

ABERCROMBIE MAY PLAN NEW BYE-PASS

C.T. JANUARY 12, 1946

IT IS BELIEVED THAT ONE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ABERCROMBIE REPORT ON THE PLANNING OF THE THREE BOROUGHS OF CHRISTCHURCH, BOURNEMOUTH AND POOLE, MAY SUGGEST THE ALTERATION OF THE BYE-PASS MOOTED BEFORE THE WAR TO RUN FROM SOMERFORD TO POUND LANE.

ADOPTION OF SUCH A RECOMMENDATION, WHICH IS SAID TO PROVIDE FOR A COURSE NORTH OF THE RAILWAY LINE FROM HINTON TO JUMPERS CORNER, WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF FURTHER ISOLATING CHRISTCHURCH FROM THROUGH-TRAFFIC AND TRADE ACCRUING FROM IT.

THE closest secrecy shrouds the London Office of Professor Sir Patrick Abercrombie, where the post-war planning of Christchurch is being carried out. As February 12th the date on which the plan will be presented to the three Councils—draws nearer, press telephone calls are politely but firmly rebuffed, and entry to 33, Welbeck Street, W.I., is difficult as stealing the Crown jewels.

Behind the doors a team of draughtsmen, under the leadership of Sir Patrick Abercrombie, who is probably the greatest Town Planning expert in the world, are engaged upon the future face of the biggest towns in the country—London, Plymouth, Hull, and some say Edinburgh—beside the local area. The staff includes some past pupils of the master from many countries of the world.

THE WORLD HELPS LOCAL PLAN.

Mr. C. Z. Chen, from China, who has recently accepted an offer of £3,500 to replan the city of Pekin, has carried out much work on the new map of Christchurch. He visited the town about six months ago and had a conference with Borough officials. A Hungarian, a Spaniard, and a Uruguayan, are also working on the staff. The joint three Borough plan will cost £4,000, and it will be presented to the three Councils on February 12th, and until that date, which will be followed the next day by a meeting of the Joint Planning Committee of Christchurch, Bournemouth and Poole, information about the plan will be as closely guarded locally as it is in London.

BOURNEMOUTH ENTRY AT OUR EXPENSE?

The Christchurch Times, however, understands from information received in London, that a new bye-pass of Christchurch is being considered for inclusion in the plan. This seems to be borne out by the fact that Sir Patrick is known to be deeply interested in providing the best possible entry into the big towns for which he is planning. The provision of a bye-pass from Hinton to Jumpers, running north of the railway would provide a magnificent entry into Bournemouth, but, it would seem, at the expense of Christchurch trade, a good deal of which comes in summer from visitors to Bournemouth attracted in passing by the amenities here. It should be pointed out that the plan which Sir Patrick Abercrombie will present will be in the nature of a recommendation, and will only be carried out by the agreement of the Joint Planning Committee, and their Councils.

NO PLANNING SCHEME

It is of interest to note that Christchurch had no Town Planning scheme prior to 1930 or thereabouts. A scheme was presented to the Ministry in 1939, but due to the outbreak of hostilities, this was never made law. Strictly speaking anyone could build according to their fancy provided they were prepared to take the risk of having to alter it to suit the Council as soon as the Planning scheme was passed by Parliament. By a subsequent emergency act, passed in 1943, however, Interim development not conforming to the proposed local planning schemes was prohibited. A bye-pass of Christchurch was envisaged in the earlier planning by the County Council Authority. This provided for a diversion at Somerford Bridge, with a road crossing Avon Meadows south of the railway line, and joining Barrack Road by way of Pound Lane, with a

roundabout at Fountain Corner. When this scheme was mooted there was alarm among local traders, many of whom considered that they would lose trade as a consequence.

LOCAL OPINION.

Here are some opinions taken at random on a bye-pass, such as that detailed above. Mr. R. A. Newbury (Chairman of the C.C.A.): "Why have a bye-pass at all---it's a shocking waste of money. No harm is done by slowing down traffic, most of the accidents are due to speeding.

"On the other hand, if we are going to do it, we may as well make a proper job, and the old scheme was a half and half measure. Personally, I do not believe that Christchurch gains anything from passing traffic, but I know that I am in the minority here."

Capt. A. W. Hornby (President elect of the Chamber of Trade) said: "It would be a long way out, and would place a great onus on the publicity service of the Borough. I would not call such a scheme a bye-pass, but a cut-off. A nearer one, like that suggested before would do little harm, but north of the railway line—it would certainly be detrimental.

"IT WOULD BE TERRIBLE."

Mr. S. G. Barber (of the King's Arms Hotel and a member of the Chamber of Trade Publicity Committee) said: "I think it would be terrible! From my own experience, I know that many people who never dreamed of coming to Christchurch did so because they were attracted by it in passing. It won't affect me much now, but if it had happened ten years ago, I should not have half my present custom, much of which stopped here casually because they liked the look of the place and have been coming again ever since."

Mrs. F. Worsley, a housewife, of 27, Avenue Road, Christchurch, was pleased to hear that such a plan was under consideration. "The only cars that ever stop here," she said, "are those that live just outside the town, and the bye-pass will not prevent their coming. Christchurch is a pretty little place, and would be better off without all this traffic. I would like to see it, and I hope Abercrombie gets a move on."

MAN IN THE STREET.

A "Man in the Street," who although admitting he was from River-way, would not give his name or address, said: "I have been living in Christchurch for approximately 18 months, and have heard little of the Abercrombie report. I will say this, however, that in my opinion a more dead town than Christchurch would be difficult to find, and that if the main traffic was diverted, well, heaven help us."

Councillor Vaughan, asked if he thought that such a bye-pass would affect Christchurch, replied: "It would definitely be ruinous. I can't think of anything worse for local trade."

Mr. A. E. Gilbert, of Campbell's Garage, Purewell, was in no doubt about the effect of such a scheme. "I think that hardly a garage in the town would be able to make a living here if this were to come about," he said "We are dependent on the casual trade from passers-by."

