

Wokingham Town Centre Market Place Highways Project

Responses to the Committee's Call for Questions

Response for and on behalf of Autistic Pride Reading, Registered Charity No. 1180805

We note the above-mentioned call for questions and would like to raise our formal concerns about elements of the Wokingham Town Centre regeneration project.

It is our understanding that various disability groups were consulted originally, but none of these appears to be a group able to give the perspectives of autistic residents. As you must be aware, one in 30 of the general population is believed to be autistic, a figure that will not be lower for Wokingham. The vast majority are not being guided round the streets by a carer, but are the business people, shoppers, parents, retired residents and other individuals who have to navigate the streets regularly on foot and by other means of transport. There are of course also a good number of autistic children and younger people who may at risk from the new scheme.

One of our team visited the town centre to find out how navigable and safe the new scheme is for them, as an autistic person with a fairly typical visual processing difficulty when in confusing and overwhelming situations - which presumably you know is a common feature of autism. (A sensory processing and social difference, not a 'mental health condition' nor a 'learning disability').

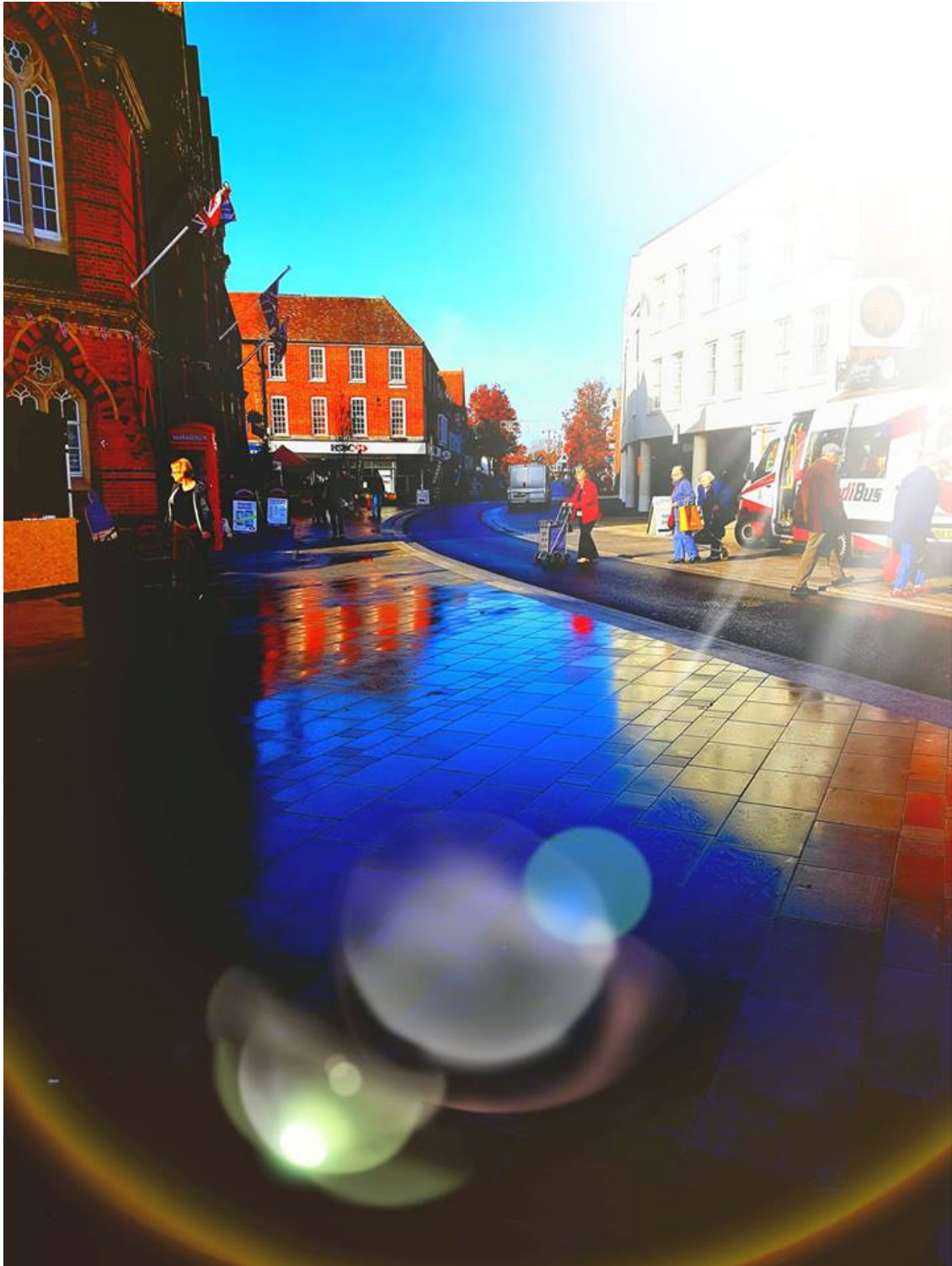
The attached photographs show the extraordinary findings. When wet, a dazzling paving scene with baffling layout. In terms of the disabled parking spaces, absolutely no way to distinguish those from pavement, for their visual processing. A near miss with a car was a result, along with nearly falling flat on their face over a seemingly invisible kerb.

This is a dangerous scheme, and the correct consultations were not done.

We would strongly urge the Council to consult properly, and to work with the correct list of groups to remedy the situation, before there are serious accidents that would have been preventable.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Autistic Pride Reading.





Response from a resident

What Works Well

There are a number of elements to the market place regeneration that are much improved from what was there before. There is substantially less clutter making it easier to navigate the space, particularly for the disabled, and the removal of the large shadowy trees has made a positive difference for those with visual impairment. The market is much better laid out though with more attractive and interesting market stalls coming to town.

Keeping the controlled crossings is a good idea, making it safer for pedestrians to cross, and the fact that these and the uncontrolled crossings are raised makes it easier for wheelchair and pushchair users. The removal of the bus lane has also made the area safer, and the intention to reduce traffic speed is good (although not enough has been done regarding the latter).

The paving blocks being a single light colour makes it easier for vulnerable people to navigate and they are not as slippery as the red bricks making them safer.

The fact that there has been and continues to be a consultation process is good.

What Could Be Better

Despite there being less clutter, A boards still remain a problem, particularly for those with visual impairments, as there is no consistency as to where they are placed.

Many users are struggling to understand the courtesy crossings being unsure on who has right of way. Whilst the courtesy crossings are vehicle rights of way, they are made with pavement material looking like a continuation of the pavement. Many pedestrians are walking out into the road not realising they should be giving way.

The loading bay outside WHSmith makes the courtesy crossing dangerous for pedestrians as you can't see if cars are coming as you cross towards the town hall if a large vehicle is parked there. This was a point raised in the safety audit in 2016.

Whilst there has been an increase in accessible parking bays, they are next to a 30mph road making it dangerous to open doors onto the carriageway. We have been told that the design was to reduce driver speed, which initially it did, but now vehicle users are used to it, the speed has increased again. Given the pedestrianised nature of the area, a lower speed of 20 mph would be much safer. Whilst the bays outside Boots have the carriageway on the opposite side of the car to the bays on Denmark Street, this then reduces the number of genuinely accessible bays.

The accessible bays are also not signed very well, and the fact that they are the same height as the pavement is confusing. The accessible bays also need to be marked out further with hatchings. Many disabled users need access to the rear of the car and it's been a problem when people come back to their car to find another car too close behind it.

