

## WTCR Questions and Answers 2012

	<p>What did the consultation consist of? I could not make the two day exhibition so did not get a chance to see it.</p>	<p>The consultation materials consisted of several display boards which went through the scheme, a 3D massing model of how the scheme fits into the town, supporting information going into more detail on specific themes such as design analysis and highways, a summary leaflet for people to take away and a comments form with consultation questions.</p> <p>The consultation started with a two day event in a Marquee on the Elms Field on the following dates –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July 10:00-11:30 (Business preview)</li> <li>▪ Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July 12:00-19:00 (Public opening)</li> <li>▪ Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> July 10:00-16:00 (Public opening)</li> </ul> <p>As advertised the exhibition boards and accompanying information were then moved to the Shute End Council Offices for display until the 3<sup>rd</sup> August when the consultation period ended. An officer from the Regeneration Team was available to discuss the scheme on request.</p> <p>The exhibition boards and information was also available to view on the Regeneration web site <a href="http://www.wokinghamregeneration.co.uk">www.wokinghamregeneration.co.uk</a>. A link to this site is also available on the Council web site <a href="http://www.wokingham.gov.uk">www.wokingham.gov.uk</a>.</p> <p>Feedback could be submitted using either the electronic feedback form on the Regeneration web site or on one of the hard copy feedback forms available at the exhibition or at the Council offices.</p>
	<p>How was the consultation publicised?</p>	<p>The Council undertook extensive promotion of the event which was successful in attracting around 1,200 people to the two day event and many additional visitors whilst the exhibition was at Shute End. The following promotion was undertaken –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 5,000 letters were sent out to residential addresses around the town centre</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Separate mailing to local businesses to attend a preview</li> <li>▪ Direct emails and letters to all who had registered details from previous exhibition</li> <li>▪ Banners and posters in the town centre advertising the event</li> <li>▪ Updates on Council and Regeneration websites</li> <li>▪ Information in latest Borough News magazine</li> <li>▪ Adverts in local press</li> <li>▪ Articles in Wokingham Times and local news papers</li> <li>▪ Radio interviews on BBC Berkshire and Heart FM</li> <li>▪ Ongoing publicity and conversations on Council and Regeneration Twitter feeds.</li> <li>▪ Meetings held with Town Council, Chamber of Commerce, Town Centre Forum and Residents Associations.</li> <li>▪ Presentations at local secondary schools to promote event and gain feedback from younger residents.</li> </ul> <p>Following the two day event itself there were further articles in the press, posters in the town and electronic advertising for the continued exhibition at Shute End which ran until the consultation closed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August.</p>
	<p>I searched for the plans on the Planning Portal and could not find them. Why not?</p>	<p>The Planning Portal only contains plans which have been submitted for Planning Approval.</p> <p>The reason to consult this summer was to get feedback on the main scheme designs whilst they are still being developed ready for a planning application in the Autumn. This means we will be able to incorporate feedback from the exhibition into the final design. Once we have submitted the scheme for Planning Approval the plans will appear on the Planning Portal.</p> <p>However all the information from the Exhibition was made available on the Regeneration web site <a href="http://www.wokinghamregeneration.co.uk">www.wokinghamregeneration.co.uk</a> where it can still be seen for information?</p>
	<p>Why am I not being given the opportunity to</p>	<p>The Town Centre Regeneration proposals on display here are part of an ongoing</p>

