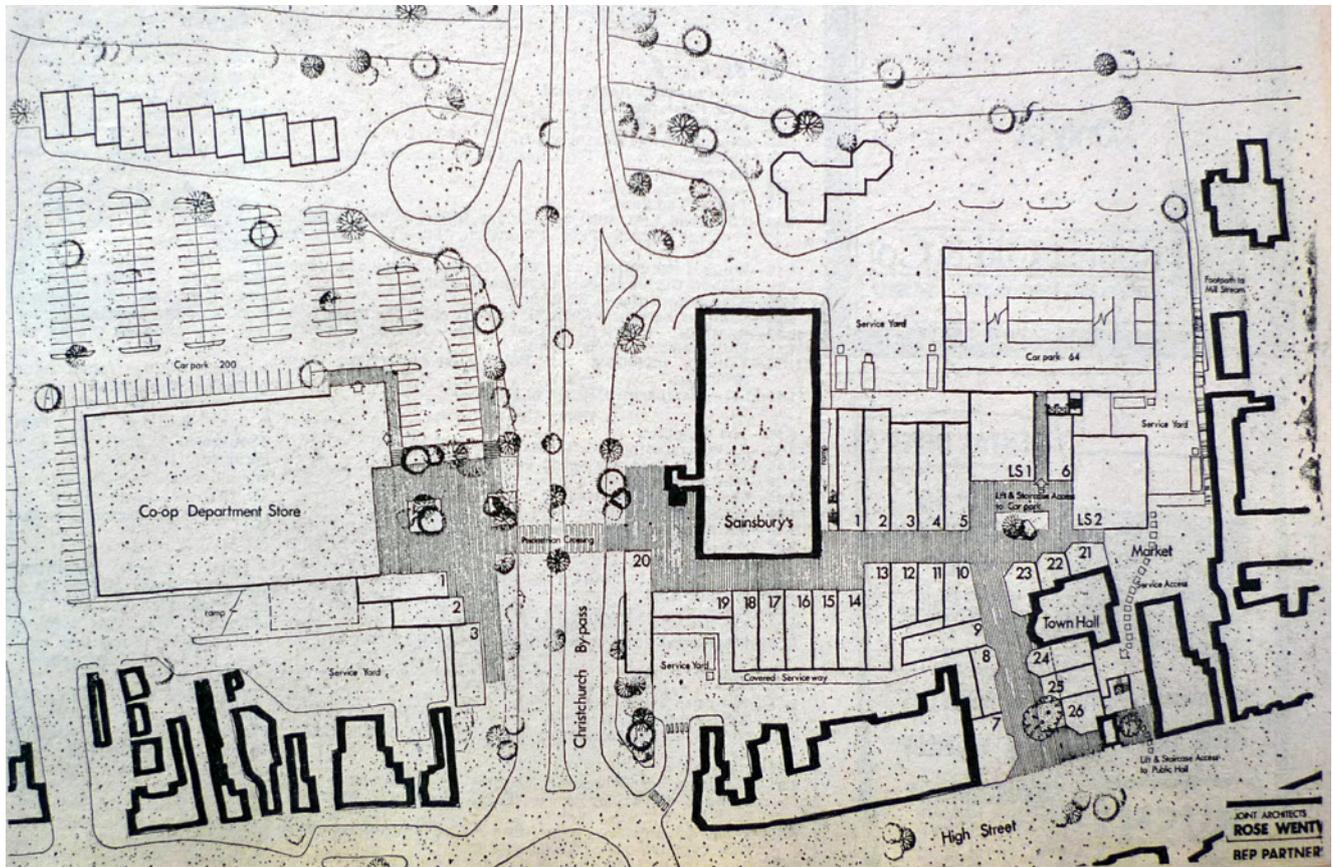


A DEVELOPMENT company have presented Christchurch with a bundle of plans for the New Year which could do more than any other to change the face of the town ... a few months after being chosen to carry out the multi-million pound development of the town centre, Cheviot House have have now submitted an outline application for their scheme.

Echo January 7, 1978



Negotiations between the Wimbledon-based company and Christchurch Council's development agents, Healey and Baker, have only just begun in earnest and they have wasted no time in going for planning permission.

But as their local architect, Mr. Percy Rose, of Rose, Wentworth and Nolan, pointed out: "At present we have no statutory piece of paper which says we are entitled to develop this area. Though Saxon Square has always been considered the place this has been based on only a non-statutory town centre plan. Without planning permission we might all be wasting our time."

Though the application is very much in outline—it shows no more than a red line drawn around the seven-acre development area to the south and north of the by-pass—informal support plans have been submitted to illustrate the company's latest thinking on the scheme.

CHANGES

These show the layout of the possible contents and reveal how Cheviot have shuffled the pack since their original scheme was produced a year ago when they were in competition with other companies.

- Biggest change is that they no longer include new council offices. The site which had been suggested for these—beside the Mill Stream behind Bargates—is devoted instead to a terrace of 12 houses.

But the key to the whole scheme is still a move by the council out of their complex of temporary offices in Saxon Square and Rose, Wentworth and Nolan report they have been given an assurance this could be achieved by the end of the year.

Where the authority would move to is not yet clear. They have agreed in principle to take over offices due to be vacated at Somerford by the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment, but no firm negotiations over this have taken place.

TEMPORARY

- One possibility is that the planning and engineers offices which occupy most of the space in Saxon Square could be dismantled and re-erected temporarily on another site while the council look for a new permanent home.
 - Another change in the plans is that the whole of the red brick Town Hall is retained instead of just the original 18th century front, apparently out of deference to the views of certain councillors.
- To integrate it as much as possible into the new development three shop units are shown slotted into the side of the main hall at ground floor level leaving the upper portion a public hall with access from a new lift and staircase.
- The uninspiring back of the building is masked by three other small shop units and the beauty of the front is enhanced as originally intended by opening up the colonnading.
- A new shopping mall runs alongside the building to a small square where it turns towards the by-pass, connecting up with the front of Sainsbury's.

SQUARE PLAN

- In all the Saxon Square site contains 28 shops, including two larger units, 438 car park spaces on four decks, a public house and outdoor market area.
- Another departure is that it is linked to the Bargates site with a combined vehicular and pedestrian underpass and the present pelican crossing at the end of the by-pass is moved to a new position opposite the end of the shopping mall outside Sainsbury's.
- Remainder of the Bargates site is much the same as before, with the controversial superstore for the Wessex Co-op, three smaller shops fronting the by-pass and a 200-space surface car park. An access is shown from Bargates as well as the by-pass.

OWNERS

Owners of about 30 properties around the area have been officially notified of the application and in some cases will be asked to sell bits of their land.

- But the United Reformed Church property in Millhams Street, previously included, has been left out of the scheme — "in the interest of simplicity," commented Mr. Rose.

The earliest the proposals are likely to be considered by Christchurch Development committee is on February 1. Cheviot House have said they would like to make a start on the development by September.