Visually impaired users will struggle with the lack of colour contrast. Given that 96% of people with visual impairment have some form of vision, colour contrast is important to maintain independence. The granite sets on the side of the carriageway are therefore very dangerous as users cannot distinguish the pavement edge and edge of the carriageway resulting in a trip hazard. Several users have already tripped because of this. The kerb height is also too low for white cane users. Initially, the idea was to have no kerbs at all to ensure pedestrians had free flow movement. Kerbs were re-introduced due to accessibility concerns, but the compromise was reduced height kerbs to provide some definition, but low enough that people could still cross easily.

A senior officer stated that "to achieve the aim of creating a flexible space that can be closed to traffic for special events and allow people to move around the space more freely, it was decided to use a reduced kerb height that would allow visually impaired

people to identify the carriageway edge whilst maintaining some delineation for drivers.” Users though have now been criticised for crossing the carriageway not at the designated crossing points, so there is a contradiction. If pedestrians are to cross the carriageway at any point, there needs to be colour contrast of the pavement edge. If pedestrians were not supposed to be crossing here, why do we have a low kerb height? The colour of the granite sets has also been raised by the interim safety audit.

Tactile surfaces have not been implemented as per the guidelines. It should be red tactile paving at controlled crossings and yellow at uncontrolled crossings. The studs do not provide enough colour contrast and are not laid out correctly. This has also been raised by the interim safety audit.

Further Comments

The Stage 1 and 2 safety audit report discussed the importance of colour contrast for visually impaired users of the market place area, and this is something that was also raised at the disability workshops, yet these recommendations were ignored. That same safety audit also picked up on the issues surrounding sight lines at the crossing near WHSmith which is still a problem for users.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was not done for this scheme because (according to a senior officer) “it is not a requirement of every project.” However, Wokingham Borough Council’s Public Sector Equality Duty report clearly states the importance of EqIA in upholding the Equalities Act 2010. The reason for an EqIA not being required (according to the same senior officer), is because the disability workshops and government guidance was deemed adequate. However, this same officer also stated that some guidance wasn’t followed (such as *Guidance on the use of tactile paving surfaces*) because it’s not policy, and some of the feedback from the disability workshops was ignored.

The same senior officer as above also stated that “many guidelines advocate the use of colour / tonal contrasted marking to identify street furniture, railings, tactile paving surfaces and so on, however, in conservation areas, such as the Market Place, it may not be appropriate to use such treatments to help maintain the historic value.” How to treat a conservation area is subjective. Many would argue that the yorkstone slabs in the grey colour do not complement the red brick town hall. I would in fact argue, that the red tactile paving that should be used at controlled crossings would complement the town hall much better. To have put aesthetics over safety, particularly when aesthetics are subjective is unacceptable.

Wokingham Borough Council’s Public Sector Equality Duty states that “equality of opportunity and to the delivery of high quality services which meet the needs of **all** our residents.” This is clearly not the case with the market place. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are huge improvements to the space, the development has not gone far enough to ensure it is safely accessible to all our residents. Further still, this could have been avoided if WBC listened to all the feedback given in consultation (colour contrast has been mentioned on numerous occasions), guidelines were adhered to (they are not there to pick and choose from) and an Equality Impact Assessment was done.

Moving forward, I would like to know when and how the market place will be made safe, why WBC has gone against a lot of the guidance in front of them and not done an EqlA, and how future projects are going to be different.

Response from a resident

In my view Market Place is extremely dangerous.

The courtesy crossings are confusing, dangerous and have no legal status in the Highway Code.

The loading and parking pays are at the wrong level and seem like pavement not road and this makes them very dangerous when compared with the way Rose Street is set out.

HSBC bank is open to a ram raid and needs bollards around it. We have had ram raids at Wokingham Waitrose and Wokingham station in the recent past.

Market Place should have bollards to protect pedestrians from vehicles.

The kerbs are too low and vehicles can easily mount the pavement.

Cars speed from Broad Street into Rose Street because the bend has been made faster.

The fire escape outside HSBC bank is blocked by people and their belongings who sit there some days but not nights. You cannot allow fire escapes to be blocked.

I have studied safety in my career and I am horrified at the lack of safety in Market Place. I have raised these issues before and nobody in power seemed interested enough to take action. With safety you have to be proactive rather than wait for the first accident.

Response from a resident

Please consider the following:

Pedestrian safety

Pedestrians and motorists are unsure about use of crossings. Where there are studs but no traffic lights, it is not clear who has priority. At light controlled crossings, the absence of countdown found, e.g. in London, results in pedestrians risking to cross in the period with 2 reds.

There are no barriers to vehicles entering the central paved area, making pedestrians vulnerable to unauthorised crossing (I have witnessed this with a white van taking a short cut). Also, in the extreme, terrorist activity.

CCTV

This is required, both for safety, as above, and control of vandalism. The damage of every string of lights on the Christmas tree on the night of Christmas day is a case in point. It seems incredible that within a £4m project there was not provision for CCTV.

Choice of stone paving

The paving is already becoming badly marked, both by traders' vehicles entering the paved area and oil leaks from vintage wedding cars outside the Town Hall. The former should be restricted and the latter banned. What provision has been made for cleaning and protecting the paving and will this be permanent or having to be repeated every few months?

Drainage

Since rough-cast concrete rather than glazed pipes were used under the surface water drains, what provision has been made for regular rodding of these culverts to clear build-up of detritus?

Electrical supply

No provision seems to have been made for electric points on the NW side of the Town Hall and SW side of the paved area, resulting in the use of above-paving cable channels for market stalls and certain events. Will the need for supply in these areas continue and, if so, will the paving be taken up to provide a safer and permanent provision?

Parking bays

How will the conflict between previously parked cars and arriving delivery vehicles be handled?

Footfall

Has the Council invested in footfall data, historical and planned, to judge the success of regeneration as a whole and in relation to retail growth or demise elsewhere. What is the marketing strategy to ensure Wokingham achieves more than elsewhere?

Congestion

If potential visitors to the market place are discouraged from coming to Wokingham by difficulty of access with congestion, the much-awaited regeneration of interest in our town may not happen. With the easier access to Bracknell, it may be preferable to go there, although reports are that the Lexicon is not doing too well. What is being done to divert the traffic which does not want to stop in the town away from it, through distributor or relief roads, and to improve flow, but not maximum speed, through the town until these roads are completed? In this contest, please see my contribution to the **Transport Discussion Group** (below).

Transport Discussion Group – input 3 December 2018 following first meeting on 27 November 2018.

The following expands on suggestions raised last Tuesday. For reference, it includes ideas raised in November 2012, following a walk around the town with Officers, “Suggestions on Congestion and Parking”. It focuses only on the area where I live, close to Wokingham’s town centre, and looks at both short-term, up to 5 years, and the longer-term strategic needs.

Short-term

In the period up to NWDR and SWDR being completed, congestion in the town centre will increase, at a time when we need to be attracting and retaining new retailers. To mitigate congestion, flow needs to increase but not at the expense of safety. Congestion and parking issues are closely linked and key themes are expanded upon here:

- Create a one-way circulatory road system within Wokingham Town Centre, removing all traffic lights from junctions and Pelican crossings;
- Prevent access to the circulatory system from minor roads which have become rat-runs and disrupt flow;
- Remove on-street parking from all major access roads and other pinch points;
- Create adequate long-term parking facilities at each access point and expand short-term parking facilities within the town centre;
- Remove “traffic calming” measures from major access roads and the circulatory system, whilst controlling average and maximum speeds.