It is hoped that after the Abercrombie plan has been submitted to the joint Councils, Sir Patrick himself may outline the scheme to a public meeting, which will most probably be held in the Town Hall, Bournemouth. The Christchurch members of the Joint Planning Committee are: Alderman Cawte, Alderman Markham, and Councillor Slinn.

LEAVE ALL CHRISTCHURCH UNSPOILED

----ABERCROMBIE REPORT

C.T. February 16, 1946

PROFESSOR SIR PATRICK ABERCROMBIE'S PLAN FOR THE FUTURE FACE OF THE THREE BOROUGHES OF CHRISTCHURCH, BOURNEMOUTH AND POOLE WAS PRESENTED THIS WEEK AFTER TWO YEARS OF INCESSANT LABOUR. BOLD, BRILLIANT, AND FUTURISTIC IN CONCEPTION, THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE BEWILDERING IN THE IMMENSITY OF THE CHANGES VISUALISED IN BOURNEMOUTH, BUT FOR CHRISTCHURCH AND HIGHCLIFFE, SIR PATRICK HAS ONLY PRAISE FOR ITS GREAT BEAUTY, AND ADVICE TO LEAVE IT UNSPOILED.

Where he has advised alteration, he has done it boldly and with infinite consideration to the amenities. A new Civic Centre is planned behind the High Street on Wick Fields, and a thoroughfare from Priory Corner to Wick and Tuckton, incorporating a riverside drive. Residential units are planned with separate subsidiary shopping centres. To avoid spoiling the character of Christchurch, on which he believes its wealth and livelihood depends, Sir Patrick allows for three by-passes. One was foreshadowed in a previous Christchurch Times issue.

All the present open spaces are preserved and Sir Patrick wishes to see them preserved for all time. He is also opposed to the further establishment of industry in the town.

The kernel of his views on Christchurch is expressed in the simple statement: "I should like to live there."

"I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE HERE"

"I THINK that Christchurch is an absolutely charming place, and I would like to live there." This is what Professor Sir Patrick Abercrombie, greatest living authority on Town Planning, told a Christchurch Times reporter, after the Press conference which preceded the official presentation of the Three Borough Planning Report to the Councils of Christchurch, Bournemouth and Poole.

In keeping with these affectionate sentiments. Sir Patrick recommends that Christchurch remains as it is. "We do not want to change it too much." he added.

Sir Patrick told me that he believes Christchurch can continue to live on its amenities. That is our most valuable asset. He thinks, too, that industry is unsuitable here, and that further development of aircraft factories in the locality should be checked.

In the preparation of the local plan, Sir Patrick paid tribute to the assistance he had received from the Borough Surveyor, Mr. E. B. Wise, from Borough Officials, and from the New Forest Planning Report. He had, however, scheduled more open space in the Christchurch area than was recommended in this report.

TERMINAL TRAFFIC.

On the bye-pass question, Sir Patrick believes that a very high percentage of traffic passing through is terminal traffic—that is to say traffic which is not passing through, but bound either for Christchurch or Bournemouth—and he therefore has no hesitation in recommending the bye-passing of Christchurch. But the present Town Hall is not to his liking. He would like to see a properly laid out civic centre behind the High Street in the open spaces of Wick Fields.

"I particularly like Mudeford," he told me. "As a residential centre this is the best. You will see that I have recommended no change there, except increasing the density of population slightly."

At one time, Sir Patrick favoured the idea of bridging the Run and providing a sea drive from Highcliffe along Mudeford Beach to Bournemouth, but this was finally abandoned.

HIGHCLIFFE UNTOUCHED.

Highcliffe also appeals to the Professor as a place of amenity which should be left untouched. He does not recommend the previous County scheme of bye-passing the village, and gets over this by providing a road from Hinton to Walkford, linking up with the New Milton road at Chewton Corner. The cliffs, however, are to Sir Patrick one of the several prominent and imposing features of the coast line, and he suggests that they should be treated accordingly. An arterial road was suggested at beach level from Highcliffe to Haven Quay, but this project was not definitely recommended.

The Stour Valley, St. Catherine's Hill, Stanpit Marsh, and the Christchurch portion of the Avon Valley, should be preserved as open spaces, and Wick Village with which Sir Patrick was particularly impressed, should remain unspoiled.

RICH FARMING LAND.

Farmers will be glad to hear Sir Patrick recommends the retention of all the Avon Valley agricultural land owing to its exceptional richness, and the needs of the three borough community.

A last point which emphasised Sir Patrick's desire to maintain the amenities of Christchurch, and not to sacrifice them to the needs of the Bournemouth community, was his sincere treatment of the three borough sewage scheme. Sir Patrick told me that the proposed scheme drawn up was an economic proposal from the engineering point of view. "But," he declared. "I think it is worthwhile spending some money to move it further away out of sight."

Sir Patrick went on to say that he had seen no alternative but to place the electric light generating station for the three boroughs in Poole, but he did not feel at all happy in seeing the sewage disposal works situated in Christchurch.

"It should be moved further away, I would not like to see Christchurch amenities spoiled in any way," was his last word.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The plans detailing Sir Patrick's recommendations will be on view in the Town Hall, Christchurch, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Here are some of the suggestions of the plan which seeks only to improve the natural and historic amenities of Christchurch.

OPEN SPACES.

On the map which shows the zoning of open space, Christchurch is a mass of green against the comparatively arid brown of the Bournemouth built-up areas.

St. Catherine's Hill, north of the Fairmile Road, is recommended as public open space, the Stour Valley, Wick, Stanpit Marsh, Avon Meadows, and much of Highcliffe should, the report indicates, remain unblemished by building. At Wick Ferry, and in the bend of the Stour opposite the old Waterworks above Tuckton Bridge, the provision of catering establishments and gardens is suggested. Sir Patrick would also like to see an open space on the left side of Stour Road as a kind of continuation of the Recreation Ground. Hengistbury Head and the Mudeford Beach are too considered as open spaces.

