

TOWN MAP: MANY CRITICISMS FROM WICKFIELD RESIDENTS

C.T. January 9, 1970

IF anything in the way of a public view emerged from Monday's meeting to discuss the revised draft of the town centre plan, it was steadfast opposition from the Wickfield estate residents to the proposals for carving the Druitt Gardens into car parks, bus turn-round, service roads and a new Creedy road.

Certainly, the Wickfield estate was well represented at the public meeting, and its residents were disturbed about the gradually eroding peace and quiet of their neighbourhood. On one side, according to the plan, lay a disrupted Druitt Gardens and on the other was St. Margaret's Avenue turned into a main access road to the quay and Priory area.

The layout of the area to the west of the High Street hasn't altered substantially in the new plan from the 1966 version. It still retains the "restricted access" at its Wick Lane entrance; it keeps both car parks in the Druitt Gardens and adds a bus turn-round: it keeps the new Creedy road from Sopers Lane to Wick Lane as the access to these car parks.

The major change in this area was the removal from the plan of a proposal for a new road continuing the Creedy road across Wick Lane to Whitehall and Princess Avenue. This would reduce traffic on the Creedy road but increase it on St. Margaret's Avenue, which would continue through the site of the Whitehall pumping station to Queen's Avenue.

Other main criticisms of the 1966 plan have largely been met by the county planners; Bargates is not to be run down as a shopping area; the huge Pit Site roundabout is replaced by high-capacity traffic lights; more space is provided for comprehensive shopping redevelopment; part of the High Street remains open to traffic.

Monday's meeting was the first public showing of the new plan, and the Town Hall was packed for the occasion. Christchurch Planning Committee chairman, Coun. John Morgan said that after criticisms of several major aspects of the 1966 plan, the county planners went back to Winchester well aware that the citizens of Christchurch would not have imposed on them anything which didn't have majority approval. There had been impatience locally, because many projects had to wait for the redrafting of the plan.

Assistant county planning officer, Mr. Roger Brown said the reason for the delay in revising the draft had been the "state of indecision" over Route 10. The county roads and bridges committee could not agree to the various sketches from the planners until they knew the effect of traffic expected at Pit Site.

Since the committee had determined that Route 10 would be built, but so far without a detailed route, it had been able to assess the amount of traffic at Pit Site, and draw the plan accordingly. The plan depended on Route 10 being built — and quickly.

Mr. Brown outlined the criticisms to the 1966 plan—they added up, he said, to a complaint that the plan was too rigid. The new draft was more flexible, and therefore, he hoped, more likely to be accepted and approved quicker.

A resident of St. Margaret's Avenue complained about the increase in traffic planned for the road, which was part of a residential estate; the Willow Way/ Stour Road junction would be dangerous, she said.

Mr. Brown pointed out that the junction would be improved, as would Willow Way. As for St. Margaret's Avenue, he agreed that it wasn't a good thing to take extra traffic through a residential area, but he saw no alternative.

Mr. James Gray complained: "We are going to destroy part of the core of the town for car parks in the Druitt Gardens. Why not put more car parks on Millhams Mead? People should be able to walk to the quay from the High Street,"

Mr. Brown said this would mean covering the whole of Millhams Mead with a car park, or building on more than one level. To do this would spoil the view of Christchurch town centre from the east; the present sharp line dividing country from town was one of the town's most attractive features.

Mrs. Doris Hunter, another Wickfield resident, said the Creedy road would mean the felling of more than half of the trees on the line of the present footpath. Mr. Brown disagreed, many would have to go, but more than half would remain.

Mr. Alan Melville, also of Wickfield Avenue, suggested "Rather than cut up the Druitt Gardens, it would be much better to put a car park on part of the recreation ground, which would be convenient for both the town centre and the quay area.

Mr. Brown agreed to consider this, provided the idea were backed by "a sufficiently powerful body of opinion" locally.