One-way system

Two major issues with this would be the routes and stops for buses and, with the new layout of the Broad Street and Rose Street junction, access to Rose Street.

Removal of traffic lights

Except for the disruption of traffic accessing the Cross Street rat-run from Peach Street, traffic flows relatively freely at the Ship Inn junction. Such a layout should also be considered at Tudor House, Glebelands and Wiltshire Roads.

The traffic lights for pedestrian crossings by the Town Hall present an indirect hazard in that neither pedestrians nor drivers are sure who has right of way at the other new “studded” crossing points. Consideration should be given to Zebra crossings.

Blocking of access from minor roads to the circulatory system

Elsewhere, comment has been made on the Luckley Path vehicle access and some residents asked for its reinstatement with access problems at the Easthampstead Road junction. The latter could be overcome with making the left-hand lane of the section of Peach Street between the Ship and Easthampstead Road being made “turn left only”. This would permit easy egress of traffic from Easthampstead Road. Rose Street, besides providing access to properties and retail, has become a rat-run in both directions.

By making Rose and Cross Streets both cul-de-sacs, traffic flow in Broad and Peach Streets and Wiltshire Road could be increased. However, the need for redundancy in the Town Centre road system is understood and hydraulically-operated bollards could be provided at the southern end of Cross Street and one end of Rose Street.

The original idea of making Rose Street one-way eastbound, if Broad Street were also to become one-way, is now hampered by the new layout of the junction by Clarks. It seems unthinkable to dig up the newly-laid pavement there but perhaps this would be the lesser evil.

Goatley Way is already one-way but I have seen vehicles using the road in the wrong direction to avoid the Luckley Path barrier. This is a less frequent issue but in the interests of safety, it might be better to make Goatley Way a cul-de-sac, too, accessible only from Luckley Path.

Removal of on-street parking from certain roads

On-street parking is already a problem on Eathampstead, Wiltshire and Rectory Roads, restricting flow. On many other Town Centre roads, cars trying to find free parking for the day contribute to congestion, particularly in the morning rush hour.

There should be greater use of double yellow lines on major access roads, extending out, for example, to Star Lane crossing, Molly Millars Lane, Holt Lane, Matthewsgreen Road, Warren House Road and Priest Avenue.

Maidenhead seems to have come to a similar conclusion, with its extended use of double yellow lines; perhaps it would be worth contacting WAM Officers for comment.

On Rectory Road, double yellow lines from Tudor House to Waitrose would allow cars queuing for Waitrose to use the 3rd lane, leaving 2 lanes free, the left lane only turning left into Glebelands Road, the middle lane going straight on or, for Waitrose deliveries, turning right.

On residential roads within the town centre, consideration needs to be given to limited time restrictions around schools, to enable school run parking off major roads such as Easthampstead Road, and to greater use of resident permits. In this way, greater usage of official car parks should enable increase in revenues for WBC.

Long-term and short-term parking facilities

With the restriction of on-street parking, above, increased legitimate town centre parking will be needed. The location of the new multi-storey carpark, with its location on the periphery of the town centre, reduces congestion as well as providing much-needed parking. Similar facilities should be considered at each major access point. Easthampstead East carpark could accommodate a multi-storey facility and would require improved access, perhaps from London Road, opposite the churchyard. It could provide a much-needed fillip to the eastern end of the town.

When approaching the town centre from the West, the provision of a better facility is not so clear-cut. What land is available, or capable of being purchased, around the station or Shute End?

Whilst it may be financially attractive to provide better, long-term, paid facilities around the town centre periphery, the need for good, affordable or even better, free parking, within the town centre is paramount. The next 5 years will be critical to attracting and retaining retail outlets. Consideration should be given to funding more free short-term parking in the centre of the town with increased revenues from the peripheral carparks.

Safe increase of traffic flow

If increased traffic flow is enabled during peak hours, there is an inherent risk with maximum speeds at other times increasing to dangerous levels. There is a need to control both average speeds between points and maximum speeds. The technology is already here to achieve this, namely GPS monitoring and exposure of defaulting motorists. However, this might be insensitive from a privacy standpoint and difficult to enforce, legally. If these problems can be overcome, fine, but if not, traditional radar control of average speed between points and maximum speeds, with police enforcement may be required.

If the speed question can be resolved, investigate removal of existing so-called traffic calming measures, which seem to result more in frustration and greater speed between humps or strategically permitted parking for example, rather than overall control of speed.

Longer term

Even when the NWDR and SWDR are completed, whether congestion in the town centre will fall to an acceptable level is moot point. With no major link from Molly Millars Lane to Reading Road, traffic will undoubtedly continue to use the Meadow Road rat-run.

Completing the ring around Wokingham through Smith's Walk has been discussed on a number of occasions but perhaps now is the time to consider its formal study and the possibility of a CPO or the one or two houses which may at present preclude its completion.

If Smith's Walk proves to be undeliverable, perhaps completion of the ring road further south, through Woodcraze, which I believed was discussed at a meeting of this group, should be considered.

Officers conducted a hot-spot analysis some years ago and this suggested the planned junctions by Tesco on the Finchampstead Road might not be able to cope with intersecting flows on the SWDR and Finchampstead Road. There were other hotspots so would it be worth updating this analysis and publishing it to the TDG members, who could then focus their attention on specific, known problem areas and suggest further ideas?

Suggestions on Congestion and Parking, Wokingham Town

Whilst the following may be seen as being solely in the interest of Wokingham Town Wards, the resolution of congestion and parking issues here is material for the wider Borough, with its need for successful town regeneration and parking provision elsewhere. Comments are welcomed.

Congestion - premise:

We may not have an effective relief road to North and South of Wokingham even after 2026, we need to improve traffic flow within the town now and plan for the longer term.

Observations:

- 2-way traffic in Broad Street and need for traffic lights causes congestion for traffic approaching junction at Tudor House from Broad Street and Shute End;
- Parking on right-hand side of Rectory Road prevents filtering of cars waiting to enter Waitrose;
- Sharp corner at left turn from Rectory Road into Glebelands Road forces traffic to cross centre of Glebelands Road, preventing use of a left filter;
- Junction by the Ship Inn, with parallel then merging flows works well, bar the next point, below;
- Traffic from London Road wanting to access Cross Street, interrupts flow in Peach Street;
- Stationery traffic in Peach Street heading for the Town Hall ignores the turn left only arrow in the left lane at the Easthampstead Road junction, obstructing traffic wanting to turn left there;
- Traffic is using Goatley Way as a rat-run to Sturges Road, ignoring no left turn and a safety risk;
- There is a risk of injury to pedestrians with cars emerging from Luckley Path into Peach Street, owing to the former's narrowness and poor visibility;
- There is a risk of injury to cyclists and pedestrians with the unexpected contra-flow past the Town Hall and Boots for buses entering Denmark Street;
- Rose Street is used as a rat-run, from Broad Street to Wiltshire Road and from Peach Street to Broad Street, disrupting traffic flow at each junction;
- Broad Street is wide enough to allow a considerable amount of parking if it became one-way;
- Pelican crossings interrupt traffic flow more than Zebra crossings and the latter can be effective and safe, as demonstrated at the Hope and Anchor.

