

SITE SPECIFIC TOTNES

Exhibition and Design Workshops 8 – 13 September 2008.

REPORT TO THE CO-SPONSORS (Totnes and District Community Strategy Group and Totnes and District Preservation Trust). 30 September 2008.

1.00 VENUE and VISITOR NUMBERS:

The Exhibition was held, during the Totnes Festival, in the Community College (The Mansion) Fore Street. It was open to the public from 11.00am to 5.00pm. The stewards gave introductory talks to groups of visitors and encouraged the completion of a questionnaire (see **Section 3** below).

Approximately 200 people visited the exhibition.

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Mayor's Consort, together with the Chairman of the Community Strategy Group and the Town Clerk made an invited visit to the Exhibition. Subsequently, the Chair of the Public Art Group (Cllr. Anne Ward) and the Chair of the Totnes Preservation Trust (Charles Fox) were invited to make a presentation to the Town Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee (15 September).

2.00 EXHIBITION CONTENT:

The Exhibition was arranged in six sections, viz:

2.10 Introduction:

This included a statement of the objective of the exhibition (Site Specific Totnes - see attached) and also a number of questions about Totnes (Questions Concerning Totnes – see **Section 4** below) and photographs of the town 'now and 'then'.

2.20 Previous Proposals:

This section contained a synopsis of schemes to improve different aspects and areas of the town centre, which have been undertaken by various community groups and the local authorities, over the past decade.

These included :

The Millenium Proposal for the Civic Hall/Market Square (1997); The Urban Design Public Realm Improvement Proposals for the Fore Street/ High Street 2002 – ongoing); The Rotherfold (2003); Open (green) Spaces (2004); The Leechwell Garden (2005 – ongoing); The Bridgetown Street Improvement Proposals (2005).

This Section of the Exhibition acted as a reference source for both the New Proposals (see **Section 2.40** below) and the Workshops (See **Section 2.50** below).

2.30 Ongoing Discussions:

This section included:

SHDC Totnes Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Sponsored by the Totnes Preservation Trust) – (2006);

Reference to the Totnes Community Strategy Group Projects Review document (2006);

The Totnes Trust response to the Projects Review (*Discovering Totnes*) – 2007;

SHDC Totnes and Dartington Development Plan Consultation Document (2007 – ongoing);

Reference to SHDC Public Space Strategy document (2008).

This Section of the Exhibition acted as a reference source for both the New Proposals and the Workshops.

2.40 New Proposals:

This section was divided into two parts:

a) This sub-section took the form of an Audit of Existing Public Art in and around the town centre and a Draft Public Art Policy and Strategy with a Proposed Public Art location map.

b) An Urban Design Strategy:

This sub-section took the form of –

A new Traffic Circulation Strategy for the town centre (including the provision of a ‘hoppa’ bus service) designed to improve the Fore Street / High Street as a series of communal urban living spaces and encouraging pedestrian predominance during the middle hours of each day (by removing non-essential traffic). In the medium to longer term the strategy is designed to address the need to attract more visitors to the town centre, because it would be perceived as a place in which to spend ‘quality time’ (and thereby increase the income to the town centre specialist businesses) without overloading the road infrastructure. In the longer term the strategy envisages the removal of through business traffic from the existing A385 Bridgetown Hill / Puddavine ‘urban clearway’ route.

An new Urban Development Strategy for key ‘gateway’ areas in and around the town centre, including Station Road (between Brutus Bridge and the Redworth junction); the Railway Station; Steamer Quay to The Plains; The Town Square (Civic Hall).

Reference was made to several recent publications which provide guidance on improving the public realm. These included:

Streets for All (Southwest)	- English Heritage / Department for Transport.
Power of Place	- English Heritage.
Its Our Space	- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment.
Manual for Historic English	- Historic Towns Forum (supported by CABI / EH).
Retail Development in Historic Areas	- EH /EHTF and Planning Advisory Service (of RTPI).
Local Leadership for Better Public Spaces (Building Sustainable Communities)	- CABI / Local Government Association.

2. 50 Design Workshops:

2 .51 KEVICC Workshop (18 May 2008).

The students at KEVICC focussed their ideas particularly on those spaces used and enjoyed most by young people, viz: Borough Park, Vire Island, The Civic Hall area and The Weir Pool which are key areas for formal and informal recreation. They also proposed a town centre Tourist Trail which would be designed to reveal the history, archaeology and environmental points of interest eg: water sources and courses. A further proposal was for an interactive message board or wall (see attached resume – KEVICC Workshop Commentary).