'A BIT FAR'

However, he thought Barrack Road recreation ground "a bit far" to expect shoppers to walk from shops to a car park. Although he thought they should walk as far as 300 to 400 yards, it would be optimistic to expect them to do so. Normally, shoppers managed up to 70 yards in a small town, although they might walk further to Regent Street.

Others were concerned about the distance drivers would have to travel to get across the town. Asked Mr. G. F. Hamlin: How would a person in Bargates get to the King's Arms Hotel for a drink —or to Lloyds Bank to cash a cheque? Well, said Mr. Brown, he would turn left at the Pit Site traffic lights, right at the Stony Lane roundabout, right at Bridge Street, and into Castle Street. In the interests of saving the town centre, the motorist would have to learn to travel a bit further than the direct route, he added.

Mr. J. M. Sparrowe was interested in the route buses would take through the town, as they would obviously not be able to turn right from Barrack Road into Sopers Lane, just in front of the traffic lights. Mr. Brown's route was tortuous: left at Stour Road traffic lights, right at Bargates, right at Pit Site lights, left into Sopers Lane, left into the Creedy road to the bus stop, and on up Wick Lane to Bridge Street.

However, he conceded that the bus operators weren't very happy about this arrangement, and the buses would probably continue to use the High Street.

Mr. R. Fleet, owner of the land planned for the bus turn-round wasn't very happy either. Fifteen years ago, he said, he built his house in Wick Lane, after being given permission by the local council. Now they wanted to take it to make room for a road, and his land for a car park and bus stop.

NEGOTIATE

Commented Mr. Brown: "This plan gives nobody the right to acquire any property. Whoever they are, they must negotiate with the owners of the land. If the council has to buy by compulsory purchase, the owner is entitled to object, and the most that can be said is that this plan indicated the land as a possible site for another use."

The other car park to the west of High Street would demand two-thirds of the land owned by Keith Motors, said Mr. Brian Woodfield, a director of the firm.

"We have lived under a planning guillotine for three and a half years already," he said. "Can you give more indication of the timing of these proposals? Or are these plans nothing more than a periodic exercise for the county draughtsmen?"

Mr. Brown said the timing was up to the borough council, which would have the job of implementing the plan. Owners could "hang on to the bitter end", or make out a case of planning blight, and ask the council to buy the property immediately.

Two others affected directly by the proposals were at the meeting, Mr. C. T. Etheridge, secretary of Christchurch Congregational Church and Mr. E. Garfield, of Staggs, High Street. The church, Mr. Garfield, the borough council and a fourth person were the owners of the land needed for the comprehensive development behind the town hall.

Mr. Etheridge was concerned about access to the church, which seemed to be via Millhams Street from Castle Street only, but Mr Brown assured him that there would be a link next to the church from Millhams Street to the town hall car park site.

NO REAR ACCESS

Mr. Garfield pointed out that on the plan, Staggs and the shops between it and the town hall would have no rear access; at present they had one, but this would go if the car park entrance to the south of the town hall were closed, as proposed by the plan.