Suggestions:

- Create a one-way circulatory road system within Wokingham Town Centre by making Broad Street one-way for all vehicles;
- Remove all traffic lights from junctions and Pelican crossings;
- Replicate the Ship Inn junction layout at Tudor House, Glebelands Road, Wiltshire Road and Easthampstead Road (at Glebelands Road, this might require a CPO for junction improvements);
- Close off Cross Street, Luckley Path and Goatley Way to traffic where they join or leave Peach Street and legitimise left turn for delivery vehicles leaving Goatley Way into Luckley Path;

- At junctions use islands and between these junctions employ use of raised kerbs between lanes to achieve “no merge”, “merge” then “must turn left” stretches (see sketch to explain this);
- Do away with all parking in Rectory Road by the old police station enabling 3 lanes: for traffic from Shute End, from Broad Street and waiting to enter Waitrose.

Issues:

- Positioning of bus stops and bus routing;
- Adequacy of parking (see below);
- Control of speed, especially outside rush hours.

Longer Term

- Assess impact of relief road via Smiths Walk and full Northern relief road on traffic;
- Estimate additional unfunded cost of these improvements in order to review priorities.

Parking - premise:

Free, limited parking has been requested by residents and may increase retail trade. However, particularly in times of restraint, we want to obtain the maximum revenue from car parks, consistent with their full utilisation.

Observations:

- Town centre car parks generally have less than 50% occupation on weekdays but little spare capacity on Saturdays. Over the week, this represents a significant loss of revenue;
- There is abuse of short-term on-street free parking and no provision for off-street free parking;
- Parking in residential town centre roads creates problems for residents (I have an interest here), increases congestion and potential revenue is lost;
- Parking on main roads into town centre causes congestion and frustration and is a safety issue;
- Signage to car parks is poor and uncertainty of where space is available causes unnecessary circulation of traffic if car parks are up to capacity;
- The WSP off-street parking study does not expand on the inter-relation with on-street parking and any decision on one without the other presents a risk;
- Increase in parking charges may impact retail trade or increase on-street parking in residential roads without the anticipated revenue gain;
- There is no all-day provision close to the market for market traders.

Suggestions:

- Carry out detailed off-street car park utilisation study before changing any parking charges;
- Structure parking charges, recognising price sensitivity, and consider dedicated areas closest to town centre for shoppers with first 30 minutes free;
- Have dedicated short-term areas, say up to 4 hours, closest to town centre;

- If Broad Street were to become one-way, introduce angled parking along the length of one side;
- Split the existing 6-hour area into 4 hours for shoppers and all day for businesses;
- Have areas which change from long- to short-stay from weekdays to Saturdays respectively, so that business users can pay for and take up unused car park space during the week, yet weekend surge for retail can still be accommodated;
- Introduce barriers with charge on exit to allow shoppers to stay longer to buy more;
- Introduce signage at entry points to town centre showing where capacity is available;
- Improve car park signage within the town centre;
- Endeavour to have easier access to parking at each entry point to town centre;
- Have limited-time only parking adjacent to schools;
- Change the rules so residents' permits can be used on some if not all roads within walking distance of the town;
- Extend double yellow lines on all main roads into and around the town, to the limit of walking distance, e.g. on Wiltshire and Easthampstead Roads as has already been done on Milton Road.

Issues:

- What is current utilisation of car parks and would taking up available weekday capacity raise sufficient revenue to offset loss through offering 30 minutes free?
- What is the distribution of periods of stay and how would this vary with changes proposed?
- What mix of free, 4 hour and all day parking provision would be required?
- Can sufficient free, on-street parking be provided, including the possible additions on Broad Street, above, without giving up part of the chargeable area?
- Will the business community accept the concept of being charged for all parking within walking distance of the town centre?
- Is their sufficient respect for double yellow lines for them to be effective?

- How do we enforce parking, in particular 30 minutes free and residents only?



Response from the Wokingham Society:

1. The 'call for questions' was given totally inadequate publicity in respect of local residents and organisations. The stakeholders list used by the Regeneration Team to arrange meetings and notify the local community in the past should have been used in this instance and we feel the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee should do so now and postpone their discussion until they have allowed time for additional responses.

2. As a Society we have been one of the stakeholder consultees from the outset and have taken part in discussions on the Public Realm and the Market Place, through exhibitions, meetings, forums and questionnaires since 2011. It would seem to me

very important that we and others like us should now be able to comment on the current situation and, indeed, be informed about further outcomes.

3. Our concerns, together with many others, about the lack of delineation of parking areas, the need for parking signage and the importance of deterring or preventing vehicles trespassing on the pedestrian apron were passed on to the Regeneration Team and we still wait to see solutions being offered.

4. We also wait to hear what is happening about the independent review of the Market Place Project announced by the Executive Member for Regeneration.

5. There is a 2013 WBC Wokingham Town Centre Design and Delivery Strategy, which includes proposals for the Market Place. Performance ought to be measured against policy expectation. Indeed, with the Strategy now five years old, it ought to be revised and updated, particularly in respect of the public realm radiating outwards from the Market Place, to ensure that the intended holistic approach does not become a series of piecemeal decisions.

Response from a resident

All very pretty, but what a horrific waste of Council taxpayers' money and as for the yearlong mess and disruption together with total incompetence of many of the workforce, I despair.

The lack of proper kerbing and little height difference between pavement and road is causing accidents and I sure hope the new paving is non-slip in snow and ice.

What Wokingham so desperately needs is relief from the mass housing estates and all the traffic and pollution that has been generated. It now takes forever to get anywhere and so much time is spent stopped at endless Traffic Lights the pollution level across the area is beginning to equal London.

Instead of the desperately needed truly affordable homes for the young we have ever more high end detached houses and now a huge hotel and the loss of more Green Space.

Instead of a joined up transport system we have a 'mishmash' with timetable for 4 and X4 just 5 minutes apart on the exact same route. What idiot thought that up? The Park and Ride is now far too small and a nightmare to exit from. Car Park charges are extortionate and then the country wonders why the High Street is dying.

Until the combined efforts of Wokingham Town Council and Wokingham Borough Council get together and find a way to stop all the house building and the total lack of infrastructure, doctors, and a decent hospital instead of the disaster zone that RBH is.

There will be more and more totally fed up residents. As for all the parking restrictions and meters around the hospital Reading Council needs a total rethink

....its parking charges that drives everyone away from everywhere and that includes Wokingham and Woodley and Bracknell too.

After 42 years living in WBC the situation that's now been created is utterly intolerable.

There's not even a bus route that goes to RBH ... A town the size Wokingham now is needs a Hospital of its own not more and more Charity shops and a Piazza outside the Town Hall that most people have absolutely no use for.

Response from a resident

Prior to the regeneration plans being approved I wrote to the Council and Councillors expressing concerns about the general tone that was being used with regards to the "domination of cars" specifically in relationship to photographs of essential disabled parking bays. I was assured that the needs of the disabled community would not be forgotten.

Fast forward to just a few weeks ago and a much anticipated trip to the town centre which die to my disability and the unavailability of town centre parking and I was quite frankly furious.

