

# TOWN MAP: ROUNDABOUT GOES AND BARGATES SHOPPING STAYS

The giant Pit Site roundabout has been dropped in favour of traffic lights; the comprehensive redevelopment area has been increased by almost three times; only part of High Street is a pedestrian precinct; Bargates is to remain as a shopping street.

These are the main changes proposed by the county planning department in the revised draft town centre map published on Friday.

But some of the points which brought objection to the original map in 1966 are retained in the proposals: the car park on Millhams Mead remains as part of the redevelopment area, in spite of its being on common land; the new service road along the line of the Creedy footpath is also retained.

Assistant county planning officer, Mr. Roger Brown on Friday described the new plan as “a great deal more flexible” than the 1966 version. He said he hoped it would be dealt with quickly, and a final plan approved as soon as possible—the state of uncertainty in the town centre had already gone on for a long time.

## MORE INFORMATION

The objections to the 1966 plan and the publication of the land use and transportation study for the Bournemouth area had produced more information for the planners to use in preparing the new plan. In particular, the study proposed that Christchurch should be the main shopping centre for this area, and that there was room for additional shopping in the town.

Hence, in addition to the redevelopment proposals for the town hall site, the new plan made provision for an extension across the by-pass, and more at the Bargates—Barrack Road junction.

The comprehensive redevelopment areas are said in the county’s written statement to be for “major expansion of central area facilities, including shops and car parking.”

The Bargates section would be used after the town hall car park shopping precinct had been completed, and only if further expansion was considered desirable in the long term. There would be no access to the Bargates redevelopment area from the by-pass. Each of the areas would have to contain a substantial amount of car parking space, said Mr. Brown.

Access to the Bargates area would be from Bargates, possibly along Beaconsfield Road. It would probably need some demolition of property.

A footbridge across the by-pass would link the two development areas. Traffic engineers, said Mr. Brown advised that a footbridge would be an easier proposition than a subway, because of the high water table of the land in the area. No footbridge or subway is proposed to link the area on the corner of Bargates and Barrack Road either with the town centre or the other side of Bargates.

## DEPTH LIMIT

About the other major change in shopping provision—the allocation of Bargates as a shopping area the county’s statement says: “In the light of the present situation it is proposed to accept some further development in Bargates. To the south of Avon Buildings new shops will be permitted subject to a limit on their depth of 50 feet, and between Avon Buildings and Fairfield to a depth of 30 feet. It is considered that such restrictions will conform to the existing pattern in the area without permitting Bargates to become a counter attraction to the town centre itself.”

Mr. Brown commented that the object of the limit on the depth of the shops from the road was to keep out large stores.

The traffic lights in Barrack Road would have to be high capacity ones, with left filters, and on the main road, three lanes approaching and two leaving, said Mr. Brown. The volume of traffic would be very high, even with Route 10 taking off most of the through traffic at Stony Lane roundabout.

Present traffic was reckoned to be about 35,000 vehicles a day; the new traffic lights would have to be able to take 50,000 to 60,000 vehicles a day. Commented Mr. Brown: “The large roundabout in the

original map wasn't very popular, and took up a large amount of land. The county surveyor does feel, having gone into it in more detail, that the traffic can be accommodated by traffic lights."

Buses are catered for off Wick Lane, but Mr. Brown was careful to avoid suggesting a route in detail.

One possibility however, was for the buses from Bournemouth to turn left at Stour Road, right at Bargates, across the traffic lights and left in Sopers Lane. Then they would turn along the new Creedy Road and to the bus stop. The journey would continue along Wick Lane — no longer one way — and Castle Street.

It would also be possible to allow buses to use the "pedestrian only" part of the High Street, and thus maintain their present routes.

He said the county planners had discussed routes with the bus operators, but they had not stated any preference for particular routes.

#### 'UNSATISFACTORY'

The present bus turning area in Church Street is "unsatisfactory" says the county's statement. It proposed that the site be moved to the Bridge Street car park at first, and finally to an area of Wick Lane.

As in the 1966 plan, the use by ordinary traffic of the Castle Street and Wick Lane junction (marked solid black on the plan) would eventually be restricted, after the High Street had been "pedestrianised." This, said Mr. Brown, was to stop the use of these roads by through traffic, and cut the amount of traffic using the old area of the town around Church Street. However, the county planners had no precise proposals for restricting traffic and gaining access to the Church Street area. "We will have to cross that bridge when we get to it," said Mr. Brown.

Access to the Priory House car park and the Quay area would be by St. Margaret's Avenue and Whitehall, the traffic approaching along an improved Willow Way from Tuckton Bridge or down Sopers Lane. These two roads would form a new access to the town centre from Tuckton and Southbourne.

The alteration in the plans for the High Street pedestrian area — in the 1966 version, the whole street was pedestrians only — is brought about by the need to gain access to the service roads planned to be constructed behind the shops. The original plan divided the service areas of the High Street, into four quadrants, one served from Pound Lane, one by Sopers Lane, one by Millhams Street and other by Wick Lane.

The new plan leaves part of the High Street available for traffic, with service roads through to the back of the shops through Bank Close and by the side of the Town Hall. Millhams Street, with a new service road running off it, is still proposed for access to the south-east area of the High Street, but Mr. Brown said the county accepted the need for access from this network to the comprehensive area on the town hall car park site.

On the other side of High Street, the 1966 plan's two car parks are retained. At the rear of the telephone exchange surface level car park could fit 250 cars, and could be extended later to a multi-storey one, taking up to 750 cars. The one proposed south of the Druitt Gardens could initially take 150 cars, and later be expanded to fit 600.

At present, there are 250 spaces at the rear of the town hall. Any development on this site would have to replace and add to this number. Total eventually required would be 500, which could be provided by a multi-storey car park or by a surface level one on Millhams Mead. In either case, says the county's statement, close attention would need to be paid to landscape and screening in order that the sharp distinction between town and flood plain could be preserved.

Any comprehensive development of the Bargates area would need to provide more parking space, for 300 to 400 cars. Total number of parking space needed in Christchurch town centre by 1981 is estimated at 2,600 — at present there are 1,165.

#### LONG TERM

Many of the proposals in the plan are long term ones, whose timing will be controlled by the opportunities presented and the resources available, says the statement. No definite dates are put forward for the various stages, but it is suggested that the main traffic proposals would be divided into three stages.

The first phase would be the replacement of the Pit Site roundabout with traffic lights, construction of footbridge over the by-pass and the improvement of the Willow Way and Sopers Lane route.

Removal of the roundabout would necessitate an additional access to the car park behind the town hall from the High Street.

The second stage would be the provision of a new car park and access roads to the south west of the High Street, and the construction of service roads.

Third stage would be the completion of the Creedy road, and if desirable, the creation of a pedestrian shopping street in the southern half of the High Street

A public meeting to explain the map is to be held at the Town Hall, Christchurch, on January 5 at 7.30 pm, and observations on it should be sent to the Clerk to the County Council, The Castle, Winchester, by February 28.

