

# A Neighbourhood Plan for St James

## Community Meeting 25 May 2011

### Summary of ideas



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## Introduction

This note brings together suggestions developed by members of the St James community at a meeting held at St Sidwells CE Primary School on the 25 May 2011. The purpose of the meeting was two fold:

- **Firstly** it was held in order to ask the community of St James whether they would support the neighbourhood planning process which has been initiated by the Exeter St James Forum. Unanimous support was given to the neighbourhood planning process by the 90 people that attended the meeting. Of the 73 people that left contact details 56 expressed an interest in being involved in the preparation of a plan.
- **Secondly**, the meeting sought the community's view of the issues that a Neighbourhood Plan for St James should address. Attendees, working at tables of between 8 and 10 people, were asked to consider three questions as a means of generating ideas:
  1. How would people on your table enhance the natural and built environment of St James?
  2. How would people on your table improve St James for everyone in the community at all stages of their life?
  3. How would people on your table support local businesses and influence economic development?  
The ideas generated are summarised in this note and have been grouped together under topic headings. Many of the workshop groups came up with similar ideas indicating a strong agreement on key issues. The ideas were recorded on flip charts and these have been retained as a record of the meeting. Other ideas that emerge from the community and businesses will also be considered as the plan is developed.

## Summary

### Question 1:

How would people on your table enhance the natural and built environment of St James?

#### Urban decay and civic pride

- Try to control creep of urban decay i.e. signage, boundary wall decay, garden neglect, tree planting.
- Ensure the protection of historic/interesting buildings. Ensure better consideration and approval of replacement doors, windows etc to be more in keeping with the existing buildings.
- Recognise the City Council is strapped for money. Develop greater residents responsibility and create an active neighbourhood which encourage Civic Pride.
- Address litter issues (eg bins put back, refuse collection/seagull proof bags and wheelie bins).
- Deal with issues associated with absentee and irresponsible landlords of student accommodation (through landlords association?). In particular address the issue of low maintenance frontages.
- improve the ambience of St James Park Station.
- More sympathetic general appearance of ground floor and front garden areas.
- Confirm which areas of the ward are conservation areas and assess how policy is being applied.
- Create a local history walk.
- Restore railings and walls, details and features.
- Encourage public art.
- Develop a 'brand' for St James.

## Green space and natural environment

- Improve the quality of the parks. Audit green spaces and create inventory of responsibility for all green areas, eg Devonshire Place, Queens Crescent, and ensure regular maintenance. Improve play equipment and public furniture.
- Develop a management plan for Hoopern wildlife valley. Develop a landscape and wildlife enhancement plan and investigate potential for volunteer groups.
- Deal with overgrown areas, including in back lanes.
- Put more trees in the streets and more 'public trees' generally.
- Identify possible functions and better usage of green space.
- Create vertical gardens on concrete structures or similar bleak facades.

## Access and Parking

- Consider strategic car park for static cars left during term time.
- Achieve reduction/restraint of through traffic, eg enforcement of 20 mph zones.
- Greater facilitation of pedestrian access, eg pedestrian zones and removal of obstructions.
- Provide proper and effective speed ramps.
- Improve parking management and address speed limits (signage/humps).
- Improve street lighting and consider movement activated system.

## Energy

- Encourage the development of renewable energy – solar, wind?

## Question 2:

How would people on your table improve St James for everyone in the community at all stages of their life?

## Community empowerment

- Local residents feel that they have been 'neutered' by a lack of a voice in decisions that are made on their behalf. A greater voice would improve feeling of ownership.
- Enable planning discussion, and liaison with decision makers.

## Uses

- Provide more systematically planned for 'social' housing, affordable, sheltered housing with warden, students (regulated), but ensure the area stay mixed.
- Greater planning emphasis on family housing.
- Accessible access to a range of facilities appropriate for the needs of the whole spectrum of residents, i.e. pre-nursery, nursery etc
- Protect the cricket ground and the WG Grace Pavilion

## Services and community focus

- Easy access to a range of services within the ward on a 365 day basis.
- There is no community focus – create somewhere to increase understanding. Perhaps a community hall but it could be a green space.
- Conserve, preserve and improve amenities: lighting, community centre, traditional buildings, historic values, football ground and cricket pavilion.
- Increase opportunities for community integration – students and residents.
- Maintain and improve open spaces (for all ages) and increase landscaping for education and pleasure.

## Environmental health

- Address issues of waste and litter
- Control of noise from the football ground.
- Create more safe areas for children.
- Control of other development out of ward to control traffic flow through the ward.
- Address issues of absent landlords and find way of ensuring better maintenance of HMOs.
- Manage issues associated with high concentrations of student housing.

## Accessibility

- Ensure good access – pedestrians, cycles, public transport, designated parking, safety and visibility, communication. Improve access for people with a disability, particularly at the station. Consider extension of the platform to allow the longer trains to stop, especially for the football.

## Question 3:

How would people on your table support local businesses and influence economic development?

## Existing business

- Encourage greater use of the local businesses and encourage those in close proximity to residential areas.
- Create a local business directory (pubs, food, shops, garage, maintenance) and create forum for businesses to support each other. Promote the specialities that St James has. Promote business directory via website.
- Address the issue of high rents for the smaller local shops
- Understand the pros and cons of a transient population and its effect on the income and scope of local business.

## Future opportunities

- Understand and consider how to respond to the John Lewis factor.
- Carry out audit of businesses in the ward, including home working, and develop plan to encourage businesses that cater for a wider variety of demands. Understand in particular how business trends and services have changed.

- Encourage and enable the involvement of the local business community in residents associations and community groups.
- Improve the environment to attract new and more varied shops and services.
- Work with the council and developers on plans for new development and explore opportunities to incentivise development the community wants.
- Create opportunities to work near home.
- Prioritise small and local developments.
- Create a market – this could be on a green space or could be a weekend market.
- Strengthen relationships with local authorities to influence economic development.
- Provide greater information of proposed development sites.



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