1) Disabled parking bays on the market side of Denmark Street appear to have gone meaning disabled people have to cross the road to the other side ...not a big deal you say.... but there is a silly little kerb of about 4cm high, not easily visible, very easily fallen over;

2) The parking is not easily identified...so much so that if I hadn't seen another vehicle already parked I would have missed it all together;

3) It already looks horrible because parked cars have dripped oil or something similar onto the new parking spaces...;

4) The oil on the stones is a slip hazard as I discovered when I inadvertently stuck my crutch in one oil spill;

5) The lack of contrast between the pavement and the road gutter area makes telling where the edge actually is difficult. My eyesight is good enough to drive legally but as a pedestrian with the sun shining on the stones it's easy to think the kerb is a gutter width further away than it actually is;

6) The metal studs which I presume are there for the benefit of the visually impaired are slippery when wet.

All told, I can't help but wonder if the disabled community was consulted at all and if so were they listened as it appears that initial aesthetics have been given priority over long term practicality not just for the disabled but for everyone. Quite frankly, as bad as it was before with lumpy pavements and all the other issues at least the council hadn't wasted all that money.

Sorry if this isn't what you wanted to hear but the reality is I am unlikely to return often even though as a Woodley resident I used to visit Wokingham a couple of times a week.

Response from a resident

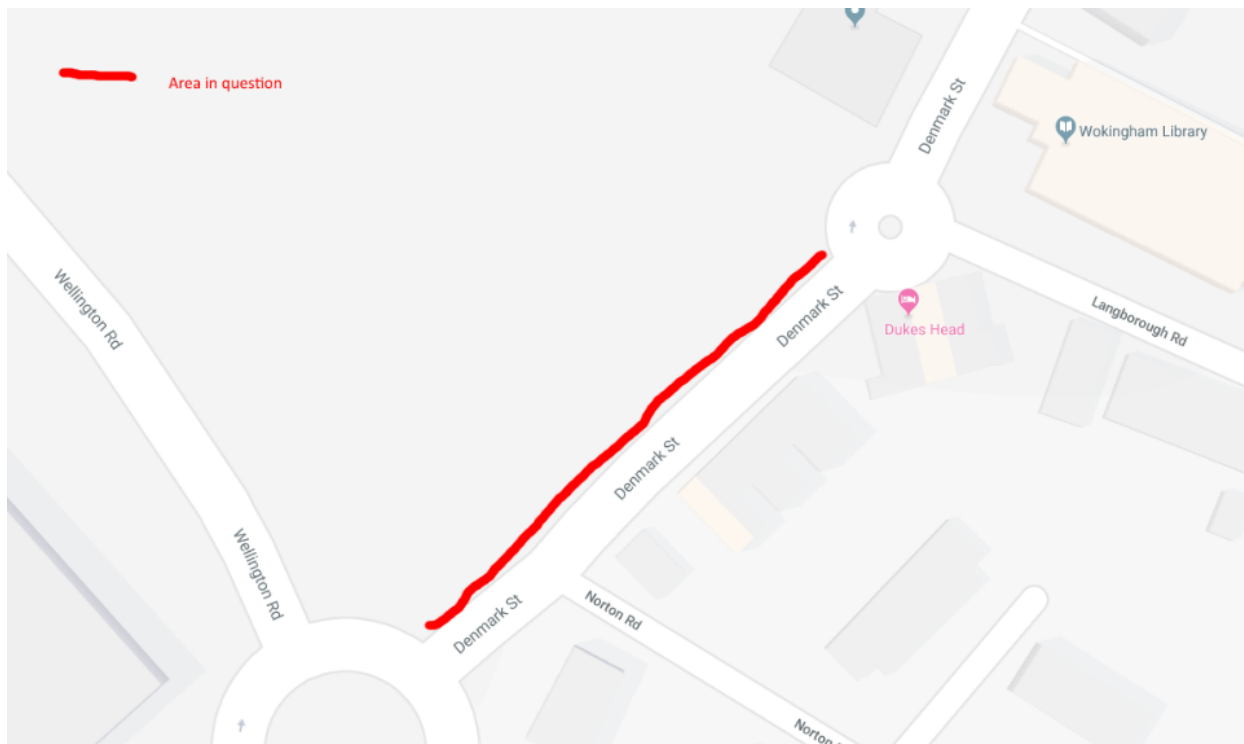
Can you please seek an answer to (during the meeting) and provide feedback on what on earth is happening with Denmark Street.

As you will be aware, a very high degree of vehicles use Denmark Street to either come out of town onto the Finchampstead Road, or use Denmark Street to go towards town and then along Langborough Road.

The stretch of Denmark Street from the roundabout to the Library is not at all wide. Why on earth, when taking down the trees in the park, along Denmark Street, did the Council believe it necessary to 'butt' the new buildings up against the very edge of the road rather than take the perfect opportunity to widen this part of the road.

It now seems as if a perfect opportunity to take a road that is both narrow and a pedestrian path that is also narrow and make both better. Would it really hurt having the new buildings being built just a few more feet in?

Why wasn't this considered, and if it was actually considered, why was it turned down. On what grounds was it not seen as advantageous?



I visited the Town Centre on Sunday with my niece who is a visitor to the area. When we were walking about I approached the crossing stage and she just carried on walking as she did not realise the pavement had stopped and the road began. There is no kerb to highlight the difference, or a yellow line to indicate awareness needed. She is a perfectly healthy person with no sight problems, she was looking around at the other shops across the road. I had to grab her arm to pull her back. She felt it was a very poor way of dealing with a road and pavement interchange.

Also there is very little distinction between the short parking area and the disabled parking in the road by Smiths and Boots. Also I have seen people getting out of cars that have parked there and opening the doors in front of cars coming along the roadway.

There was also a child of about 12 who was going home from school, I think St Crispin's, who shot out of the roadway by M and Co and only because I stopped he didn't hit me. He was travelling very fast and straight out of the road onto the pavement.

The distinction between the road and pavement is so slight fear older and young children will not notice it and fall over.

All these things are very dangerous

I do hope notice is being taken of our comments before an accident occurs it really is only a matter of time. Who really thought this was a good idea with heavy traffic coming through the town all day long.

Response from a resident

I've been told you're looking for feedback about the impact of the Wokingham town centre regeneration on us as disabled people. I am working age, a church minister, mum of a teenager and live in Lower Earley. I lost most of my eyesight (registered severely sight impaired) and mobility just over 3 years ago and use a wheelchair full time.

Before I comment on the accessibility of the regeneration of Wokingham I want to say that once I became disabled I could not access the town centre without someone to help me; the ground was uneven, the pavements uneven, the traffic too fast and the shops often inaccessible. The regeneration is definitely an improvement in terms of pavement quality, space, width of pavements and excellent crossing points; but it is not as accessible as I had hoped it would be and I still need someone to help me access the town. Below are the issues I've encountered:

1. Low kerb heights: I use the 4 or X4 bus to come into Wokingham and get off opposite the post office. The kerb heights are lower than those found elsewhere in the borough or in Reading town centre and this means that the ramp is much steeper than elsewhere - something which increases the risk of the wheelchair slipping - I've had a few bus drivers say they're concerned about this;

2. Lack of colour differentiation between pavement and road: I can see contrasting colours and use these, to ensure I don't fall into the road from the pavement; I understand that there is a colour difference between the road and the pavement in the town centre but I can't see that and, therefore, have to rely on someone else to keep me safe;

3. Disabled parking: the disabled parking bays are not accessible for me as a wheelchair user. Either I have to have my door opened onto the road, or onto a busy pavement. To transfer into my wheelchair the door must be fully open and my chair brought round from the boot of the car; this is obviously not possible in the road or on the pavement. However, this is no different than the issues before the regeneration, just a disappointment.