The Urban Design proposals presented in the Exhibition reflected the students’ inputs.

2.52 Business Workshop (9 September) and Community Workshop (11 September).

The outcomes from these two workshops broadly agreed with the Urban Design proposals presented in the Exhibition.

Additionally the following ideas and proposals emerged from the Workshop sessions:

i) General Items:

- Planning Policy: - It is desirable to survey shopkeepers as to their perceptions regarding the origins of shopping journeys to the town centre and to survey shoppers as to the actual origins of their shopping journeys.
- Allow and encourage individual initiative and creativity in design / alterations (avoid uniformity of design).
- Landscape: - There is need for an enhancement strategy for the town centre surroundings, as well as the centre itself.
- Areas such as pocket parks could be put into the hands of community trusts, eg. Kingsbridge Hill.
- Cycle Routes: - There is a need to extend the network to connect outlying areas eg: Westonfields, Follaton, Littlehempston and Berry Pomeroy to the town centre.
- There is need for segregation/ protection of all cycleways/ footpaths from vehicles.
- Pedestrian Routes: - Lanes / footpaths need improving and integrating into a comprehensive system.
- Improve the important link between the Station and the town centre.

- Traffic Calming and Management - Measures need to be taken on through routes eg: Bridgetown Hill, Station Road, Kingsbridge Hill, Plymouth Road
 - Park/Ride facilities are needed for visitors (to relieve pressure on town centre car parking which should primarily be short-term).
- River Front Access- The River should be accessible to all users along its route through the town centre.
 - Waterfront activity areas need to be developed for sport, teenager/children informal use.
 - Boat-based businesses need to be encouraged eg: café / restaurants.
 - Additional berthing needs to be provided for visiting private boats.
- Public Transport - Improve links between outlying areas and the town centre.
 - Require only 'eco-friendly' energy sources to be used by public service vehicles.
 - Encourage local public modes of transport eg: Community buses, motorised rickshaws.
- Refuse and Litter - Improve street cleanliness by providing more and better litter/refuse bins.
 - Reorganise collection times to avoid conflict with town centre daytime uses.
- Public Information:- Provide a public display/dissemination system of information (eg: electronic, interactive information board).
- Pedestrian Support:- Provide benches at intervals related to disability requirements (perhaps colour-coded to link to public transport eg: 'Bob the Bus' – yellow).
- Civic Facilities: - Give Top Priority to redevelopment of Civic Hall Community facilities (Flexibility, multipurpose, multi-use). Improve Market facilities (shelter). Hold a national competition for design proposals.
 - Allocate central location for new, expanded library (As part of Civic Area).
- 'Commercial Development' - Develop Art Market places eg: Vire Island, Rotherfold, to support and expand creative enterprises.
 - Develop town centre as specialist shopping/ recreational area.
 - Extend steam railway link from 'Riverside' terminus to the 'Brunel' building.
- Improving the Public Realm - Use carefully designed lighting to enhance uses and character of the town centre.
 - Create community spaces for the meeting of the young and old members of the community.
 - Carefully design all installations, surfaces, etc. to add 'beauty' as well as improve 'function'.
 - De-clutter the public realm.
 - Introduce features to enliven selected urban spaces eg. fountains, waterfalls.

ii) The Rotherfold:

- Improvements need to support a variety of uses eg: residents (family friendly), community (Festivals, Charity Markets), commercial (external adjuncts to pub, shops, takeaways).

iii) Fore Street / High Street:

- Break up the linearity of the space and increase the number of focal points by opening up space laterally to frontages of major public buildings and potential pocket parks. eg. St. Mary's Church, United Reform Church, The Mansion, the 'Blind' Garden.
- Widen pavements to allow social interaction, window shopping, etc. as well as ease of two-way movement.
- Allow businesses to use areas in front of their premises (where space is available) to enliven and animate the street scene and to encourage communal 'ownership' of the public realm.
- Inhibit fast vehicular movement by developing chicanes with planters and public art at strategic points.

iv) Civic Areas:

- St. Mary's Churchyard / Guildhall Yard:
 - Open up churchyard as a public space for communal activity. Strengthen connection between High Street and Guildhall Yard. Relocate War Memorial to give more ceremonial space. Introduce a 'coffin rest' as a piece of public art.
- Castle Site:
 - Open up and enliven as a community space.
- Market Square Redevelopment:
 - Refurbish existing hall add spaces for smaller events, exhibitions and information centre. Develop basement level for noisy events. Incorporate supports for outdoor events. Provide cover and support for market. (cf. Roman Agora or medieval Butterwalk). Arcade the High Street frontage with offices/apartments over. Add Library facilities, lock-up shops and apartments over. Extend market area and connect outdoor space to St. Mary's Square and Guildhall Yard as sequence of civic spaces.