BYE-PASSES.

Of the new roads proposed, only the bye-passes are likely to create opposition in the town, and that from those traders who believe that the diversion of passing traffic will cause a loss of trade. There are no less than three roads which could be considered as bye-passes. Furthest north an arterial road, which has a continuation down Walkford road, breaks off the main Southampton-Christchurch road at the Cat and Fiddle, and following the line of the existing road to Godwins Croft, strikes between Bransgore and Bockhampton to Avon Causeway and to Hurn, after which it continues on to Wimborne via the existing Hurn-Parley road.

The next bye-pass, which is apparently intended to serve Bournemouth direct, and which was forecast in a previous issue of the Christchurch Times, leaves the Southampton road at a point just north-east of Hinton Station and proceeds north of the railway line through Burton and across the Avon, joining the existing main road again at Jumpers Corner.

The third bye-pass, which partly serves Christchurch and provides a direct entry into Southbourne. is on the route put forward prior to the war by the County Council, that is to

TO BE EXPURGATED

The Town Clerk of Bournemouth refused a Christchurch Times request to purchase for the benefit of its readers (the ratepayers) a copy of the full text of the Abercrombie Report. There were, he said, certain passages derogatory to Bournemouth, such as "This sprawl of unlovely shops," and other phrases which the joint committee did not wish to make public. Before long a suitable (and we presume expurgated) copy will be available.

say, from Somerford, north of Purewell, across Avon Meadows and joining Fountain Corner by Pound Lane. From this point Bargates and Barrack Road continue as at present, but another bigger road is proposed on the line of Sopers Lane to Wick, continuing as a riverside drive to Tuckton Bridge.

A CIVIC CENTRE.

The only major alteration proposed for the town itself is in the High Street area, which despite this is still proposed as the business centre of the town.

From the Silent Policeman at Priory Corner a new road is suggested running parallel with Wick Lane and joining Sopers Lane extension at Wick Ferry. It is on the eastern side of this new thoroughfare that a new civic centre is proposed, lying in open space behind the High Street on the ground now occupied by Creedy Passage and Wick Fields. To give a High Street entrance to the civic centre, it seems probable that the removal of business premises from Priory Corner on the Wick side of the High Street to a point opposite the entry of Millhams Street is indicated.

NEIGHBOURHOOD UNITS.

Neighbourhood units are one of the keynotes of Sir Patrick's planning. Rather than see the straggling development of single houses in open spaces which characterised the pre-planning period, he plans for a tighter grouping of residential districts comprising units in themselves and served by subsidiary shopping centres.

In Christchurch there are four of these. St. Catherine's Hill is the first, lying south of the Hurn road, then Jumpers Common, Purewell, which also comprises Stanpit, Mudford and Friars Cliff, and Highcliffe. It will be seen that the High Street area would not be considered as a residential unit, because, presumably, it is the business headquarters of the town. Separate shopping centres are indicated in each of these units, and there is a shopping centre marked in Wick Lane.

Although Sir Patrick considers that the whole area is unsuitable for industry and that it relies solely on its amenities as a residential and seaside resort, he believes in balancing industry to provide subsidiary employment for those not engaged in local supply industries and the holiday trade. For these he suggests that over the area light industries such as plastic and cosmetic factories, decentralised from London, should be established. There are a few marked in Christchurch, all of which would be small, except that already established at Somerford by Airspeeds.

Sir Patrick thinks that Christchurch and Bournemouth are the natural watering places of London, and believes that our local attractions make us one of the most suitable resorts for the Metropolis.

THREE BOROUGHES HEAR PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

IN the crowded Assembly Hall of the Municipal College, Bournemouth, on Wednesday afternoon, surrounded by great coloured maps interpreting a vision of things to come, the three Councils of Christchurch, Bournemouth and Poole listened to the dynamic pronouncements of Professor Sir Patrick Abercrombie, M.A., F.R.I.B.A., M.T.P.I., explaining his proposals for the joint Town Planning of this area.

During the course of the meeting, which may well be an historic occasion, Sir Patrick pointed out that unknown to himself until the day before he had planned a new civic centre for Christchurch at the place where previous generations had seen fit to locate the first Christchurch Town Hall.

Introduced by the Mayor of Bournemouth, Sir Patrick said that they had been engaged on the plan for what might have seemed a long time, but he pointed out that when a long term future of three towns, two of them of great antiquity, was being considered, it could not shortly be dismissed.

"These are only ideas," he declared. "Visions of the future looking very far ahead."

Sir Patrick referred to the housing problem. The immediate necessity for building houses was a problem in itself. One of the objects of the plan was to show the boroughs where those new houses could best be situated, so that they could be linked to the building of the future in a co-ordinated plan.

The fact that the future of the district was almost definite, had simplified the planning to some extent. Its situation on the sea determined its position in the national community. But a change was taking place in the area.

"You used to be a very high class community, so much so that I should never have spent my holiday here," said Sir Patrick amid laughter. Now this was on the wain and there was an increasing demand for smaller houses to which people of small means wished to retire in their old age.

DAY-TRIPPERS NOT SUITABLE.

The area was not suitable to attract day-trippers and therefore the round of amusements characterised by Blackpool were out of place. This was supported by the Mediterranean kind of coast occasioned by the small fall of the tide, almost unique in the country.

As regards the size of the area. Sir Patrick thought that despite the gloomy prognostics of the birth-control statisticians, the population of the area was bound to increase, due largely to the seaside habit which was increasing and had not yet found full development.

They had allowed for increased population by gathering communities together without loss of open space. Dealing with Christchurch, the Professor said: "I think a somewhat less ardent problem confronts us in the quieter atmosphere of the grand Priory Church: but there again we felt and I think that the general feeling of the Christchurch people was that they wanted something more of a civic centre."