I hope this is useful; I'm happy to answer any questions this might raise.

Response from a resident

I don't like what has happened/is happening to Wokingham. This so called regeneration has ruined our lovely town.

The town centre is a disaster. Who ever thought of having the edge of the road the same colour as the footpath making the low kerb blend in and a trip hazard? It also leads to "jaywalking" where people just cross anywhere rather than the proper crossing places. The unloading/disabled bays are not clearly enough defined and cause problems with pedestrians.

The new buildings don't fit in with our town's character. What's happened to the trees we were promised? More lies by our Council, as with all the other lies they've told us (won't be removing the hedging at Elms Field, won't be removing the trees and hedging along Mathews Green Road, there will be no access to the estate there from Mathews Green Road, being just three).

The areas given to the people of Wokingham taken away by the Council to be used for things the people don't want. The roads are a disgrace, can't handle the increased traffic from the masses of houses built on our green fields. Houses, not for the people of Wokingham. My son and nieces, born, bred and working in Wokingham, can't afford to live here. Lots of retirement homes but not for the old of Wokingham.

Journeys that used to take an easy 10 minutes now take half hour or more. A trip to hospital in Reading took over an hour and Wokingham to Ascot on a Friday afternoon took just on 2 hours, unheard of a few years ago. Disgusting. Who on earth thought of the stupid cycle lanes? One minute on the road, the next on the pathway and in the case of by the St. Pauls parish rooms. Dotted lines allowing vehicles to park over the cycle lane. Of course it doesn't make any difference to the lycra-clad who ignore them anyway and do as they please.

And what do we get for this? Unacceptably high levels of air pollution from the increased traffic and stop/start driving, caused in part by all the new traffic and

pedestrian lights. High levels of light pollution, vehicle lights, street lights and building lights. Take a look at the station and its car park, the multi storey car park, etc. High levels of noise pollution, early in the morning to late at night. Hardly any respite on a Sunday when I used to be able to sit in my garden and listen to the birds sing. Not any more, there's a constant hum of traffic.

The excessive amount of building has caused problems with our wildlife, we now have problems with rats, never had before, but their natural habitat has been built over so they move on. The pollution causes health problems. Air pollution causes breathing difficulties and light pollution causes insomnia to name just two. Then there's the increase in criminality, never been this high before. We have vagrancy, people sleeping in doorways, a criminal offence, begging, "Nottingham knockers" running riot and more.

I can see why. Wokingham used to be such a nice place to live. Not anymore, it's a nightmare.

Response from a resident

My main concern is around the disabled parking spaces around the Market Place.

1. They are not very obvious to pedestrians as they blend into the pavement.

2. I was under the impression that the purpose of a kerb is to separate the road from the pavement and to protect pedestrians from road vehicles. However in the Market Place pedestrians step up off the road over the kerb on to the disabled bays. There is no discernible difference between the pavement and the bays except for a difference in surface texture. Pedestrians are continually walking on to the bays from the pavement as there is no kerb there. I myself have inadvertently walked on to the bays to make way for a pushchair and nearly been knocked over by a car coming up over the kerb on to the bays.

It's an accident waiting to happen as the kerb is in the wrong place. Many residents share this view.

Response from a resident

I assume there was a Business Case for such an expensive project and the works should be reviewed against it. It is difficult to see what functional improvement the community has gained from the investment. I have lived here long enough to remember when we lost the town centre parking around the town hall in exchange for the short stay Rose Street Car Park. The Council have, with this development, reneged on that deal without providing an alternative near the shops.

By running the project for such a long time the town centre has been permanently impaired as Bracknell has developed a much larger and more pleasant shopping and entertainment facility. Traders have been lost and without shops such as M&S, and Clintons the draw has gone.

The design has been poorly done with limited or ill-conceived consultation.

- The colour schemes and boundaries between pedestrian and traffic are dangerous.
- By choosing a pale pavement scheme the town has lost its traditional mellow appearance and now looks dirty and unloved.

Wokingham as a retail centre will never be a destination shopping experience. It can only ever be a local quick and handy place for immediate needs. Unfortunately people are unlikely to pay more for parking than they would intend to pay for goods. The design has not provided daytime short stay free parking for under an hour this will restrict the ability of the town to recover its trade.

As an example if I need a Birthday Card I am likely to head to Bracknell for Clintons where I can park for free at Skimped Hill and then wander round a larger mall than pay at a Wokingham Car Park.

I believe the Scrutiny Committee should consider the performance of the Council in developing a strategy for drawing people into the town centre to replace the losses brought about by the works.

It looks as if we have invested a lot of money without any gain - less safe, less pleasing to the eye, less traders, lengthy project changing behaviour so that people have got used to going elsewhere.

It also seems that no thought has been given to making the environment safe with CCTV which is expected of a modern town centre.

Response from a carer registered with the Wokingham Outreach Service

Please see below concerns and difficulties raised by one of our registered unpaid carers registered with us at the Wokingham Outreach Service.

I would like to raise, once again, the lack of toilets. Went on Sunday to see the Nativity...two buses as no No3 to Wokingham on Sundays...desperate for loo...could not see any signs on windows. Asked Round Table who did not know, said one in Old Town Hall where they were based, but it was locked. Asked four shopkeepers who hadn't a clue. Left early and crossed my legs.

Also the pavement/road/disabled parking, particularly by Robert Dyas, has only minimal separating sections in height so hard to see level changes and how blind

persons and assistance dogs manage heaven knows...in heavy rain or snow you would not see rise and fall.

Lastly, car parking. Had early meet for choir this Tuesday and tried 3 car parks before just caught somebody leaving. Others did the same and finished going down to multi and then walking back to Rose Street. It seems Wokingham is for the commuter, who park their cars early in the morning for the railway station... Wokingham is now non user friendly with lack of signed toilets, seek and search for parking and take your chance with the pavements.

Response from Southern Co-op

Thank you for your letter on 21 December inviting us to feedback on the recent Market Place town centre highways project in relation to our retail store in Market Place, Wokingham.

We appreciate this opportunity as there was, unfortunately, a large number of areas which we felt could have been significantly improved – many of which could have been resolved by a better level of consultation, communication and support both before and (perhaps more importantly in this instance) during the works as timescales and project details changed.

The lack of communication during the project led to some very serious issues including concerns over customer and colleague safety. Incidents included loss of one of our fire evacuation points, dangerous parking issues, increased crime including from workers on site and inappropriate comments. This is just a brief summary as the full list of incidents is much more extensive.

However, we realise a lot of this feedback may not be relevant to the upcoming Council meeting. If your councillors and/or officers would like to go through them in detail then we would be happy to meet them on site to discuss it in more detail.

We hope that you find our feedback useful for other projects in the future. We can clearly see that the final results of the overall project will improve our customers' experience of the area. For this we are grateful.

Response from a resident

I write as a blue badge motorist, who knows several visually impaired people.

I would like the on-street disabled parking bays to be more clearly marked, and, in particular, to have individual bays marked out to prevent cars parking too close to my boot and preventing me being able to get my scooter back in the boot when I return. That is the only comment from my personal viewpoint.

