ‘flat’ Fountain in Square. If not seek a budget for a dais to be installed on the square which does not inhibit Market nor Mop Fair. This is to be encouraged to be used for music events (see later) and for the steps to be used as seating.

Recommendation – Investigate the opportunity for a central feature.

- 4.32 Issue / Lesson Learnt - The Review considered that the Mop and Market constrained the design process when there was an opportunity to let the redevelopment to run without as much consideration given to the former.

Recommendation - There is a need to ensure that the Mop’s temporary rides fit around the permanent trees and features.

4.4 Retail Outlets:

- 4.41 Issue - The quality of shops is felt to be high but not diverse. It was felt that the type of shops is not ones which generate increased footfall.

Recommendation - Investigate the feasibility of new build shops on the old taxi rank as an income generator for WCC. This will help to strengthen the pedestrian ‘loop’ aim for the town centre.

- 4.42 Issue – The proportion of restaurants and other food and drink outlets (A3 uses) in the town is becoming inappropriate. These establishments do not encourage day-time footfall and are highly susceptible to economic change. This needs to be borne in mind for the area under review.

Recommendation - Feedback to the Town Management Group concerns that the existing Draft Local Plan over-emphasises A3 uses above retail in Market Place. and suggest a response on the Draft Local Plan.

- 4.43. Issue – There was much comment on the lack of progress being made at the former Post Office in Old Square and the missed opportunity of the current use of the Coffee Tavern..

Recommendation - Write to the landlord of the old Post Office to get feedback on future plans. Explore with WCC alternative uses of the Coffee Tavern.

4.5 Museum:

- 4.51 Issue – Release the potential of the museum.

Learning Point – More attention should have been given to the uses and aspects of feature buildings in the square, rather than the concentration on highway engineering.

Recommendation – Support the WCC Museum in Market Hall in their efforts to relocate the entrance and to open up the blacked out windows with glazing.

4.6 Events:

- 4.61 Issue - Fewer events than anticipated have been carried out (and there is little money to implement these).

Learning Point – Creation of a space for events will not in itself make them happen.

Recommendation – Write to all relevant community groups and raise awareness by other means by promoting Market Square as a place to perform (usually free) for the community. Ensure that they have appropriate public liability insurance. As far as budgets will allow, increase the promotion of events which take place within the area under review in Leamington and Stratford rather than wholly within Warwick to attract more people.

- 4.62 Issue – The Management Plan for the use of Market Place was not updated when the Highways Unit was transferred from the District Council to the County Council. As a result there is a need to clarify what Market Square can and cannot be used for and who has responsibility for organising.

Learning Point – That a Management Plan for the use of the Square should have been updated at the time of the handover.

Recommendation - Ensure that a Management Agreement is drawn up between WCC and WDC'S Town Centre Business Development Manager to outline what can and cannot be permitted on the Square and to seek whether there is income potential to fund town Centre Management activities. This will include agreement with key stakeholders on licensed trading street policy for Market Square and in other parts of Warwick town centre. Presently there is a need to clarify in writing what is and is not allowed to be exhibited on the Square.

4.63 Other Recommendations -

Seek to increase the budget for more organised events to be held particularly with a musical theme.

Make greater use of the banner stands next to Woolworths to promote events and festivals.

4.7 Streetscene:

4.71 Issue - There is felt to be a lack of maintenance to the street furniture of the area. Learning Point – That there needs to be a continual budget for maintaining the area under review to keep it at an acceptable standard.

Recommendation – Maintain a long term street scene maintenance budget.

4.72 Issue - The seating located in front of the parking bays running up Market Place faces incorrectly.

Learning Point – These seats were felt to be under utilised as they are in afternoon shade and face the bonnets of parked cars and hence offered a poor facility for people to linger and enjoy.

Recommendations – Consider the feasibility of turning around alternate benches to face buildings alongside eastern side of Market Place.

Purchase new benches to face into the square next to or instead of planters and ensure that they are able to be removed for events fairly easily.

Re-varnish all benches which require maintenance in Market Place, Market Square, Old Square and Church Street.

4.73 Issue – Evidence suggested that the atlas stones are too small to be safe – for vehicles and those with visual impairments. They also now look dirty and are damaged in many instances.

Learning Point – Fashionable items of street furniture do not always stand the test of time well and should be considered very critically.