"It was quite by chance that the site we chose was where the civic centre originally stood before it was destroyed in 1850. We only discovered that yesterday."

Sir Patrick went on to say that Christchurch suffered more than any other from traffic hurrying through, and they had accordingly planned two bye-pass roads, one running north of "that ancient ribband called Purewell," and another north of the railway line.

HIGH STREET SHOULD REMAIN.

"This prevents the danger of needing to widen the charming High Street, which should be kept in its present condition, but relieved of traffic congestion," he added.

Speaking of communities, Sir Patrick said that a process of integrating existing groups had been observed. It had been thought necessary to add one neighbourhood unit to Christchurch. (This is the unit to be known as St. Catherine's).

The cliffs and coastline in the area were geologically speaking comparatively new. The mouth of Christchurch Harbour had actually been changing while they had been engaged on the plan, and the cliffs had been disastrously neglected during the war. These things would have to be taken in hand with all speed.

Sir Patrick continued that Christchurch and Poole and indeed the whole district had most valuable amenities of Christchurch and Poole Harbours, the full beauty of which he had not realised until he came to this part of the country. There development as yachting centres, was a very great asset. He also considered the New Forest as of great value.

"It was created for the pleasure of a King, and now it is for the pleasure of the people," he commented.

In conclusion, Sir Patrick expressed the hope that his plan would lead to some kind of joint planning in the future, and he would like to see a scheme prepared to plan a much wider area than the confines of the three boroughs.

Explaining the various road systems of the three boroughs, Mr. Nixon said that for Christchurch, the bye-pass would cross over Jumpers Common outside the area south of Burton village, and join the main road at Hinton Admiral. The bye-pass had been planned to take the long distance through traffic which did not primarily concern the Borough.

It would be wrong, he said, for Christchurch to assume the character of Bournemouth. At the moment, there would only be the provision of the bye-pass, an increase in the population by community planning, the new civic centre practically on the original site, and the new development of buildings, and residential area next to the station. The centre of Christchurch would be left untouched, and unencroached upon by any development.

The meeting was then thrown open for questions, and Councillor Woodford, referring to the Christchurch Bay, said that there had been no mention of what was proposed for the beaches of Highcliffe extending along to Mudeford. There appeared to be no consideration of developing the beach or of providing roads to give access to the beach.

Sir Patrick said that this point had been considered, but that it had finally been decided to leave the matter to be debated by the local authority.

The Mayor of Bournemouth said that unfortunately between these three boroughs there were lines of demarkation.

"Sir Patrick," he said, " has shown us that we have one common interest in that we should have one onus of purpose to work together as a community. We can at the moment share our advantages and amenities, and I hope this plan will be an incentive to us to work together to this one end."

Concluding, the Mayor said, there been some anxiety expressed about the cost of this scheme. It was his experience, and that of the whole country, that improvements had a way of paying for themselves.

HOW IT WAS PLANNED

Sir Patrick said that his office had been "a real UNO in miniature." Among those working on the scheme were experts of all nationalities, and by this means he managed to solve his labour problem.

There was a Chinese, a Russian, Pole, Czech and Singalese to mention a few, and they had managed to work very happily together.

He also made it clear they had always been in the closest touch with the local authorities, and had often included many local suggestions in the plan. These suggestions and their own recommendations had been welded into a comprehensive whole.

"The plan is a long term imaginative effort to make people see what are the possibilities of their town," he declared, adding that their project had always been bold with a view to future possibilities. He went on to point out that they had been able to go beyond the former planning scheme as this was hampered by the powers vested in local authorities at that time.

"We hope that the new powers which the Government is bringing forward for betterment and compensation will allow the three boroughs to decide what land they desire to keep safe," he said.

Regarding Christchurch, Sir Patrick said, as reported elsewhere in this issue, that the chief thing was to disarrange its beauty and historical association as little as possible.

They had, however, decided that something new would have to be provided in the centre. The present Town Hall, which he described as a rather unimpressive old Georgian building, should be replaced by a unified civic centre. This would have to be in keeping with the district and should not be of an aggressively modern character.

"We want to see nothing demolished in Christchurch," he said.

ABERCROMBIE REPORT-WHAT DO YOU THINK?

C.T. February 23, 1946

All kinds of local people —students of Local Government, idle sight seers, Councillors having “another look,” and even visitors-passed through the Town Hall to see and to comment on the plans of the Abercrombie Report, which were on show there on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Many of them remarked objectively on the skill and beauty of the workmanship which brightened the dark walls of the hall, others confessed that "it just didn't make sense," or plainly that they didn't understand it. Many were impressed, a few think that the Corporation's time and the ratepayers' money has been wasted. Certainly the plan has caused a considerable stir, for it seems to be generally appreciated that if the plan is proceeded with it will make a personal difference to many people in Christchurch.

Here are some local opinions. Of 25 people interviewed at random during the exhibition of plans and in the street, not one could find reasons to oppose the plan.

WASTE OF TIME AND MONEY.

Councillor Cobb, a member of the Council's Town Planning Committee, advanced the opinion that his views would not look nice in print.

“It's just a waste of my time and the ratepayers' money," he said, "It's just moonshine."

“He told us we wanted a by-pass, and we knew that. Apart from that nothing. Anything he has suggested is miles in the air and in the future. What we want is a more practical and nearer sighted policy.

Mr. A. W. Hornby, President of the Chamber of Trade, was gratified to hear that the natural amenities of the town should not be altered.

“I noticed, too,” he said, “that Professor Abercrombie recommends the removal of the joint sewage scheme from the precincts of Christchurch. This is most important.”

“Now the picture is drawn, I am confident that the Town Council will plan accordingly. They should particularly notice the suggestion of a civic centre worthy of the town. It is high time we had one.”

The only fault Mr. Hornby could find was with the road running from Priory Corner to Wick. “That would spoil all that beautiful riverside walk,” he commented.