<p>comment on the overall concept of regeneration of the town centre?</p>	<p>consultation process since 2005. Members of the public have been heavily involved at each stage of this process and have helped set the principles of development in the Borough and Town Centre.</p> <p>Wokingham Borough Council have undertaken a series of consultations which have helped inform the proposals –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Core Strategy (Consulted on from 2005-2009). The Core Strategy sets the overall level of residential and commercial development within the Borough until 2026. It identifies where this should be located in four main Strategic Development Locations and the level of infrastructure (such as highways improvements, schools, employment locations and retail provision) that is required to support this growth. The Core Strategy includes a detailed Retail Capacity Study which set out the requirement to increase retail capacity (both food stuff and non food stuff retail) within Wokingham town centre and to what level this should be provided.</li><li>2. Strategic Development Locations SPD (Consulted on from 2009-2011). The SDL Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) look at the designs for each of the four SDLs identified in the Core Strategy in detail. Two of the new SDLs are located to the North and South of Wokingham town centre and will provide 4,000 new homes for the town.</li><li>3. Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD (Consulted on from 2009-2010). The Town Centre Masterplan looks in detail at the requirement for growth identified as part of the Core Strategy. The Masterplan sets out where the development growth should be delivered within the town including key anchors units to reinforce effective retail circuits and the infrastructure required to create a sustainable town centre</li><li>4. Town Centre Regeneration Proposals (Consulted on from 2007-ongoing). The vision and priorities for the Council's Regeneration project was developed in response to a range of public consultations such as the Core Strategy, Key to the Gateway scheme, the Wokingham Workshop and Town Centre Masterplan. Following the selection of Wilson Bowden in July 2011 a public exhibition was held showing how the proposals had been moved forward since the masterplan was agreed. Around 1,750 people attend this and the feedback was further used to take forward the detailed designs. Another exhibition was held in July 2012</li></ol>
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		<p>showing the final plans for Peach Place Refurb and the further develop plans for Elms Field and Peach Place Plaza. The feedback from this is currently being reviewed and elements will be incorporated into the proposals due to be submitted later this year.</p>
	<p>Is this my last opportunity to comment on the development?</p>	<p>The purpose of this exhibition was to bring forward our latest ideas and gain public feedback to enable us to build up the detailed designs ready for a planning application in the Autumn.</p> <p>There will be a full statutory consultation period at this point where people will have the opportunity to comment on the proposals as part of the planning process.</p>
	<p>What are you doing with the comments forms you are collecting?</p>	<p>All of the responses will be analysed and a report detailing the comments and how these will be fed into the design process will be published later this summer.</p> <p>A summary of responses will also be included in the Statement of Community Engagement that will be submitted with the Planning Application later this year.</p>
	<p>I object to the development of the town centre and do not believe there is local support as claimed</p>	<p>The Council has not rushed into the project and has been consulting on development within the Borough since 2005 looking at initial options for the Core Strategy. During this there has been continued and growing support for town centre regeneration.</p> <p>Last years consultation showed overwhelming public support for regeneration and initial assessment of the current feedback continues to reaffirm this as the case. The majority of verbal conversations with the Regeneration Team at the exhibitions were very positive and supportive of the scheme. Feedback and analysis from consultations is available for anyone to read on the Regeneration website <a href="http://www.wokinghamregeneration.co.uk">www.wokinghamregeneration.co.uk</a> and will continue to be updated as new information is compiled.</p> <p>Making changes to the town centre will always be an emotive issue and, as can be seen from the spectrum of public comments made during consultation, any development will need to balance a large range of conflicting local views. Growth within the town centre is desirable as it forms part of the infrastructure requirements</p>

		<p>to support delivery of the large numbers of houses and the town needs to adapt to thrive with the increasingly changing lifestyle led by local people.</p> <p>If development does not come forward within the town centre it is likely to come forward in out-of-centre locations, this will further weaken the position of the town centre and draw more footfall away from the town</p>
	<p>You said that you listened to peoples comments and made changes following last years consultation but what actually changed?</p>	<p>As set out in our response to ‘Why am I not being given the opportunity to comment on the overall concept of regeneration of the town centre?’ the principles of regeneration within the town have been established through long term consultation and policy setting.</p> <p>This means that last year we were not consulting on principles like whether there would / would not be development on Elms Field, and whether there would / would not be a new foodstore in Wokingham. These have been set already through the establishment of the Core Strategy and Masterplan SPDs. The current regeneration project is about making sure that they are delivered in the manner which works best for the town centre as a balanced whole.</p> <p>Last years consultation was about asking for feedback on what types of facilities should make up this development such as types of retail and leisure provision, types of housing and what should be in the open space. We have also revised the scheme over the past year with changes such as creating an improved setting to the Town Hall in Market Place, a detailed park design, no development on the Shute End site, changes to the car parking provision, redesigning the layout of the hotel, appointing specialist Residential Architects to get something unique to Wokingham, and undertaking a comprehensive design analysis of the town to create a more local approach by identifying key points of the Wokingham architectural vernacular.</p> <p>The 2012 consultation has been around looking in greater detail at the design of the scheme and whether local people believe we have come up with a design language that reflects Wokingham, it is also around asking people about the preferred design options for the new residential proposals and what is needed for the open space.</p>

<p>Why has the planning application for Peach Place refurbishment come in so soon after the consultation finished?</p>	<p>The Peach Place refurbishment application was finalised following the consultation in July 2011. The architecture and design was altered after comments received. At the exhibition in July 2012 the plans for the refurbishment were shown as the final proposals which were not subject to further change and would shortly be submitted.</p> <p>Members of the public will still have the opportunity to comment on the designs as part of the statutory consultation period which forms part of the Planning Application process.</p>
<p>You recently published a Public Notice to Dispose of Elms Field what was this and does this mean you are selling it?</p>	<p>The Public Notices of 22nd and 29th August were published in response to a procedural requirement arising under the Town and country Planning Act 1990.</p> <p>This Act requires that any Local Authority intending to dispose of land held as Public Open Space must give notice in advance and have regard to any objections arising. This same statutory procedure was followed by the Council prior to the Appropriation of the same land five years ago. The current intended disposals will give effect to the planning purposes for which the council appropriated the land in 2007.</p> <p>In the case of the recent notice, it is required to refer to proposed “disposal” of the land defined in the notice. In the context of the Act this term includes a wide range of property transactions including letting and selling. The notice has to be published to meet our statutory obligations even though it is repeating information that has been in the public domain for a long time and was exhibited most recently at the public consultation event in July.</p> <p>In terms of the proposed “disposals” referred to in the notice, the current plan remains unchanged i.e. for the new Elms Field public open space to be retained in public ownership and control, the retail development to be let to commercial occupiers, the new houses/flats to be sold to individual owner occupiers and the new public highway to be adopted by the Highways Authority. The term “disposal” in the context of the Public Notice covers elements of the land that will have to be “let” (to retail operators) or “sold” (to residential occupiers).</p> <p>The intended disposal of different elements of the land in different ways is an</p>

