

# **FUTURE CHEPSTOW – SHAPING THE CHEPSTOW PLACE PLAN – ISSUES AND CHOICES**

## **Response to the Autumn 2021 Issues & Ideas Leaflet on behalf of the Chepstow Society**

**NOTE: In some cases, we cannot simply state that the words as written are capable of either “Support” or “Not support” – so, we are setting out general comments.**

### **DRAFT Vision Statement and themes (page 4)**

A. Do you agree with the draft Vision Statement? (Page 4 of the leaflet)

Broadly, yes

Is there anything you would change, remove or add into to the draft vision?

The next stage needs to identify clearly who is responsible for implementing any proposals, and where the necessary funding will come from. The Place Plan should not simply be used to justify Supplementary Planning Guidance for the RLDP. That is important, but possible initiatives will also be identified which will require investment from other sources, including the Wales Government, the county council, the town council, private investors, community groups, and individuals. Future documents need to set out clearly who will be responsible for implementation, and should highlight those areas in which the town council will take responsibility

Do you have any comments on the organisation of the plan into the six themes?

No comment

### **Getting Around (page 6)**

#### **Getting Around - Planning Guidance.**

1 Needs to recognise that much of town is hilly, and large parts are some distance – more than walking distance for many people - from main shops and community facilities. “Active travel” as often used is not appropriate for a large proportion of residents, including the elderly, those with disabilities, and those having to balance multiple commitments including child care, shopping, and travel to work.

2 It is particularly important to improve the crossings of the A48, which currently divides the town. Subways are unattractive and discourage walking, and more safe crossings need to be provided. Traffic flows need to be reduced on the A48 to help achieve this. With a bypass, it should be possible to provide several at-grade crossings of the A48, especially at the Tesco lights.

There is a need for more speed indicator signs on the A48 through Chepstow in both directions. Traffic frequently travels too fast both up and down the hill, and mostly because people do not realise it is a 30mph limit. This could provide some improvement in pedestrian crossing of the A48.

3 The disadvantages of moving the bus station away from the main shopping area need to be recognised. Many of those using buses need to use stops within or very close to the main shopping area, and it is unlikely that any shuttle service between the rail and bus station will be financially justifiable.

It will be difficult for buses, especially double-deckers and National Express coaches to manoeuvre at the train station unless the proposal also involves removing much of the parking associated with the station which is not a helpful idea – many people who catch trains do not have local bus services heading to Chepstow at early hours in the morning or later in the evening when they might wish to commute. Almost all bus services serving Chepstow do so within a limited time frame. So taxi or car pick up will still be required for those who don't or can't park at the station.

In addition there will be at least two additional sets of traffic lights for the buses to negotiate to reach the station which will add journey time for buses and may result in National Express (whose services are well used) deciding not to include Chepstow on its routes at all. Currently it has a quick in/out route with no lights to contend with. Loss of National Express would be a serious blow to wider connectivity.

4 This is somewhat disingenuous, in that – without a bypass - any proposals for further development are likely to generate additional traffic on Hardwick Hill.

### **Getting Around - Practical Projects.**

1 We support measures to improve traffic flow at High Beech roundabout, which could help reduce congestion in the town and minimise pollution – but, only to a very limited extent. The problems of traffic on the A48 are ones of volume – exacerbated by the extent of new development in the town and the Forest of Dean – as well as the road's gradient (which is unresolvable), narrowness (again, effectively unresolvable), and the number of road junctions and property accesses directly onto the road (also largely unresolvable although measures may be needed to restrict movements at the Bulwark road junction and improve flows around the Larkfield (BP/Greggs) retail area).

As well as reducing traffic and congestion, it is also vitally important that Chepstow has a resilient road system, which allows choices of movement to be made – roads should not be closed off without all the implications being fully considered.

2 There is much to commend the Transition Chepstow plan, though it should not be adopted wholesale as it is flawed in some respects. The projects outlined, for active travel, bus-rail links, and car sharing, are all supported in general terms.

Regarding walking routes, there are issues of security to be considered - they need to be well-lit, but also overlooked by houses. Many people feel safer walking along a pavement

with cars passing frequently, than on a hidden path away from a road. There is also the issue of gradients in the town, particularly as a disincentive to walking and cycling for many people including older people.

Further comments:

- A 20mph zone should be applied throughout residential streets, including Lower Chepstow, where more traffic calming measures such as speed bumps on St Ann St and Lower Church St should be introduced.
- There should be further restrictions on heavy lorries accessing Lower Chepstow, frequently causing congestion and damage to properties because of the bend at St Mary's churchyard.

## **Empowering Communities & Enhancing Services (page 7)**

### **Empowering Communities and Enhancing Services**

The idea of using vacant properties as community centres is supported. This should not be restricted to the town centre – it should also apply to those parts of the town that are distant and/or cut off from the town centre, including Bulwark, Thornwell, and Bayfield.

### **Empowering Communities and Enhancing Services - Practical Projects**

1 Support

2 Support

3 More cross-border working needs to take place, but simply establishing a working party is unlikely to achieve much. What is needed is an overarching strategic approach to the M48/A48 corridor covering the area between Newport and the Forest of Dean, that takes account of both the strategies for SE Wales, and the West of England including Gloucestershire.