“Now there is a local by-pass at Fountain Corner, I don't think we shall lose much trade,” he added.

“Motorists who take the roads further north would never stop anyhow. So long as the Publicity Committee advertise the town before the entry to the by-passes at Hinton, we shall lose nothing. But it would be up to the Publicity Committee.”

The Borough Surveyor, Mr. E. B. Wise, said that he did not wish to express an opinion on the plan, as it was primarily a matter for the Council to decide on a policy.

“As a lesson in planning it is a masterpiece," he added. “It is better than a written textbook on the subject. It is the principals of modern town planning applied to a district we know intimately.”

Mr. Wise added that he considered that the zoning of much open space on the plan might be a cause of controversy.

BRILLIANT CONCEPTION.

Mr. D. Llewellyn, prospective County Councillor, said that it was a brilliant conception from a clever man's brain.

“It certainly will lift Christchurch out of the pig-shaft in so far as the vast demolition of properties is concerned. Much good will come out of it.”

“There appear to be four or five arterial roads leading into Bournemouth, and I am wondering whether there is one too many.”

The plan would probably take 50 years to develop and cost a million pounds. It was however, a suggestion well worthy of the closest examination and would no doubt receive much controversy for many years to come.

Councillor S. Kermode, County Council candidate, thought Sir Patrick had overlooked the fact that Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole had grown rapidly during the last few years, and as the whole of the

area from Poole Harbour to Christchurch Harbour was fully developed, the only area which could continue to grow was the eastern end of the Borough.

"I think there is no reason why people from the industrial areas should not continue to migrate to this beautiful part of England I consider therefore that he has reserved too much open space in the Highcliffe area, and although his instructions were to plan the Borough of Christchurch, it would have been well to consider the possibility of Highcliffe, New Milton and Barton building up and planned for development there on similar lines to Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch.

The Councillor added that he did not see the point of two by-passes of Christchurch so close together.

Mr. R. A. Newbury, chairman of the Christchurch Citizens Association, said that his first impression was whether Christchurch and Bournemouth could afford such a scheme.

"Although Sir Patrick mentioned that he did not think Christchurch should be altered, he has proposed the alteration of two, of the most beautiful lanes in the town, with arterial roads in Sopers Lane and Wick Lane. If they are not beautiful they certainly have character.

NEVER COMPETE WITH BOURNEMOUTH.

The Vicar, the Rev. R. P. Price thinks that the plan is "on the right lines."

"Sir Patrick evidently understands the true character of Christchurch, which could never compete with Bournemouth on the same ground."

The "youngest" member of the Council, Mrs. Power said: "I think it is a wonderful plan, but it's almost too big to grasp. The Christchurch part is ideal, the town should be left as it is as far as the amenities are concerned. Provided the traders do not object to using the High Street as a side street, I think the by-passing is most necessary."

One housewife who lives in River way was all for the scheme, but felt that the civic centre should be located in Pit and not on the proposed site.

The Town Sergeant, Mr. A. Cox, thought that there should be a new Town Hall, both from the point of view of administration and the convenience of the public.

Councillor Bingham said at a recent Labour Party meeting that he did not attend the meeting at which the plan was presented, because he had pressing matters to consider on the problem of housing. He was not interested in the eventualities of 50 years, but wished to see the people housed properly soon.

ABERCROMBIE REPORT-WHAT C.C.A. THINKS

C.T. March 23, 1946

The character of Christchurch must be preserved. This was the general opinion of members of Christchurch Citizens Association when they discussed the Abercrombie Report at their meeting last week.

The majority of speakers were also in favour of the suggested by-pass to take through traffic away from Purewell, but there were differences of opinion as to where this road should be located.

In view of the fact that the full text of Sir Patrick Abercrombie's report has not yet been made public, the chairman, Mr. R. A. Newbury, said he had heard the view that it was rather premature to discuss it. "I do not subscribe to that opinion," he declared. "I feel the C.C.A. must not be content to tag along a move—or a couple of moves—behind the Town Council, especially on matters of such importance."

It was no good merely criticising the Town Council, he said. That would only annoy them and make them dig their toes in more and stick to their pre-conceived notions. "If we are to perform our proper function we must use the C.C.A. to enlighten the Council on the real feelings of the burgesses."

The discussion on the report was introduced by Mr. B. A. Mead and Mr. A. S. Carlos (secretary of Highcliffe Citizens Association).

THEIR AMBITIONS.

Mr. Mead explained that as the report had not been issued his opinions were based on a study of the maps which had been displayed. In forming an opinion he thought that one must decide what were the ambitions of Christchurch. They must make up their minds whether their ambition was to see Christchurch financially well off or whether they wanted it to be a place to live in as happy citizens.

If it was their ambition to be a rich borough he thought they would be pretty disappointed with the Abercrombie Report, because they could not make money out of open spaces. He had heard the opinion that there was too much open space suggested in the report, but he thought that the people who made that suggestion were the type who wanted Christchurch to be completely built up so that they could have the maximum rateable income from their houses.

That was understandable from a business point of view, but he was glad that Christchurch was going to be—if they followed the report—a place in which they could live as happy citizens. His idea of a place to live was one which possessed character. However Christchurch developed he hoped it would preserve the character which ancient history had given such an excellent beginning.

A GEM OF A PLACE.

"I would not like to see Christchurch an ordinary town," said Mr. Mead. "I would like it to be a place with splendid facilities for music, entertainment, art, study and worship. All these things go to make a decent town to live in. I am glad that Abercrombie has apparently not lost sight of the fact that here in Christchurch is a gem of a little place providing it is developed in the right way."

Mr. Mead thought the suggested community centres separated by open spaces an ideal arrangement. "My main criticism of the Abercrombie Report is that so far as we can tell it gives no guide to the development of what is undoubtedly the biggest asset to the borough, namely, the sea front," he continued.