		<p>essential means of delivering the proposed redevelopment of parts of Elms Field and the overall regeneration of the Town Centre. In this respect the Notice merely confirms the Council's adherence to the Town Centre Masterplan in accordance with the plans most recently exhibited at the public consultation event held on Elms Field in July.</p>
	<p>The design shown is not identical to the adopted Town Centre Masterplan SPD. Does this mean it fails to meet planning policy?</p>	<p>The Town Centre Masterplan is an adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) building upon the policies set out in the Core Strategy. The SPD provides guidance for development in the town centre and is a strong material consideration in the assessment of planning applications.</p> <p>As a Council controlled project the design follows the Masterplan closely, however there are some important differences we are proposing which we feel make our scheme better. These include –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Moving the hotel to the opposite side of the roundabout as suggested in the Masterplan so we can mask the rear wall of the foodstore and use it to create a landmark building at the Southern Gateway</li> <li>▪ Redesigning the new Elms Road with a bend so we can frame the park better, use natural traffic calming to slow traffic down around the park and reduce the attractiveness of the road as an alternative through route</li> <li>▪ Building residential properties above the Elms Field retail as opposed to office space to create natural surveillance over the park providing a safer and more vibrant location throughout the day and evening. Also recognising the existing overprovision of small office space within Wokingham town centre and a desire to not create units which are likely to remain empty long term</li> <li>▪ Retention of important Shute End car parking. In addition to weekday office parking, the spaces are also used as Member/Public parking for evening meetings and as public parking on evenings and weekend.</li> </ul> <p>Where we do choose to differ from the Masterplan we need to provide clear reasoning behind our decisions to show how the scheme and town benefits. The formal pre-application process, which sees the Regeneration Team meeting to discuss items such as these with the Planning officers, has enabled us to experiment</p>

		with options and discuss these thoroughly to agree an acceptable approach forward.
	<p>Isn't the developer going to simply build what they want so they can maximise profit and then leave rather than build what is right for the town?</p>	<p>In the case of this regeneration project it's the Council who are acting as the developer rather than any private company looking for a quick gain. We feel we are well placed to lead on this as we care more about the town centre and the long term success of the town than any private developer would. Many of those directly involved in the project live in or around Wokingham town centre and are passionate about getting the project right.</p> <p>Over the past decade there have been several attempts to look at regenerating the town centre which have mainly been unsuccessful due to their piecemeal nature and the need to overdevelop sites to maximise profits. The Council themselves came forward with a proposal to sell the Elms site for development in 2007 but following public consultation on developers initial concepts for the Elms they decided to halt this project and take a new approach where the Council would have much greater control over what was delivered in the town centre and how the North/South elements of town work together rather than apart.</p> <p>The Council undertook a comprehensive procurement process to identify the right partners in the Barratt Group to advise us in delivering a successful mixed use scheme. Although the Brief for the regeneration sets out that it must be a viable project which delivers the growth required by the Core Strategy, as a Council project we are fully in control over what is delivered and when it is constructed.</p> <p>This means that we have been able to ensure that the scheme is balanced between the north and south and does not lead to overdevelopment of any one area, we can also make sure that the scheme is built to a very high quality and that capital generated can be ploughed back into the scheme to improve it with things such as high investment in the park and public realm. This is because in addition to financial profit the Council is also in a position to consider the community gain for the project.</p> <p>As landlord the Council is also in control of setting the long term letting strategy for the development which will help us make sure that the right retailers come to the town to help create the balanced independent and regional retail provision required</p>

		for the town centre to thrive.
	<p>Why are the council paying for this scheme and risking tax payer money?</p>	<p>The Council has always had confidence in the strength of Wokingham as an attractive but underperforming retail town. Since starting out on this project it has become more and more evident that this is an excellent investment opportunity for both capital and revenue returns. This is why several major developers were interested in being involved in the scheme and remained so through the long procurement process.</p> <p>One of the requirements of the Project Brief was to create a deliverable and financially viable scheme. The proposal demonstrates a good long term return</p> <p>It's also important to make sure that any financial risks are minimised so the Council has appointed Wilson Bowden and David Wilson Homes to make sure we have the necessary knowledge, experience and links to the commercial markets. We have also placed binding conditions on ourselves, such as pre-let conditions, to ensure that we have sufficient tenants signed up to guarantee income before construction on different phases of the scheme starts.</p> <p>Wokingham is the lowest funded Council in the Country and needs to look for ways in which we can increase income without relying on local tax payer or central Government funding. That's why schemes like this which can generate additional funds are important. As the developer the Council is in a position to retain the scheme and associated income or realise actual profit by selling some of the assets at the appropriate time.</p>
	<p>Why do we need a hotel? Wokingham is not a tourist area</p>	<p>Despite its excellent location at the heart of the Thames Valley and its transport links we agree that Wokingham is unlikely to become a major tourist destination. However there is a need / demand for a hotel to increase the town's attractiveness as a business location within Berkshire.</p> <p>The Borough is working hard to ensure that we continue to attract new business and retain existing business in the area as it's these companies which provide the high level of local employment. However Wokingham is less attractive as a location due to</p>