A cyclist friend says that the road past Boots is so narrow that it's dangerous to ride her cycle there for fear of being hit by a car whose driver decides to overtake. A widening of the road to incorporate a cycle path would be helpful, and there is plenty of space to do this.

Of the 3 visually impaired people I know, 2 have fallen or stumbled while crossing the road near Clarks shoe shop. This is because they cannot see the different shades of colour which differentiate the raised level at which to cross, and the two slopes for car drivers to get over the raised crossing. This means that if they cross at the edge of the level section, they meet an unexpected small change in level at one end of the crossing, and trip. I realise that experience will teach them to use the centre of the crossing, but visitors might well fall.

Finally, I think the period for comments should be extended, as many people were otherwise engaged over the long break, and the consultation was not widely publicised.

Response from Winnersh Parish Council

1. Reasons for the improvement of Market Place

The Wokingham Borough Council web site <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/major-developments/wokingham-town-centre-regeneration/> states that under "**Public Spaces** We are looking to improve the streets and other public spaces in the town centre, to reduce the dominance of traffic and make them more 'people friendly'.

We're working with Wokingham Town Council to carry out improvements to the Market Place. Following a series of meetings and workshops with local residents during 2015 we have been working on the detailed design."

Whilst Winnersh Parish Council supports the reasons for planning these improvements, it has some serious concerns over the outcomes of the project that have been set out below.

2. What appears to be working well

There are several elements of the Market Place project that have much improved the area from what was there originally. The removal of the clutter has enabled the market to be better laid out with a more attractive setting and a variety of market stalls now appearing in the town, making it of interest for visitors. In addition, the reduction in clutter has helped people move about the area more freely, especially when it is busy. The retention of the controlled crossings points was a positive decision, making it safer for pedestrians to cross, and the fact that these and the uncontrolled crossings are raised makes it easier for all people to use including mobility impaired and people with a pushchair/pram.

The removal of the original red pavements that were slippery in the wet is also a positive decision. In addition, the removal of the bus lane around the 'eastern side' of the Town Hall has also made the area safer, and more pleasant.

It is also a positive decision to consult on the completed Market Place project, although the timing over the Christmas/New Year period is questionable. However, hopefully the feedback, including any negative comments will be considered to enable corrective measures to be carried out.

3. What appear to be issues

The loading bay outside WH Smiths makes the uncontrolled raised crossing a potential unsafe point for pedestrians as they have difficulty seeing if vehicles are approaching as they cross towards the Town Hall if a large vehicle is parked there. This was a point raised in the Road Safety audit in 2016.

It was understood that part of this project was to reduce traffic speed through the area. However, there appears to be little evidence that this has been achieved and as the Borough Council has retained a 30mph limit throughout this area, drivers can still legally travel at speeds that do not make the area "people friendly". The Borough Council should consider making this area including its approaches into a 20mph zone. Coupled with the above traffic issue, it is still the dominance / volume of traffic that is a cause for concern and whilst it is understood that for example the Northern Perimeter Road by-passing the town centre has not yet been constructed it would be helpful to know what plans are in place to reduce the volume and therefore dominance of traffic through the town centre.

The signing and marking out of the Disabled Bays and Loading Bays is poor and causes confusion for the public. It is difficult to see where the boundary of the different bays are located making the space inefficient at times as users can park incorrectly taking up either too much space, whereby another driver is unable to access the remaining bay, or park too close, whereby the 'front' vehicle not being parked correctly in the bay, does not have enough space to access the rear of their vehicle, as the rear vehicle has parked too close, by squeezing into the remaining space.

There appears to be a major issue with the colour contrast at the pedestrian crossing points, and Department for Transport guidance has **not** been followed. They should be red tactile paving at controlled crossings and buff at uncontrolled crossings. The brass studs do not provide enough colour contrast on their own and are not laid out correctly. This issue has also been raised by the interim Road Safety Audit.

Visually impaired users will struggle with the lack of colour contrast. Statistics indicate that 96% of people with visual impairment have some form of vision, colour contrast is therefore very important to maintain an independence for these people.

Away from the pedestrian crossing points the decision to retain a 'low but raised kerb' has been made with a black bitumen carriageway. However, the introduction of granite sets adjacent to the low granite kerb of a similar colour to act as a channel has created an issue for many users who cannot distinguish the pavement edge and edge of the carriageway/channel resulting in a trip hazard. It is understood that several people

have already tripped/fallen because of this feature. In addition, the kerb height is also too low for white cane users.

Reading some of the history on this project, it is understood that initially, the idea was to have no kerbs at all to ensure pedestrians had free flow movement. However, kerbs were included due to accessibility concerns, but the compromise was the 'low raised height' kerbs to provide some definition, but low enough that people could still cross easily.

Whilst some people will use the designated crossing points, the 'openness' of the area allows for people to cross at any point and therefore the lack of colour contrast adjacent to the low raised kerbs needs to be resolved. The colour of the granite sets has also been raised by the interim Road Safety Audit.

Whilst there is less clutter, temporary 'A boards' still remain a problem for everyone but especially for those with visual impairments. The Borough Council has the powers to act on the removal of these signs.

4. Summary

Whilst the Market Place project has provided some improvements to the area there are many key issues with the usability of the project.

The Independent Road Safety Audit (stages 1 and 2) highlighted the importance of colour contrast for users of the Market Place area, and it is understood that this is something that was also raised at the disability workshops. However, these recommendations were ignored. The same Road Safety audit also picked up on the issues surrounding sight lines at the crossing point near WH. Smiths which is still a problem for users.

Wokingham Borough Council's Public Sector Equality Duty states that "equality of opportunity and to the delivery of high-quality services which meet the needs of **all** our residents." This is clearly not the case with the Market Place project. It would also appear that an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was not done for this project. However, Wokingham Borough Council's Public Sector Equality Duty report clearly states the importance of EqIA in upholding the Equalities Act 2010. Why did Wokingham Borough Council not comply with its own policy?

The Borough Council clearly underestimated the length of time that the project would take to complete and provided the public with several false completion dates. This clearly had a damaging impact on businesses at a very difficult time for the retail sector and the opening of Bracknell's new town centre together with the draw of Reading as a Regional centre as 'local shopping areas' to go may make it difficult to attract shoppers back into Wokingham.

Whilst the Parish Council acknowledges that there are some improvements to the space that has been made available for pedestrians and the Market, the project has not gone far enough in the safety aspects for users and the layout of parking/loading bays and addressing the dominance and speed of traffic.

Response from a resident

My comments on the Wokingham Town Regeneration scheme. These are my personal views as a Winnersh Resident:

1. Constant delays with little or no explanation as to why.
2. Disruption to pedestrians. A maze of metal mesh barriers that changed constantly with little signage of how to navigate them. In early November 2017 I had an appointment at Boots Opticians opposite the Town Hall. I could not find my way in. In the end I had to get a workman to show me the way. When I mentioned this to the Boots receptionist she said that people were missing their appointments altogether as they could not find their way. After my visit I spoke to a foreman and told him the problem, he said he would see what he could do. When I went back a few days later the signage was better. This needs to be done as a matter of fact not when somebody complains.
3. Disruption to traffic. I go into Wokingham about once a week on the 4/4X bus. During the work the buses could not run to the timetable with long delays and then two sometimes three coming together. This was not the fault of Reading Buses but poor planning by WBC.
4. Who agreed to replace the surface surrounding our lovely Victorian redbrick town hall with light coloured tiles? It stands out like a sore thumb now whereas before it blended in better with the original surface. This surface is already looking dirty with tyre marks still visible.
5. The kerbs between the town hall and the row of shops opposite is too low. They are off a similar colour and I have seen people, mainly elderly, misjudge them and trip or stumble.
6. WBC has turned a traditional market town into a soulless copy of many other market towns where the local authorities have not taken into account the original character and tried to retain it, or at least some of it.