It appears that Abercrombie has dealt with us as an ordinary inland town and he has made no suggestion of how we can make good use of our very wonderful stretch of bay.

"We certainly don't want a pier shaped like a steamer—Bournemouth is welcome to that, but I do think we should have some continuous development from Mudeford to Highcliffe."

They did not want any gaudy or pretentious development but simply facilities for walking from Mudeford to Highcliffe, and he suggested that they should take steps to find out whether the local Council would do something about it. "I think Christchurch should have a master plan for the development of the sea front," he concluded.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.

Mr. Carlos, who said he listened to Professor Abercrombie give his report in Bournemouth, thought the value of the report lay in the fact that it brought home very forceably to the Councils the importance of looking to the future. He felt that so far as places like Highcliffe were concerned the report could be of great help to the Council.

He considered the question of bypassing Christchurch of the utmost importance, and it would not prevent people who wanted to come to Christchurch from visiting the town. He thought it an excellent suggestion to leave the Purewell road as it was, although the "appalling gasworks" should be moved elsewhere.

With regard to the sea front, he referred to the efforts already being made at Highcliffe to preserve the cliff top as an open space, and said he hoped the Council would follow this up. So far as the beach was concerned, a drive which had been suggested would be no easy proposition, and before it could be contemplated would need the best geological opinion in the country. The cliffs at Bournemouth were being eroded at the rate of about a foot a year, and at Highcliffe it was very much faster.

THE BY-PASS.

During the discussion which followed. Mr. J. F. H. Smith said he had heard some tradesmen say that a bypass would be suicidal from a trade point of view. In his opinion that would not be the case, and he thought a by-pass would do much to prevent the large number of accidents which occurred on the road

entering the town from Purewell. On the other hand he did not agree that there should be any alteration of the shopping centre.

Councillor Bingham spoke in favour of the report so far as it related to preserving the character of the town, and was delighted with the suggestion for a new civic centre.

Councillor Kermode said he would like to see the whole area developed and while it was possible to have plenty of open spaces it was not necessary to have such large ones as indicated in the report. He thought it was possible for Christchurch, New Milton and Barton-on-Sea to be linked up.

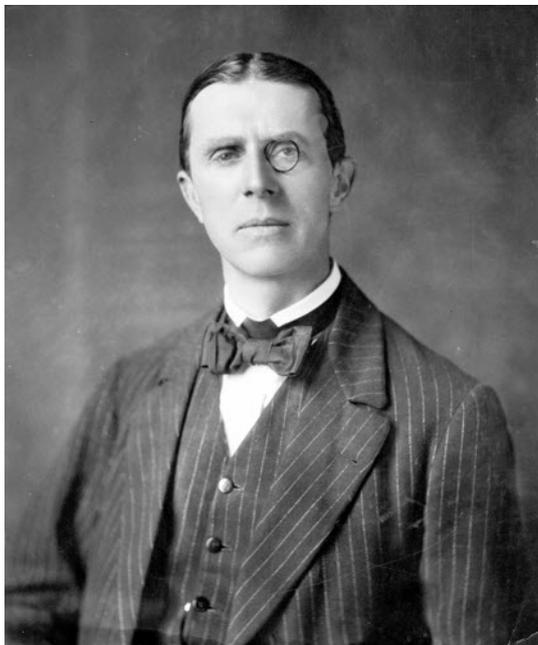
After several members had expressed their view as to where the suggested by-pass should run, Mr. Mead said he considered it should be south of the railway because of the wonderful skyline that Christchurch would provide. He thought it would have great publicity value.

Summing up, the chairman said it was evident that the majority of members wanted the character of Christchurch preserved and although they were not averse to a by-pass road, there was considerable uncertainty as to where it should be.

ABERCROMBIE REPORT 1946

(SECTIONS APPERTAINING TO CHRISTCHURCH)

INTRODUCTION.



Sir Patrick Abercrombie

A detailed description of this Borough and an examination of the problems confronting the Planner have been given in Chapter 2. It is the object of this chapter to attempt to describe how these problems may be usefully solved, not by drastic measures, but by an improvement of existing conditions, by preserving the historic elements in their natural setting by a study of the traffic problem and the introduction of a wider and more ornamental open-space system thereby increasing the already considerable amenities of the town.

1. ROADS AND TRAFFIC.

At present all main through traffic between Bournemouth, Southampton and the east passes by way of Purewell and Castle Street, an elongated stretch of ribbon development, crosses the River Avon over the attractive mediaeval town bridge, quite unsuitable by its narrowness, barely allowing space for two vehicles to cross simultaneously in opposite directions, through High Street and thence along Barrack Road. High Street is the principal shopping centre of the Borough and it has already been

strongly pointed out that the intermingling of through and local shopping traffic results in chaotic and dangerous conditions both for motorists and pedestrians.

It is proposed that a by-pass should be constructed from Somerford Bridge, running North of Purewell to the junction of Barrack Road and Bargates, both of which are widened, the former leading to Bournemouth and the latter (becoming Fairmile) to the airport at Hurn. At the junction of these three important roads an adequate roundabout is suggested. Thus very simply main through traffic will be directed away from the shopping centre and avoid the present congestion at the bridge giving an unhindered and harmonious flow throughout the Borough.

It is suggested that Soper's Lane, from the proposed roundabout to Wick Ferry, be double in width, preserving in a green strip down the centre of the road, an attractive line of trees which now form the eastern boundary of the Recreation Ground.

A new road, to be called a Pleasure Drive, is included in the scheme. It begins as a continuation of Castle Street; thence through the new Civic Centre, by-passing Wick Lane, it wanders through the open country north of the River Stour, crossing the river by Tuckton Bridge (which would have to be widened) eventually linking up with the Bournemouth Scenic Road. It is felt that this Pleasure Drive in conjunction with the

suggested Public Gardens along the north bank of the Stour would form an attractive feature in the development of the Borough.