		<p>its failure to provide the facilities, such as hotels, which business needs. There are surprisingly few hotels located in the area given the amount of business headquarters in the Borough and there is strong interest from providers in coming to the town centre.</p> <p>Many travellers prefer staying in a vibrant town centre location with choice rather than a remote out of town location where they are tied to hotel facilities. Wokingham has a thriving leisure scene with a variety of high quality restaurants and bars, as well as an attractive market town feel which can be used to appeal to travellers and draw them to stay in the Wokingham rather than elsewhere. Creating the hotel in the town will also help generate additional footfall and help support the 18hr economy necessary for the town to thrive.</p> <p>By raising our profile as a business location we can continue to promote Wokingham as a good place to do business and encourage more companies to remain or locate here.</p>
	<p>Why do we need more shops? Aren't there enough already, especially now everyone shops on the internet?</p>	<p>Over the past year there has been a lot of information in the news about how town centres are struggling and more and more shops are closing. As a town Wokingham is managing to buck this trend and since the exhibition in July 2011 the number of vacant units in the town centre has significantly reduced.</p> <p>As part of the Borough's Core Strategy, which sets out the level of development in the town, the Council undertook a retail capacity study to look at how many new houses were being built and where these were located. The 2007 study analysed the amount of retail floorspace currently available in the town centre and the amount that would be required to provide for all the additional growth coming locally. This was then adjusted to take into account the changing face of retail with things like the increase in internet shopping and click and collect services.</p> <p>A second retail study was undertaken in 2010 as part of the Town Centre Masterplan SPD development to make sure that the figures from the earlier study still stood and that the increasing trends towards e-commerce has not had a greater impact than expected. Both Capacity Studies identified a significant additional capacity and a</p>

		<p>shortfall in the current provision and the regeneration project is working to address this whilst leaving scope for other future expansion in the town centre.</p>
	<p>Why are you proposing a range of units? Shouldn't Wokingham be made up of only independent / boutique units to make ourselves different from other towns?</p>	<p>We all believe that independent boutiques are a good thing to have in the town centre. However one thing which most independent stores need to survive is a large level of footfall in the town to give them enough regular custom and passing trade. That's why one of the key things for Wokingham to thrive in the future is to strike the right balance between larger brands who will act to bring more people into the town for their day to day shopping and smaller independent stores to help create a uniquely Wokingham feel.</p> <p>We are doing this by building the right mix of store sizes to intermingle independents with regional and national names and by carefully placing anchor stores at key points in the town centre to encourage footfall past our smaller traders.</p>
	<p>Why do we need another foodstore? There are already several close to the town centre?</p>	<p>As part of the Borough Core Strategy there are over 4,000 new houses coming to the edges of Wokingham. Retail Capacity studies were undertaken to calculate how much convenience (foodstuffs) retail floorspace would be needed to cope with this growth in homes. The study found that with all this new development, even when taking into account the recent out of town Lidl store, there was going to be a shortfall in provision and that a new foodstore will be required within the town.</p> <p>Knowing that a new foodstore was going to have to be provided somewhere within the town the Council looked carefully at where this should be located to work best for Wokingham. Over the past 15 years national planning policy has leant towards out of town locations. The result is that town centres have been killed off with people abandoning them in favour of these big standalone retail parks. If you talk to the traders of Wokingham they saw an enormous fall in trade when Tesco moved out of the town centre. We feel it's important to bring the foodstore back into the town so that it can support the other traders in the town by bringing in the core daily footfall that is currently missing; this will help strengthen the vitality of the town centre.</p> <p>There will always be some people who simply do their food shopping and leave but national research shows, along with local evidence from those using existing town</p>