The regeneration scheme has cost an awful lot of money, taxpayer money, my money as a Wokingham resident. I do not feel we have got value for money.

Response from a resident

To whom it concerns:

1. Was the area that was repaved cleaned at all after completion? Marks on the light coloured paving from the work being done can still be seen?
2. Is there a programme for cleaning the pavement on a regular basis to maintain a clean free surface?

3. Was any advice given (from any parties contractor, paving supplier, contractors, QS, etc) on the road that was laid and the materials to be used, given that the tarmac and car tyres have completely blacken the paved humps that form part of the road. So rendering them a waste of money.
 4. When will Elms Field play area be completed? Has this area been prioritised in any way given the lack of play facilities currently in the centre of Wokingham and that the previous play park was extensively used?
 5. Given the current level of antisocial behaviour and seemingly increasing levels of, along with a non-existing police presence, are there any plans to install CCTV in the centre of Wokingham or/and peach street plaza and /or Elms field development?
 6. Have any of the town centre regeneration plans incorporated or taken into account the likelihood of anti-social behaviour and the prevention of this behaviour?
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Response from Inspirations, Hair and Beauty

As far as we are concerned the project has been a disaster from start to current stage. It is obvious that the, so called, planning team gave no thought or plans to cover the repercussions on existing businesses over the build period.

I should have thought that the Council would realise with the upheaval of the work that local businesses would suffer. The constant work, the road closures, the lack of signs, the fact that people were unable to access Wokingham and difficulty to get to car parks, all lead to us being approximately 20% down on our takings during that time. We know that many other businesses have suffered in the same way, many, including us, having to use private savings to keep our business going, some having to close for good and more planning to!

We have learnt that other towns had a compensation fund built into the regeneration budget. There was no such thing for Wokingham. You say in your letter how were we supported during the work, the answer being we were not supported. For example, when Denmark Street was closed there was no signs neither end to inform the public Denmark Street was open for business. We got a sign half way down Denmark Street that no one could see. We were given notices to put in our windows to say the shops were still open. It would be obvious that we were open by the time they read the notice.

Who ever thought up the idea for the music festival during this time must be crazy. Wokingham was already in chaos, yet someone decided it would encourage people to visit. You chose to close an additional road, making it almost impossible to access Wokingham easily. On that day we lost so much of our trade with clients phoning in telling us they had attempted to get to us but given up, or clients were arriving so late due to the road closure, it was chaotic.

The new tiled pavement stops half way down Denmark Street, leaving our end uneven and dangerous. Why was our pavement not refurbished? We have two people brought into our salon who were injured after a fall caused by the uneven pavement. In the midst of all these problems our rates have been put up. What sort of Council does that to businesses already suffering, plus the compensation offered, which we had to fight for, was insulting.

With work continuing in the New Year, what is the future for Wokingham and Denmark Street two new centres either end, has any one thought how to bring life back to Denmark Street and connect the two? A thought – make Denmark Street pedestrian only! Making the town one again.

Response from a resident

1. Regeneration of the Towns and Villages has been a priority of the Council. Is that still the case?
2. If it is the case will Wokingham Town's experience be used as a template for other areas?
3. When, and by whom, was it agreed that the Market Place Highway Project and the Town Centre Regeneration works would happen at the same time, with the subsequent traffic problems and issues for local businesses?
4. In an article in the Wokingham Paper (6th September 2018) headlines "Final cost of the Market Place project still up in the air", Cllr Stuart Munro is quoted as saying "the overall cost to the local taxpayer for the improvement project is zero because this investment in the future.....is funded entirely by developer contributions" Is this quote correct? Does it take into account any Town and Borough Council time in the project? What alternative projects could this money have been used for?
5. In the latest Wokingham Borough News Philip Mirfin is quoted as saying "...not only a fantastic town centre with far better facilities... but also a town centre generating new income for you..." What better facilities will there be for the town? When will the flow of new income start and how will it be reported? How much will be in late generated in 2018/19 and will any of this income be given to the Town Council?
6. Are you happy about the way that information about completion dates for regeneration projects has been provided? I ask this question now and here at Shute End as the WBC website reported that the works at the Shute End car park would have been completed by October, and it was only in late November that was removed from the website. Despite asking at reception and customer services several times for a completion date it was only on the 14th of December that I asked Bernie Pich in Waitrose and he told me that it would open on the 18th, which indeed it did.

7. The Market Place scheme completed some three months ago. Since then concern has been expressed about risks of pedestrians tripping and uncertainty of where vehicles can park as evidenced by the number of parking tickets issued. What reviews have been undertaken on these issues?

Response from Manager of Cancer Research UK, Market Place

1. Consultation with Businesses

1. When running a business like a charity shop, we have deliveries of new goods, people bringing in donations and a significant waste stream of materials that have no value (in terms of sale through the shop) plus transfers via large van to other shops in the chain. There was no consultation prior to the works as to how these various good movements were to be maintained through the periods of extreme access limitation. There was an erroneous assumption that large lorries could access the rear of the shop. As a consequence of the restricted access, we incurred increased costs of waste disposal and a significant drop off of donated goods in the region of 25%.
2. There was no consultation as far as I was aware of how emergency services such as ambulances were to gain access to the main shop entrance.
3. There was no consultation regarding potential and in reality, massive delays to completion and the mitigation of those delays – for example, my shop takings were reduce by at least 40% for a period of nine months.

2. Support for businesses during works

1. There was no support for loss of takings other than information about applying for rates rebates. Proactive activities like free parking could have been introduced much earlier and, the “free after 3” made little or no difference and nobody asked the retailers if it worked or what would work.
2. During the works, the noise was horrendous, especially when concrete was poured in frosty weather which had to be dug up using pneumatic drills and repoured – offering ear plugs is not an acceptable mitigation strategy and noise level probably exceeded legal limits. Not helped by concreting over my water meter for which they then had to install a new water supply and meter. If they had asked, I could have indicated the approximate location.
3. I attended all the open meetings and almost every comment by retailers was met by responses to the effect “...it will be wonderful when finished...”. This was unhelpful.

3. How issues and complaints were dealt with?

1. Almost every issue I raised were not resolved satisfactorily without costs incurred by the Charity; the main one being having to make extraordinary and expensive arrangements for waste collection.

2. The Council staff (both Town and Borough) were helpful and understanding but ultimately were often unable to achieve any resolution to issues raised like noise, access, mess, loss of trade, delays, lack of action to incentivise potential customer to visit Wokingham.

Observations

- No thinking or initial action was taken regarding cyclists mounting and riding in the restricted walkways
- Lack of marketing of the opening event and subsequent efforts to attract people back to the town centre (unlike the Lexicon).
- The piecemeal approach to doing a bit here and a bit there appeared very wasteful and inefficient.