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Finally, the existing street net in the semi-developed area between Fairmile and Barrack Road shows that local traffic in this district at present uses both these important arteries. It is therefore proposed that there should be a new road running from Grove Copse, following the line roughly Enfield-Annesley Roads to Stour Road. This would open up direct access to the Station and elsewhere for vehicles to and from this particular area preventing the unsatisfactory mixing of through and local traffic.

2. CIVIC CENTRE AND NEW DEVELOPMENT.

It will be seen from the Plan that it is intended to preserve as a precinct the old net-work of streets south of Wick Lane and most of the frontages on to High Street, thus leaving almost intact the essential historic character of the Borough. Full reference has been made elsewhere in the Report of the necessity of retaining as far as possible all such features in the area.

It is considered necessary to provide a new Civic Centre for the whole Borough of Christchurch and an attempt has been made to place this Centre in suitable relationship to the other elements forming the improvements for the town: for example near the historic precinct, the main shopping street, within easy reach of the 'bus station and with an ample area of open space near by. It is suggested that the Civic Centre should include a new Town Hall, Public Library, Club and Committee Rooms, this group being linked by an open colonnade to an Assembly Hall and Recreation Centre. A new row of shops is shown as forming the southern boundary of the Civic Centre.

A new bus station and fire station are sited just south of the main traffic roundabout. The advantages of this position for both buildings should be clear, having special regard to the desirability of excluding terminal bus (trolley buses) traffic through High Street to Church Street and the convenience for through bus traffic heading east or west. A tower has been designed in connection with the fire station overlooking High Street and it is intended that this tower, with an arched way through for pedestrians, should form an appropriate architectural conclusion to the street, looking north. The short length of road between the bus station and fire station is solely for the use of these two buildings and should be one-way traffic.

The Plan shows that the only area where it has been found necessary to adopt more drastic measures is that in the vicinity of the Railway Station. Here the lack of an appropriate approach to the station, the too numerous exits on to Barrack Road and the unsatisfactory distribution of building plots form a difficult problem the solution of which is of importance to the future of the Borough. The new street from Grove Copse should be studied closely in connection with the redesigning of this area.

A new Station has been planned, with separate entrances for "up" and "down" platforms and with police station and post office forming a sort of station "place." The developed land bounded by the triangle of Stour Road, Barrack Road and Bargates, lying as it does between these busy traffic routes, is completely replanned as a residential cell with flats, its own small nursery school and garages. Thus greater accommodation with an increased open space will be given and all exits on to the main roads will be eliminated except for the one small

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local street which enters Bargates. It is felt that this Cell, with much open ground and well-designed flats, should form an interesting and pleasant approach to the town. It may at a later period be extended to include the present plots along Bargates.

3. TREATMENT OF OPEN SPACES.

It has been suggested earlier in this chapter that much can be done to co-ordinate and ameliorate the more significant of the undeveloped areas in the Borough having special regard to the lands around the Priory and along the bank of the River Stour. The Priory precinct, including the Castle and Convent Meadows, should of course be preserved and maintained in a manner appropriate to this lovely church.

The land between the proposed Pleasure Drive and the River Stour, at present undeveloped, should be treated as a long stretch of ornamental public gardens. Beyond Stour Road it is proposed to take advantage of the bend in the river to create a Pleasure Island formed by widening the Creek into a lake and linking this by a narrow watercourse to the northern base of the bend. On this island is shown a large cafe-restaurant which may eventually become an hotel. There is no doubt that this length of gardens beside the peaceful estuary of the Stour, from the Priory to its logical conclusion at the island, making full use of the landscape artist's ingenuity with trees, shrubs, flower beds and discreetly wandering paths, beckoning to the human pleasures of sailing, eating, dancing and lazing on hot summer days, would become one of the most attractive, entertaining and oft-visited points in the whole region.

The area between Margaret's Avenue and South View Road (linked in our scheme to form one continuous frontage) and the Pleasure Drive may at some future date be included in the riverside parkway. At present it is used for pastoral purposes and should temporarily continue in this use.

An attempt has been made to link the Station with the riverside gardens along the Stour by a "Green Walk." It will be seen that advantage has been taken of both existing and proposed open spaces such as the proposed open area around the new residential Cell and a suggested open space adjoining the new Civic Centre, which would also embody some fine old trees behind the buildings on the western frontages of High Street and the present Recreation Ground. Creedy footpath has been made use of and the Walk eventually finds its way across Wick Lane, Whitehall and Queen's Avenue to the Gardens. It is hoped that this might prove a pleasant alternative route for those who wished to avoid passing through the centre of the town.

4. REALISATION OF THE PROPOSALS.

(a) Whatever may be the future of Christchurch, there is one present problem which should be tackled with a minimum of delay—that of the traffic congestion in High Street and the eastern approaches to the town. Therefore it is suggested that the new by-pass from Somerford Bridge and the central roundabout including perhaps the widening proposals for Barrack Road and Bargates should be a primary consideration. The construction of the by-pass would open up building land north of Somerford Road for a possible extension of the Borough. The bus station might also be brought into this stage.

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(b) The second stage might be the construction of the Pleasure Drive thereby opening up the ornamental gardens. In this period a general revision and co-ordinating of existing Open Spaces might be carried out on the lines suggested by the Plan. The new Civic Centre, that part of which does not immediately interfere with existing buildings, i.e. the Recreation Wing and the Assembly Hall, might be begun and in conjunction with this eventually the proposed shopping centre. The object of this development period would be to increase the amenities of the town and introduce more civic consciousness by the provision of a Cultural and Amusement Centre.

(c) There does not seem to be the pressing urgency for new housing in Christchurch as in many other places and it is therefore considered that further development in this connection may be taken in a long-term policy which could be decided upon by a study of events and problems as they arise. The development of the area around the Station, the triangle containing the new flats, the completion of the Civic Centre to name a few all come under this category.