		<p>centre stores such as Waitrose and M&amp;S, that a large proportion of shoppers will link trips to a foodstore with other shopping and leisure if the offer is right within the town and the parking is managed properly. That's why we are working hard on the mix of units within the town and have agreed terms with the foodstore to make sure the car park becomes a real town centre car park as opposed to their sole use.</p> <p>By placing important shops, known as anchors, at key points within the town you encourage people to move between these locations and strengthen retail circuits. By locating the foodstore at the south of town, and reinforcing anchors at other main points such as Peach Place, we will be able to draw people through the town and create increased footfall past the areas where the majority of our smaller units are located.</p> <p>Another important factor for having a foodstore in the town is that it brings in good investment and supports the overall scheme viability. Having the foodstore helps guarantee that the regeneration works will go ahead when other local and national schemes have failed. The foodstore value will also act to enable the proposed development of the 1960's block on Peach Street, which does not stack up financially on its own without allowing overdevelopment of the site.</p>
	<p>The delivery access to the foodstore makes an unattractive gateway to the town</p>	<p>We agree that the blank wall at the rear of a foodstore is not the right gateway for the town centre which is why we have come forward with the proposal for the hotel which wraps around the corner and along some of Wellington Road. The entrance to the foodstore car park and servicing area is further along Wellington Road opposite the existing block façades of the Carnival Pool and Southgate House.</p> <p>The hotel helps creates active frontage around the Southern gateway and allows us to come up with a well designed and exciting building to show you have arrived at the town. We have reviewed initial options for the hotel and will be developing these further over the coming months to come up with something special for this location as a proper gateway.</p> <p>As the scheme has evolved careful consideration has been given to the servicing and delivery strategy for all commercial units in the scheme. Various options have been</p>

		<p>considered and our conclusion is that the best proposal for the foodstore is to be accessed off of Wellington Road. This takes into account the need to minimise the impact of the scheme on the highways network and also our commitment to create a high quality and flexible pedestrian area to the front of the foodstore and retail that can be used for activities such as outdoor eating and events.</p> <p>There is extensive design work being undertaken to ensure that the servicing side of the foodstore can become an attractive addition to the town centre. We are investigating a range of options such as green walls, planting, public artwork and architectural ways in which the façade can be broken up to create something of real interest.</p>
	<p>Wokingham does not have a department store yet. Why are you not providing one as it would be a much better anchor than a foodstore?</p>	<p>Consideration was given to providing a department store at the Southern Gateway rather than a foodstore. Conversations with the main providers showed a lack of interest in Wokingham as the town is considered too small a location and they are already represented in Reading and Bracknell.</p> <p>A department store would also fail to create the type of anchor store necessary to get the level of daily footfall and strengthened retail circuits Wokingham needs to thrive. The modern department store format has changed and rather than offering unique goods modern stores are made up of small branded concession units under one roof. For Wokingham to work as a whole it's important that these types of unit go back onto the high street to draw shoppers around the town rather than concentrating them in one location.</p> <p>Additionally a department store would impact significantly on the project viability as the Council would need to make significant capital contributions towards the cost of fitting out the store as well as ongoing rent concessions. In order to create a viable scheme other areas of the project would have to be developed to a much more intense level to offset the costs incurred.</p>
	<p>The Elms Field retail is too far out of the town centre. Won't people just shop there, splitting</p>	<p>Wokingham is a small compact town. The areas proposed for development are within a few minutes walk from each other so it is not viewed as being too far out of the</p>

<p>the town into two and killing off trade in the centre and at the far end of Peach Street?</p>	<p>town centre. However the town centre currently suffers from a limited retail circuit concentrated around the Market Place and few shoppers travelling beyond. The majority of our independent traders are further out along Denmark Street and Peach Street.</p> <p>As part of the Regeneration the Council are creating larger anchor stores, so called because they weigh down core points in a retail circuit and draw people to them, at key points to the South of town and the far edge of Peach Place. The anchors will help to bring more day to day shoppers to the town and their locations will help draw footfall along an extended 'high street' increasing the number of people who pass our independent traders. In addition to getting the anchors in the right locations the Council is working with Wilson Bowden to ensure that the right mix of shops is located amongst the different areas to encourage people to move between the two sections, the plan is to deliver two differently scaled but complimentary locations.</p> <p>The anchor and balanced retail effects can be further enhanced by making sure that parking is provided at the right locations and linkages from the car parks are improved to make accessing the town centre easier. When coupled with public realm improvements such as effective signage and promotion performance of the town centre as a whole will improve following the regeneration and trading levels should go up in areas outside of the core Market Place.</p>
<p>There are loads of empty shops already in the town. Why are you not dealing with these first?</p>	<p>Over the past few years there have been some closures such as Woolworths and Peacocks which reflect national trading issues rather than local conditions. Bucking national trends there are currently very few empty units in the town centre and in the past year several new businesses have come to the town.</p> <p>In June 2010 WBC bought the Peach Place portfolio which then suffered from several empty units. Since then, we have managed to ensure they are all trading, mainly with local traders</p> <p>However, there is a need for more appropriate units in the town centre which will bring in a better mix of shops, increasing footfall, supporting existing businesses and acting as a stimulus for growth.</p>

