



**Estate Regeneration Programme
Community Consultations at Weston Parade May/June 2011
Solent Centre for Architecture + Design**



Introduction

In May 2011 The Solent Centre for Architecture + Design was engaged to run a public consultation process with residents of Weston in Southampton to gauge opinions of the proposed redevelopment of the area which has been chosen because it is regarded as having come to the end of its useful life. The area to be considered was the Weston Parade (shops with flats over, and included Somborne House and Ashton House).

Prior to SCA+D's engagement Southampton City Council sent all residents and shop-keepers to be directly affected notice of its intention to consult with them about possible regeneration in the area which suffers from poor design and layout and with a retail and related content which is unlikely to be economically viable in the longer term.

SCA+D's brief was to consult with both residents and users of the area and to feed the information, concerns, and ambitions from this into a development brief to be prepared following Cabinet's meeting in July 2011. This work follows the successful programme of consultation run by SCA+D at Hinkler Parade in Thornhill and subsequently at four other areas: Exford Parade, Cumbrian Way, Meggeson Avenue and Laxton Close.

Consultation Process

SCA+D have experience in running consultation programmes like this with tenants and residents and have developed a process that centres on two public events: a Design Festival to encourage people to focus on what the current issues in the area are, and follow-up meeting whereby SCA+D report back to people what conclusions they had drawn from the Design Festival and to check whether these conclusions were shared by residents. There is a danger when engaging in community consultations that professionals take away erroneous assumptions from people's comments – the follow-up meeting gives people a chance to check what has been reported on their behalf. The wider population of the area were informed that the consultation was taking place and prior to the Design Festival flyers were sent to stakeholders inviting them to the events. Posters and flyers advertising the events were also produced and displayed in prominent local community locations.

Building for a brighter future

How do you think Weston Shopping Parade should look in the future?

In July councillors will use your comments to decide whether or not to regenerate Weston Shopping Parade.

Drop-in events Tuesday 24 May, 5pm-7pm at Weston Library

Come and take part in the Design Festival taking place:
Wednesday 1 June, 9pm-8pm,
at Weston SureStart, 99 Forest Close
and Saturday 4 June, 10am-1pm,
outside Weston Local Housing Office

Find out further information at:
Email: estate.regeneration@southampton.gov.uk
Estate Regeneration Tel: 023 8021 7843
Gateway Tel: 023 8022 3855
Visit: www.southampton.gov.uk/estateregeneration

SCAD SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

A questionnaire was also given to stakeholders asking a number of questions centred on the nature of their use of the shopping parade and housing, the importance they attached to certain issues, the ranking importance they gave to the individual shopping units and their general feelings about how the area could be improved in the future.

Weston Shopping Parade questionnaire for residents and shoppers

8. It would be useful to know where you live so we can separate out comments according to where people live when we report back to the councillors in July 2011

What is your postcode?

Please confirm if you are: (Please tick the relevant box)

Local resident living in Weston Visitor/shopper to Weston Shopping Parade

Please confirm if you: (Please tick the relevant box)

Own your home Rent your home

9. Do you have any other comments you would like to add? (Please state below)

This questionnaire will help us get an idea of the facilities that are important to you. We will use your feedback when the proposals are discussed further to make sure that your needs are considered. Thank you for taking the time to complete it.

1. On average how often do you visit Weston Shopping Parade?
(Please tick the relevant box)

- Every day
 2-3 times a week
 Once a week
 Once a month
 Hardly ever
 Never (Go to Q6)

2. If you use Weston Shopping Parade, how do you travel there?
(Please tick the relevant box(es))

- Walk
 Bus
 Car
 Cycle
 Other please state

www.southampton.gov.uk/estateregeneration

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Design Festivals

Weston Surestart 1st June, 5.00-8.00pm
Weston Parade 4th June, 10.00am-1.00pm

The Design Festivals were held in a two locations at different times in the week in order to allow people with varying work/life arrangements to attend at least one event. On 1st June this was at the Weston Surestart building on a weekday evening; on Saturday 4th June in a gazebo tent on the parade itself.

SCA+D arranged the events to centre around a large Ordnance Survey plan of the area. On 'walls' surrounding this were placed large sheets of paper with the following titles:

Housing Mix and Type
Local Amenities
Public Space and Green Space
Transport Parking and Access
Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Each subject had a colour code that related to coloured 'post-it' notes. Participants were encouraged to fill in the post-it notes with their thoughts on the particular subjects and then to place their comments on the map where they felt it was geographically located. People were not restricted in terms of the number of comments they had or the subject matter of their comments. Throughout the event, when the map became congested, the comments were re-pasted onto the sheets on the surrounding walls.





SCA+D, Southampton City Council and other volunteers engaged participants in discussions using the map as a means to encourage both specificity and clarity. People came and went throughout each event and it was noticeable that the nature of those using the area on the Saturday changed as the morning progressed. The event at the Surestart building suffered perhaps by being located off-site and whilst only a handful of people came to this, this was more than compensated for by the number of people attending the event held at the Parade itself on the Saturday. People were very animated in their views – in almost all cases agreeing that the site needed to be re-developed whilst retaining shopping and other amenities in the future.

In all, 158 people filled in a questionnaire or engaged in conversations with the event staff. There was consistency in people's comments and in particular concern that whilst people unanimously agreed that the current environment was indeed very poor, that the amenities were well used and needed to be replaced rather than removed.