4 Support

5 Not supported. This should be given a lower priority, recognising that Chepstow has not been a predominantly Welsh-speaking area since at least Norman times almost a thousand years ago.

6 Support

7 Support

8 Support

9 Support

10 Support

11 The town council needs to improve its profile on social media as well as in physical media. The previous “What’s On” leaflet should be reinstated and expanded to include notices of town council decisions and activities.

12 Support

### **Heritage and Place (page 8)**

#### **Heritage and Place - Planning Guidance**

1 Greater recognition should be given to the post-WW1 garden city housing developments of historic importance, both at Hardwick (“Garden City”) and Bulwark.

2 Support

3 The “distinctive Chepstow context” should include its historic significance as a trading and shipbuilding port, and walled market town, as well as its strategic significance in medieval and later times. The Welsh language is of lesser significance – Chepstow was never a Welsh-speaking town.

4 Potential viewpoints, currently poorly maintained and/or overgrown, should be developed as a feature of the town – especially along the coast path in Bulwark, and at the western gateway of the castle.

5 Support the installation of artworks and environmental improvements along the A48.

#### **Heritage and Place - Practical Projects.**

- 1 Support a limited reappraisal, and greater account being given to previous studies of the historic character of the town. Previous work seems to have been largely ignored in decisions taken on development adjoining the river, affecting views to and from the castle.

There is a continuing need to improve the appearance and maintenance of the High Street and its pavements

2 Strongly support. There is a need to improve signage between the town centre, the castle, and car parks.

3 Strongly support. Information boards need to be placed in key locations (town centre, car parks, castle, etc.) highlighting the important structures and features of the town, and routes to them. More information boards should also be placed in other parts of the town, notably Bulwark, to indicate the history of the area and help bolster local community feeling (rather than just being aimed at tourists).

4 Support. The role of the town as a walking base needs to be promoted.

### **Future Homes & Sustainable Development (page 9)**

Future Homes and Sustainable Development - Planning Guidance.

1 Support

2 Support. However, there needs to be some recognition of factors which make town centre living less attractive, such as lack of residential parking and private outdoor space, and noise and nuisance, especially in evenings.

Future Homes and Sustainable Development - Practical Projects.

1 Support, although it is disappointing that it appears that the town council did not respond to MCC on the RLDP strategy consultation - so the comment seems disingenuous.

2 Support

3 Support

4 Support

### **Shopping, Working & Visiting (page 10)**

Shopping, Working and Visiting - Planning Guidance.

1 Support, while recognising the disadvantages of town centre living for some, including lack of car parking and private outdoor space, and noise and nuisances especially during evenings.

2 Support

3 Support.

4 Support

5 Support. In particular, there is a need to improve links between the castle and town centre by rebuilding and making an attractive feature of the decayed and dangerous wooden steps leading down from the Port Wall adjoining the Welsh St car park, into the Dell.

6 Support

7 Support with the proviso that any extensions and conversion should respect the historic character of the town centre, especially within the existing conservation area.

Shopping, Working and Visiting - Practical Projects. Please indicate those you SUPPORT

1 Probably support, though the meaning is not very clear. One approach would be to develop the potential for attractive viewpoints around the town, such as in Bulwark and at the western end of the castle (see previous comments)

2 Support

3 Support

4 Support, but it is regrettable that there is no mention of the obvious practical means of attracting more footfall for all of these purposes, which is free or reduced cost parking. Whilst some people may come by whatever public transport there is (or indeed actively travel there) many others will still want or need to come by car. Better signage only seems to have been identified in relation to the environment theme but there is a need for good clear signage within the town itself and on the approaches to it and to such facilities as the Drill Hall and other community centres

5 Support. This could also include the promotion of river trips.

6 Support

7 Support

8 Support

### **Open Spaces & Natural Environment (page 11)**

Open Spaces and Natural Environment - Planning Guidance ideas.

1 Support, particularly to ensure that the coast path is improved in quality as a visitor experience. There also need to be environmental improvements to the Riverside park area and path, to incorporate a play area, gym equipment, and more benches.

2 Support, while recognising that further development may be necessary in the future and no "edge" should be considered as immutable.

3 Support

4 Support

5 Support. The reference to "land" should also include bodies of water, specifically rivers.

6 Support, especially close to the town centre (possibly including the private land north-east of the Welsh St car park).

Open Spaces and Natural Environment - Practical Projects ideas.

1 Support

2 Support

3 Support

4 Support

### Last Section!

Any other comments you want to add ?

The next stage needs to identify clearly who is responsible for implementing any proposals, and where the necessary funding will come from. The Place Plan should not simply be used to justify Supplementary Planning Guidance for the RLDP. That is important, but possible initiatives will also be identified which will require investment from other sources, including the Wales Government, the county council, the town council, private investors, community groups, and individuals. Future documents need to set out clearly who will be responsible for implementation, and should highlight those areas in which the town council will take responsibility

About you

Do you live or work in Chepstow?

Group response

What age bracket do you fall within?

Group of various ages