	<p>Why are you not developing the area of Peach Street towards All Saints church as this is in desperate need of regenerating?</p>	<p>One of the key requirements for the Council's Regeneration project was to come forward with a viable project which would help deliver the infrastructure growth requirements identified within the Borough's Core Strategy and Town Centre Masterplan.</p> <p>Attempting to regenerate too large an area at once has been the downfall of many regeneration schemes both financially and logistically. In order to avoid this pitfall the Council set the project boundaries to cover areas of the town which were identified as highest priority within the Town Centre Masterplan and public consultations.</p> <p>The Council has limited landholdings within this section of Peach Street but it is expected that the Council's Regeneration scheme will encourage landlords to invest in the stock that they own and will act as a catalyst for further private schemes to come forward in line with the Town Centre Masterplan.</p>
	<p>Like Martins Pools which the Council built over many years ago, Elms Field was gifted to the people of Wokingham and the Council has no right to build on them.</p>	<p>Both Martins Pool and Elms Field were purchased historically by the Council at full market cost to provide for a range of uses such as leisure and local development.</p> <p>Martins Pool was a good facility but due to its outdoor nature was only available during the peak summer time and appealed to a limited range of residents. The sale of Martins Pool helped fund the development of the popular indoor Carnival Pool which is used by a much larger range and number of people throughout the entire year.</p> <p>In a similar nature by using some of the Elms Field land we are able to deliver the facilities that the town needs to support local growth requirements whilst offsetting the overall cost to the local tax payer and ploughing profits back into the facilities</p>
	<p>Why are you building on the open space? Especially when the town needs more parks to deal with all the additional housing being built.</p>	<p>The Council recognises the importance of open space and planting within the town but has to carefully balance this with the need to deliver the infrastructure required for a significantly growing local population and the need to create a sustainable town centre for the future.</p>

		<p>Key to the town centre regeneration project is the delivery of a high quality and flexible town centre park which will encourage use of the open space by a much wider range of age groups and people than currently use the area and extend use throughout the year. Feedback from the consultation in 2011 has helped guide our proposals for the open space with the creation of open spaces, areas of planting and relaxation and a purpose built area for events.</p> <p>The project will also allow for the improved pedestrian linkage of the park to the town centre by moving the road to the far edge of the park allowing fluid movement from the retail to the park and the opportunity to have leisure facilities such as cafés directly linked to the open space. The design for the park will be further refined following feedback from the latest consultation event.</p> <p>In addition to this town centre park, the delivery of the north and south Wokingham Strategic Development Locations will see the creation of several new large green open spaces which will be within easy reach of the Town centre along with improvements to leisure facilities at locations throughout the area.</p>
	<p>Is there still going to be a Children's play area in the new park?</p>	<p>We see families as being key to getting the right feel and vibrancy for the town and want to do more to draw them in to use the town centre. The plan is to create a new and improved play area within the park. Although the existing play area is well used it is rather dated and there is much more stimulating and enjoyable equipment available on the market today which caters for a range of ages and needs and is much more accessible to all.</p> <p>The main part of the play provision is located close to the foodstore area of Elms field to give it improved surveillance and security but the plan is that play will spill out into other areas of the park with improved facilities over the entire space including a levelled area for events which will be much more suitable for playing ball games and running around.</p> <p>The park design built upon last summers consultation and this year we have asked much more detailed questions around what people would like to see in the play area and what kind of ages we should be providing for. We have also been out talking to</p>

		<p>schools on regeneration allowing them to have a say in something they will use. This feedback will help us further the proposals for the park based upon what local families and children would like to see</p>
	<p>After the Regeneration will there be enough space left to hold annual events like the May Fayre and Food festival</p>	<p>With the changing face of retail events like these are seen as an important way of revitalising the town, bringing more people in and creating the right 'feel' for Wokingham. The Council has been working with those responsible for organising and running these events on the design of the park to make sure that these can continue to expand.</p> <p>The designs for the open space include a large area of open space which has been specially designed as an events area to cater for existing events, and a wider range of new ideas, to occur in the future. This flexible area will be purpose built to provide the facilities required such as power and water and drainage whilst remaining as a wonderful area of open space for leisure and relaxation for the rest of the year.</p>
	<p>Why are we losing mature trees within the scheme?</p>	<p>The Council recognises the importance of open space and planting within the town but has to carefully balance this with the need to deliver the infrastructure required for a significantly growing local population and the need to create a sustainable town centre for the future.</p> <p>Detailed tree surveys have been undertaken to look at the existing trees including quality, canopy/root ball and expected life span. As part of the necessary development some of the trees will be lost but the design has been developed to retain as many of the best quality trees as possible by incorporating them into the scheme.</p> <p>We are also working closely with the Council Arboriculture team to ensure that we mitigate any loss of trees with high quality new tree planting through the scheme at appropriate locations to ensure that the town continues to maintain it's pleasant green feel and that a legacy of well thought out planting is created both in the short term but also for the long term heritage of the town.</p>
	<p>What will be the impact on existing wildlife</p>	<p>Extensive ecological studies are being undertaken as part of the scheme</p>