Feed-Back Meeting

There is always a danger with consultation events that the comments people make are either misconstrued or taken out of context. It is therefore best practice to hold a feedback session whereby one can test whether the conclusions made are agreed with participants. Unlike our previous engagements where we have held the feedback session before reporting back to the Council, the timetable has meant that this will be held after the report has been submitted. This notwithstanding, SCA+D plan a feedback session at the Weston Parade later in June or early July 2011. In this way we feel that as many stakeholders as possible will be given the opportunity to express their views about the redevelopment plans.

For the feedback session SCA+D will prepare a powerpoint presentation focussing on each of the five subject areas and will ask whether the priorities they had drawn from the participant's comments are correct.

Participant Priorities

Below are listed the priorities of those stakeholders who participated in the consultation process.

Housing Mix and Type

There was general consensus that the Weston shopping parade and surrounding buildings had become an eyesore and were felt to be beyond 'saving' through refurbishment.

Rear deck access to the maisonettes above the shops was considered especially unsatisfactory. There were numerous accounts of anti-social behaviour occurring behind the shops, on the walls to the housing and, since the collapse of a walkway last year, a real sense of fear that these could fall down and cause injury.

People living above the shops and in Somborne House reported clear problems with damp and of the poor condition of the building fabric.

Those people who were aware of it, thought that something along the lines of the re-development at Hinkler Parade might work well here, especially an emphasis on creating more traditional street layout.

The large areas of publicly accessible space in front of and behind the shops were felt to encourage loitering and the anti-social behaviour that comes with this, especially in the evenings. Their removal (again along the lines of Hinkler Parade) was felt would offer a better environment.

People understood that any redevelopment would need to include a mixture of houses and flats in order to make a scheme economically viable.

Most people felt that the wider Weston area was a good place to live and that the current status of the shopping parade seriously let the area down. Re-developed sensitively the area would receive a great boost.



Local Amenities

People agreed that the parade had more shops than could now be expected to be supported. People were happy for a new development to retain far fewer units (3-4) as this would solve the problem of the area looking derelict for most of the time when only a few of the shops are open.

The provision of a convenience store, post-office and a fast food outlet were most popular, followed by the desire for the library to stay and some provision for young people.

Many people felt that the Cooperative was expensive and hoped that a cheaper, though no less comprehensive convenience store would be provided.

The pet shop was also cited by many people as being desirable in any re-development



Some people spoke of the lack of youth club provision in the area and suggested a community hub/youth centre to be included in the area, though not so as to create problems of anti-social behaviour.

Transport, Parking and Access

People felt that pathways need to be properly maintained and repaired and that lighting should be improved to increase a sense of security at night.



Parking was felt to be a real issue in Weston (especially by people who currently use the surgery).

The corner of Wallace Road is very tight and felt to be dangerous. It would be good if the re-development could address this issue.

The large open space in front of the shops was felt by many to be redundant and a magnet for anti-social behaviour. Many felt that in a re-development it should be reduced substantially (with just enough space in front of new shops for a few benches and for people, especially the elderly who walk there, to spend a little time).



The electricity sub-station was felt by some to be an eyesore and should be moved if possible.

Public Space and Green Space

In the evening and after the shops are shut there are problems with people loitering in the area in front of the shops, often drinking alcohol – it feels threatening to many and puts people off walking through the area.

Some people expressed the wish to have some form of green space built in to a new development scheme, but there was an understanding that the emphasis should be on housing. Connections to Mayfield Park could be improved to give access to this large, local green space.



Crime and Anti-social Behaviour

People felt the area was threatening in the evenings (especially in front of the shops and around the garages).

Because there are no 'eyes on the street' to the rear of the shops, there are frequent cases of mischief and anti-social behaviour occurring here, especially around the garages and the rear walk-up decks to the housing.



The derelict nature of the site was felt to be a major cause for further anti-social behaviour. The area has become a place where young people 'hang out' and naturally mischief takes place (broken bottles, windows and graffiti).

Some people thought there should be more weekend patrols in the area.

Key Findings

It was clear from our consultations that there is overwhelming support in principle for the redevelopment Weston Shopping Parade and the surrounding buildings. Everyone, it would seem, agrees that the current situation does a major disservice to the wider area, bringing down an otherwise good place to live. Furthermore the inability of the parade to be economically viable in its current form has led to its derelict-looking condition to compound the problem.

The main points can be summarised as follows:

- The existing number of shop units does not reflect modern shopping patterns and the redevelopment of the area should be made up of many fewer units (3-4).
- The most popular amenities to be included in a re-development are a convenience store, post office and fast food outlet (followed by the library, pet shop, youth provision and possibly a hairdresser).
- Whilst flats were acceptable to people as part of the mix these should attempt to reflect the wider area which is predominantly 'suburban' in feel with a more traditional network of streets.
- Housing units should not be accessed via decks and should have front doors opening onto the street. Those who knew it thought Hinkler Parade was a good model to follow.
- Parking was considered to be one of the overriding issues that would need to be addressed by the re-development of the site.
- Some form of youth provision in the area was seen to be desirable.
- Better lighting and maintenance of shared areas was seen as a priority for many to engender a sense of security and to counter a 'fear' of crime and anti-social behaviour that can be just as corrosive as actual cases.
- The large areas of publicly accessible space were seen to be counter-productive in trying to improve the image of the area.