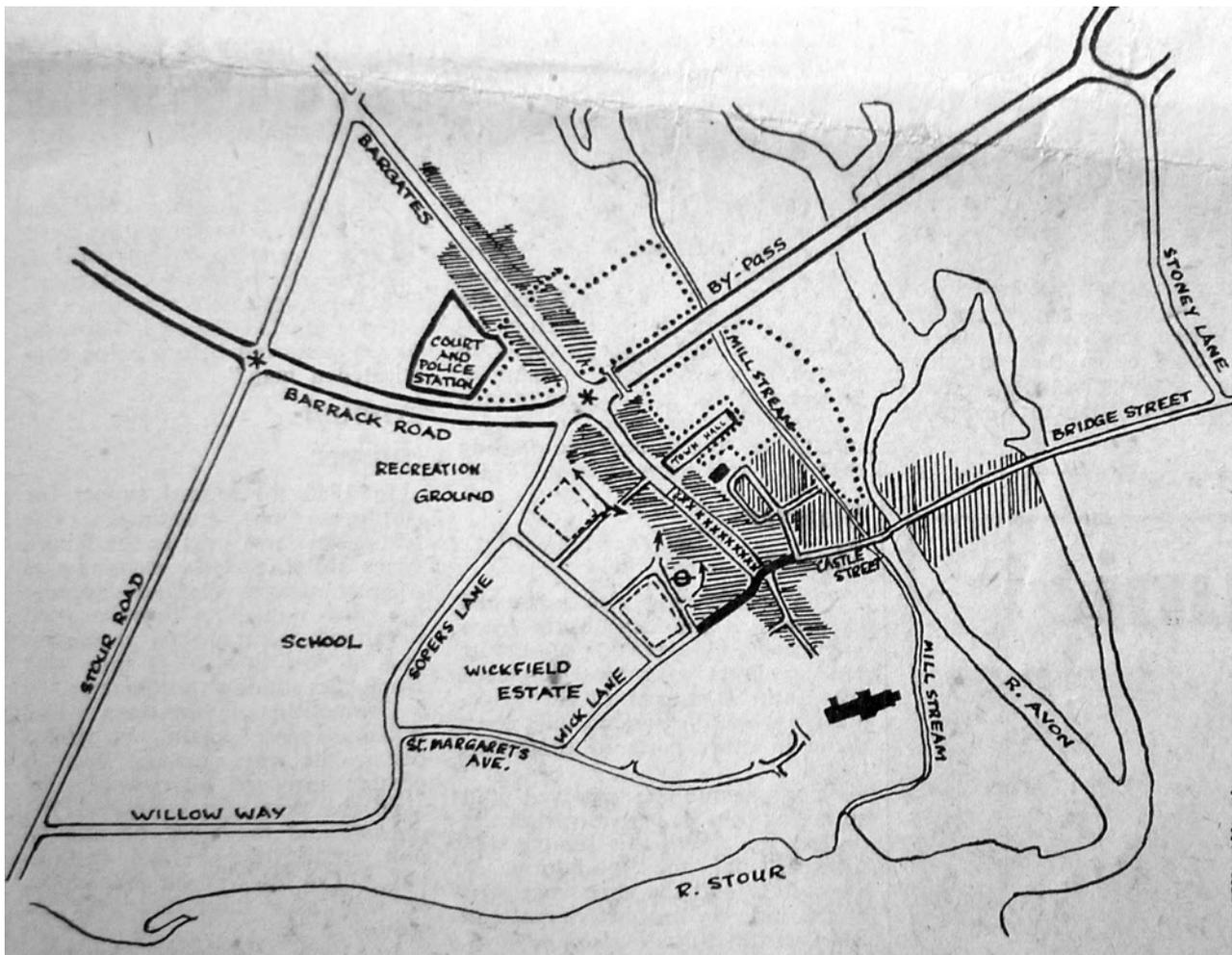
If the Corporation planned an alternative route, how soon would this be made known? No plans for redevelopment behind these shops could be settled until the line of this new route was decided.

Said Mr. Brown: "Millhams Street should be connected to the new redevelopment area. That is as far as I can go. The four owners of this land should put their heads together and come up with some reasonable arrangement between them."

Mr. Garfield complained that 'big brother' the council had already started planning the redevelopment of the car park site, (reported in CT on December 24) but it hadn't asked him for his views on how his part of the site could be redeveloped.

A copy of the plan is on display at the Town Hall. Comments and objections should be sent to the Clerk to the County Council. The Castle, Winchester, by February 28.

Map featured in C.T. December 24, 1969



- * . . . traffic lights
- ⊕ . . . bus facilities
- ≡ . . . Main shopping area
- |||| . . . mixed uses
- xxx . . . pedestrians only
- ⊞ . . . comprehensive development area
- . . . new car parks