	<p>within the town centre?</p>	<p>development process including looking at things such as animals, bats, amphibians and birds. These are being used to evaluate what wildlife is already present in the development sites and whether it will be impacted upon by the scheme, but also to guide what improvements could be made to increase biodiversity within the town centre thorough a wider range of planting and improved habitat design.</p> <p>All this information will form part of the Design and Access statement and accompanying Ecological Impact assessment submitted as part of the Planning Application later this year</p>
	<p>Why are you building more housing in the town centre?</p>	<p>Town centres are ideal places to provide residential accommodation as they help cater for a wide range of ages and needs. Town Centres are some of the most sustainable locations as they have links to facilities such as schools, public transport, shopping, leisure and health.</p> <p>By bringing people into the town centre to live you also help create more vibrant town centre communities with people around throughout the day helping to support an 18 hour economy. Residential creates a sense of community and provides passive surveillance, which contributes to a safe and secure environment</p> <p>The sales of these residential properties are also important for creating a viable scheme and profit is being used to offset the cost of redeveloping the poor 1960's buildings on Peach Street.</p>
	<p>You are building lots more housing but why is there no new school proposed for the scheme? The existing primary schools don't have enough places.</p>	<p>The Regeneration project is only dealing with a small site and work undertaken on the Core Strategy and Town Centre Masterplan SPD does not identify the locations of Elms Field, the Paddocks and Peach Place as being the right location for a new school.</p> <p>However we recognise the increase in population which will occur as part of the roughly 150 new homes proposed for the Regeneration, and the fact that many of these will be larger homes which will attract more families to the town centre. When any new development is built the Planners assess the number of homes and calculate contributions called Section 106 that developers need to pay to fund things</p>

		<p>such as additional school places and facilities. Although this is a Council Regeneration project we will still be making significant contributions to support infrastructure delivery just as any private developer would do.</p> <p>Outside of this project the Council has been undertaking an extensive review of school place provision and has been consulting with local parents on what needs to be done, where and when it needs to be delivered. The contributions from developments such as the Regeneration and SDLs will be used to ensure the correct provision is in place, including the enlargement of existing oversubscribed schools and the delivery of several new schools as part of the North and South Wokingham developments.</p>
	<p>Why are the buildings so high around Elms Field and Wellington Road?</p>	<p>There are a variety of building heights proposed within the scheme and the different approaches are being used to tackle specific design needs and issues at each location. In the majority of cases height is being used to reflect the nature of what is there already or to create landmark buildings at key points. As can be seen from the existing architecture in the town centre such as town hall and Market Place when buildings are well designed to work together with the correct styles of roofline and proportions, far from feeling overbearing the architecture gives a feel of space and sense of place.</p> <p>The new park is a large space and it's important that the buildings are high enough to create a sense of framing for the park and don't fade away at the edges. It's also an important design tool to use slightly higher buildings on corners to create a strengthening 'book end' effect which will help to identify key points and help balance the scheme. We think eaved town houses framing the new Elms Road are the right response to create a naturally surveyed and vibrant town park</p> <p>It's also important that the residential scheme has thought to the buildings surrounding the development when establishing heights which is why we are proposing things such as lowering the residential heights which are on the sightline from Albert Road so their street scene retains the right feel of scale, and building at a scale appropriate to balance and not be over-dominated by the existing large flats on Ellison Way at the north edge of the development.</p>