v) Vire Island:

- Place prominent 'barometer' sculpture at downstream point to record rising tidal levels and to warn of impending inundations (as result of global warming)
(NB: any new construction should reflect the origin of the Island ie. made from dredged material).

vi) Station Road/
Borough Park/
Industrial Estate:

- Encourage establishment of 'networking' café facilities.
- Relocate noisy activities away from housing area.
- Provide alternative access (to facilitate emergency escape).
- Redevelop TA Centre forecourt as transfer point for town centre deliveries.
- Develop jetty points at Long Marsh/Vire Island/Morrisons / Park and Stride / Station.
- Provide bridge link from Park and Stride to riverside footpath.
- Extend Borough Park to edge of Station Road (Provide new housing as part of mixed use development - including indoor sports facilities at park level and commercial space at station concourse level).
- Develop linear park along Malt Mill Lake and mixed use live/work units along south side of Station Road.

vii) Station:

- Provide new bridge serving Station and linking KEVICC Lower School site to Borough Park as cycle/ Pedestrian route.
- Add outrigger footbridges to existing railway bridge.

2. 60 What Next?:

This section of the Exhibition outlined the ambition of the co-sponsoring organisations to pursue the proposals through consultations with the local authorities, government and other agencies and elected representatives, who have an overview of developments in the town, in order to achieve consensus as to what can be done to improve and enrich the public realm, and also to establish an integrated programme for the necessary works.

A questionnaire was made available to visitors to the Exhibition. 120 of these were distributed. (see below for analysis).

3. 00 – QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS:

120 questionnaires issued – 58 returned completed. (approx. 50 % completion).

Responses:

Part A:

Q1: Do you think there is a need for a plan to improve the way the various parts of the town work and link together, to be more convenient and pleasant for residents, businesses and visitors?

Yes – 58 No - Nil 100% support

Q2: Do you think that public art can help make the town more attractive and enjoyable?

Yes - 57 No - 1 99% support

Q3: Do you support the Totnes Community Strategy Group and the Totnes Preservation Trust in their efforts to improve the town centre?

Yes – 57 No - 1 99% support

Part B:

	St. Agree/Agree	Disagree/St. Disagree	
Q1: Is a better link needed between Steamer Quay and the town centre?	57	1	99% support
Q2: Should more use be made of Vire Island and the riverfront for social Activities?	54	4	93 % support
Q3: Should more priority be given to pedestrian activities in Fore/High Streets?	56	2	96% support

Q4: Should we increase traffic management in the town centre to alleviate Congestion, pollution, damage and conflicts between users?	58	-	100% support
Q5: Should town centre businesses be allowed to use the areas in front of their Premises to enliven the street scene?	52	6	90% support
Q6: Should the Civic/Market Square area (Birdwood Court) be developed for Better market, community and social use?	58	-	100% support
Q7: Should the Civic Hall (and other buildings) be redeveloped to improve the Range of accommodation/ uses available?	54	4	93% support
Q8: Should there be a 'Hoppa Bus' service linking all major transport / parking Areas with the town centre?	55	3	95% support
Q9: Should more guidance be given to property owners/occupiers regarding the Quality standards expected of any alterations made to buildings?	55	3	95% support

Part C:

Please list/briefly describe those things which you think would improve and enrich the town centre.

Items registered in this Part are taken into account in Section 2.5 above.

4.00 – QUESTIONS CONCERNING TOTNES:

These questions were appended to the advertising flyers circulated prior to the Exhibition.

- * Could the street scene be more attractive?
- * Are the open spaces in the town centre suitably designed?
- * Should there be more public art?
- * Do the pedestrian and traffic flows work well?
- * What changes to public spaces would most enhance the town?
- * What should be the priorities for improvement of the town centre?
- * How sustainable is the town?

5.00 - FUTURE ACTION:

It is the intention that the Exhibition material will be 'repackaged' (focussing on the New Proposals ie. the Public Art Proposal; the Urban Design proposals) including a brochure (for wider dissemination of the proposals) and possibly 3D modelling of the proposals. This refreshed material will then be exhibited as part of a presentation to the stakeholders (including elected local government representatives, administrators, government agencies and other environmental bodies, and community groups. The target date for this event is late Spring 2009.