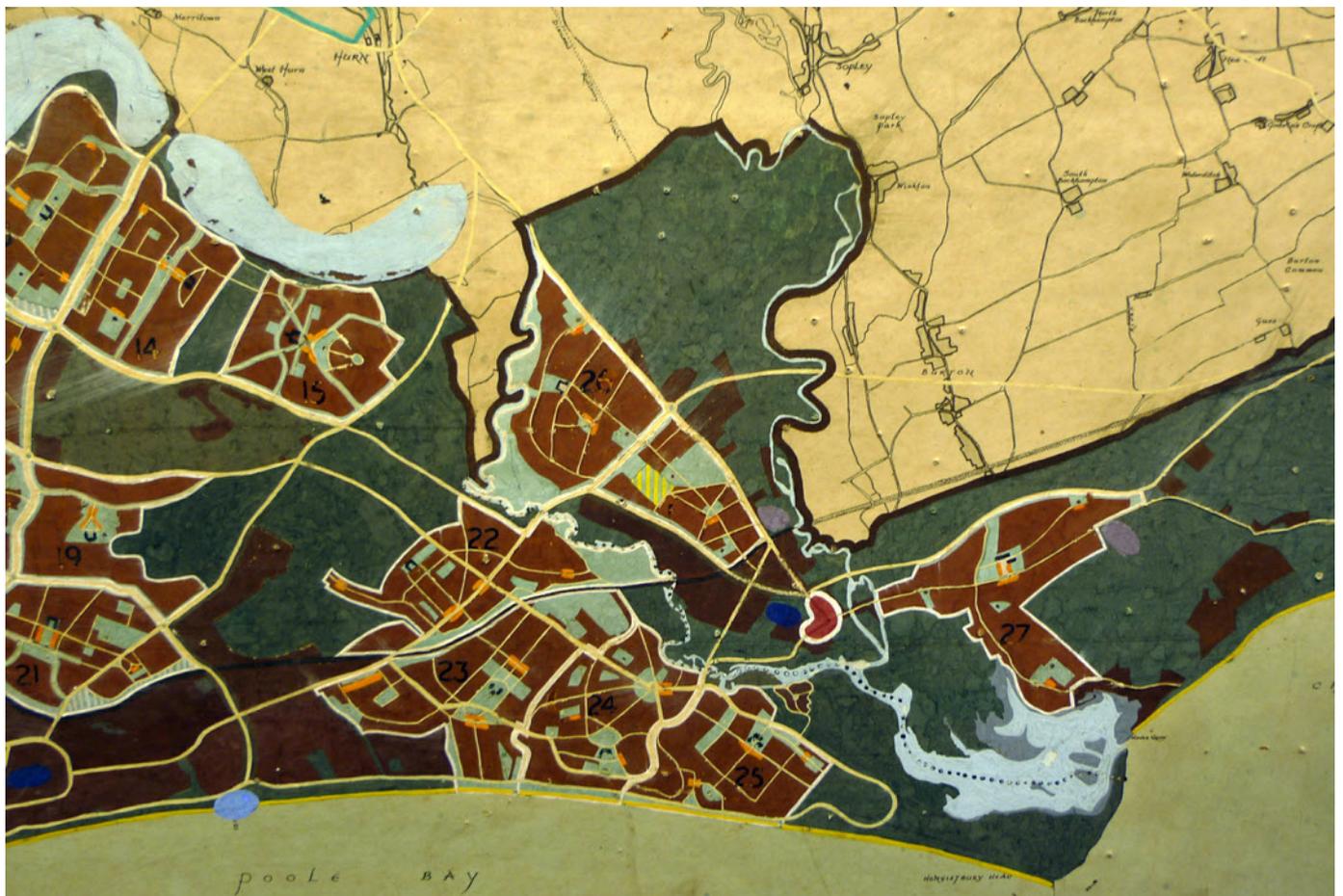
CONCLUSION.

But this question of the development of Christchurch seems largely to depend on what is to be the function of the town in the future. Is it to be increased in size, with more hotel and boarding house accommodation, new cinemas, dance halls, amusement parks and all the other elements that go to make a lively seaside resort? Are its present industries to be largely augmented, bringing in further people and possibly increasing revenues and trade? Or should it remain largely as it is to-day a charming old residential town with a new civic pride in its beauties, which with tactful handling have been preserved and added to, to satisfy the more refined tastes of inhabitant and visitor?

It is considered more than possible that an attempt to rival Bournemouth as a popular seaside resort would be doomed to failure owing to the crushing advantages which Bournemouth already has in this direction over Christchurch. Neither does it seem a fit place to become industrialized by allowing more factories and works with the possible exception of the extension of the Government factory already in existence.

No it is felt that Christchurch should become, as a direct contrast to Bournemouth, a place of old-world charm and serenity, a place where the visitor may find tranquility and beauty amidst the general noise and bustle of life. With the suggestion contained in the Plan and briefly described in this chapter, we put forward this as the proper and useful function of the town and we are certain that not only Christchurch but the whole country would be the better for it.

(iii) The Christchurch Central improvements may be equally subdivided. The site for the new Civic Buildings being open ground will allow them to be included in the first stage: but the break through to the High Street will be in a second or third. The same principle applies to the various road improvements, the stage of realisation depending largely upon the condition of any buildings to be demolished.



Part of the Abercrombie Plan (Original held in Bournemouth Library).

On the following page is an image from the Evening Echo February 15, 1946 concentrating on Christchurch. (Courtesy of the Bournemouth Library).



Disposition of new roads in Sir Patrick Abercrombie's plan for Christchurch will have the effect of taking through traffic away from the centre of the Priory town. Suggested new by-pass runs parallel to the existing road from Purewell and meets a roundabout at Fountain Corner. To the west of High-street the new civic centre is planned, and as an extension of Castle Street is a suggested Pleasure Drive running out into the open country north of the Stour. The plan aims at retaining the existing character of the older parts of Christchurch, but makes provision for considerable expansion in other parts.