		<p>We are also going higher on the side of the Elms Field commercial development as these buildings sit right next to the existing large mass of the multi-storey car park and office block which would dominate anything too low. It also allows us to create some quite exciting architecture around the edges of the space.</p> <p>Another location where it is important to get a building with more height is the hotel at the bottom of Denmark Street which is being designed to create a gateway to the town with a sense of arrival at Wokingham town centre. Although it is important to get a building with a sense of massing and occasion to this corner it's also important to minimise the impact on the residential properties opposite. This is why the revised scheme has set the hotel back from the road and incorporated semi mature tree planting between the houses and the building to soften the line. Setting back the hotel building also allows us to lower the bank and widen the pedestrian route down towards the Carnival pool site.</p>
	<p>Is there going to be enough parking in the town centre?</p>	<p>Wokingham is a busy town where many people come in by car so it's important that the Council work hard to get the parking right within the town centre. With the level of development proposed the Council is looking at a range of factors to establish a Town Centre Car Parking Strategy.</p> <p>In order to produce the Strategy the Council is undertaking a comprehensive review of what parking already exists in the town and how well it is being used now. They will then be looking at the level of growth proposed for the Borough, where it is located and what the parking requirements will be in the future. From this they will establish a range of important information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish the amount of car parking spaces that the town will need to support existing needs and the planned growth (considering both resident, visitor and commercial needs)</li> <li>▪ Establish the balance between short, medium and long stay spaces within the town centre</li> <li>▪ Establish where these spaces should be located within the town to ease access, capture cars at the edges, and reduce the need to travel through the town to reach appropriate parking sites</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider methods for improved management of parking with in the town such as live Car Parking Information Systems to identify spaces, wayfinding signage and improved methods for making payments.</li> </ul> <p>The Town Centre Regeneration team has been working closely with the Council Highways department to support them in the delivery of the Wokingham Town Centre Parking Strategy requirements. The 350 space basement car park below the new Elms retail helps to provide much of the towns short stay shopper parking at a key entrance point to the town centre, whilst the provision of additional parking outside of the project boundaries, in line with the locations identified within the Town Centre Masterplan SPD will help the Council to achieve the key objectives listed above and create sustainable parking for the whole town.</p>
	<p>Why are you getting rid of the Rose Street Car Park as it's my favourite car park?</p>	<p>There is capacity within existing town centre car parks and the additional car park which will be underneath the new supermarket. The Council is looking at a range of factors to establish a Town Centre Car Parking Strategy (see response above).</p> <p>By using the Rose Street Car Park we can create a fantastic public space which will contribute much more positively to the town centre and will be a lovely environment for people to shop and relax.</p>
	<p>Won't these proposals simply lead to more traffic congestion in the town centre?</p>	<p>The Town Centre Regeneration project sits within a range of highways improvements planned for the area as part of the Borough Core Strategy. These include schemes such as the Station Link Road, the widening of the railway bridges over Finchampstead Road, the Northern relief road and Southern distributor road all of which are designed to reduce congestion in the town centre.</p> <p>However the regeneration team are committed to making sure the proposals work within the existing network and are not dependent upon the delivery of schemes outside of the project. As such the team are working closely with the Council's highways team and extensive traffic modelling is being undertaken to look at areas such as road/junction design and location of car parking to establish the best solution for the development and the town. A Traffic Impact Analysis will be submitted with the Planning Application detailing findings and proposals for the scheme</p>

	<p>How will you stop the new link road proposed between Shute End and Wellington Road from becoming a rat run? Why not close it to through traffic?</p>	<p>The road is intended to be primarily for residential access and access to the existing car park. However the Council are aware of the risk of the Elms road becoming an alternative to using the new Station Link Road and have been undertaking extensive work to minimise this risk. This has involved looking at options to minimise the attractiveness of the through route by using natural measures such as junction design, restricted directional access, creating an offset and non-direct road route, and considering the use of surfaces within the scheme.</p> <p>In order to create the safe and vibrant street scene required for a town centre location it is important that the street remains a through road and avoids the enclosed dead end of a cul-de-sac environment. The road will also offer alternative access to the residential properties and car parks helping to reduce pressure on other parts of the town network.</p>
	<p>Won't the delivery access on Wellington Road just cause more congestion?</p>	<p>The design of the Wellington Road servicing area has been carefully considered to ensure the best flow of deliveries to the foodstore and minimise any impact on through traffic and local amenities. It makes sense to ensure the access/egress is located on a main road in order to reduce impact on the network. It is not expected to increase congestion on Wellington, or other, surrounding roads.</p> <p>We have worked carefully on the design to ensure that deliveries to the store are made off road in a screened and gated service area so that delivery vehicles will not block the roads whilst unloading. We have also working with the provider to ensure a low number of daily deliveries and timing these so that they can be managed effectively out of peak traffic times.</p> <p>The separate entrance and exit to the service area reduces the need for delivery vehicles to turn across the flow of traffic. The gated system used to conceal the service area will be managed so they are open ready for the delivery vehicle arrival and departure to ensure a smooth flow of vehicles and prevent vehicles backing up on the road whilst waiting for access.</p>
	<p>Are the Council planning to improve cycling</p>	<p>When we consulted on the Vision for the Regeneration cycle facilities came out as an</p>

	<p>access to the town centre?</p>	<p>important factor in local needs and we have been working to make sure this is considered as an integral part of the design. We are looking at facilities such as routes within our scheme and appropriate cycle parking provision in the town centre, making sure it is in safer locations to increase natural security.</p> <p>The Council is also undertaking an extensive assessment known as the A329 corridor study to look at travel into and around the town centre and borough. This includes looking at the cycle routes across the borough and how/where these need to be built to create the safest and most enjoyable facilities. The way in which these routes link into the town centre is being given careful consideration and flexibility is being included within the design to ensure best integration into the scheme once these are confirmed.</p>
	<p>Are there any plans to provide public toilets in the town centre?</p>	<p>The Council recognises the need for publically available toilets within the town centre and continues to support the Local Loos scheme to ensure that toilets are managed to a high standard within the town.</p> <p>The regeneration team have been working closely with the foodstore provider to make sure there are toilets open to a wider range of the public in an easily accessible location on the Elms Field development. There are also opportunities to provide further facilities to the North of town as we look for tenants at the Peach Place scheme to ensure that toilets are well located within the town.</p> <p>The benefit of working with providers at this stage of the process is to ensure that facilities are designed with Local Loo provision in mind from the start and are not retro fitted like some of the current facilities can be.</p>