Recommendation - Remove atlas stones and replace with wooden tubs or cast iron bollards

4.74 Issue – There was a feeling that the lighting in Market Square and Old Square could be improved by the use of consistent colour.

Learning Point – Outdoor spaces should be designed for use all day and every day. Lighting is fundamental to the design process. t of this and a coherent scheme be drawn up, even if funds are not immediately available for implementation.

Recommendation – The lighting scheme be reviewed by the Urban Design Team. Such a scheme could be introduced gradually as funds allow. Renew orange units with white when they need replacing.

4.75 Other Recommendations -

Install the three missing flagpoles which run up the left hand side of the Square and utilise fully.

4.8 Trees and Planters:

4.81 Issue – There are not enough trees.

Learning Point – A mature tree cannot just be removed and replaced. The redevelopment left an inadequate number of trees and greenery generally in the Square. There was felt to be over emphasis on the redevelopment being a predominantly engineering project.

Lesson Learnt – There were unexpected issues in the redevelopment such as the service pipes located in an area where trees were due to be planted. There was scope to utilise the skills of landscape experts at both WDC and WCC were neglected.

Recommendation – Review the options, including feasibility and cost for planting more trees in appropriate locations. Investigate how the Mop and Market can work around such physical barriers.

4.82 Issue – The Warwick Society made an offer several years ago to fund permanent planting of the planters in the Square. This offer was not taken up.

Learning Point – Encourage public/voluntary partnerships.

Recommendation – Re-open negotiations with the Warwick Society.

4.9 Planning:

4.91 Issue - 'Café culture' was a phrase used which has wider connotations and has different interpretations by planners.

Lesson Learnt – Evidence has suggested that it is a concept and the concept needs the space.

Recommendation – Consider this phrase carefully in future scenarios.

4.10 Information:

4.10.1 Issue: The taxi companies felt that there was a need to install information for the public of taxi companies and their phone numbers when there are no taxis at the rank.

At present there is no such facility which would ensure an improved destination management and community safety and is a response to demand.

Learning Point: The use of public spaces requires attention to be given to information.

Recommendation: Install a permanent sign in close proximity of the taxi rank to inform public of taxi companies and their phone numbers.

4.10.2 Issue – People are supportive of the events in the area under review feel as though they should be better informed of what, where and when they are.

Learning Point – That events need to be better promoted to raise awareness of them and make them more successful.

Recommendation - Work with WCC to seek permission to install an information board to inform people of Warwick events and other relevant news. This could be located at the north face of Museum or in the vicinity of Shire Hall.

4.11 Signage:

4.11.1 Issue: The signage in the area under review (and beyond) is not felt to be adequate.

Learning Point – Such schemes should not be considered in isolation simply in terms of engineering. Visitor management is required for benefits to be felt.

Recommendation: A review of signage (both directional and advisory) within the town centre area should be worked on incorporating some of the work already completed by other agencies. WCC Urban Design Team have agreed to carry this out. Using guidelines for historic towns, produce a Warwick specific signage strategy to be implemented progressively as budget permits. This would mean a coherent strategy could be drawn upon when Traffic Management and Decriminalisation of parking proceeds. WCC Highways Engineers, the Town Centre Management group and the Warwick Society should be involved.

4.11.3 Issue – Overall there is evidence to suggest that there is unnecessary signage in the area under review.

Learning Point – Signage should be effective and efficient.

Recommendation –Support WCC in seeking to have necessary signage consolidated (on buildings or existing street furniture to reduce the number of poles).

4.12 Toilets:

4.12.1 Issue – At the time of consultation, the toilets were felt to be in a poor state and poorly maintained.

Recommendation - Raise awareness that the toilets have been refurbished since consultation and any incidents should be reported.

4.13 Market:

4.13.1 Issue – 61% of those questioned felt that the layout of the market is correct and therefore should not change.

Learning Point – None

Recommendation – Leave the layout of the Market as it is. Warwick District Council's Engineering team are to contact the Showmen's Guild to discuss ducting issues for Mop to see if underground works in redevelopment can be utilised.

5.0 *It is to be noted that the recommendations for action vary in time scale and are subject to the relevant agencies themselves accepting the need for action to be taken. Cost implications also need to be understood in terms of the feasibility of projects..*