
ROCHFORD TOWN CENTRE ENHANCEMENT SCHEME (Min 114/01)

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides details of the public consultation exercise carried out between 1st - 15th June 2001 into the proposals for the enhancement of Rochford Town Centre and seeks Members' agreement to the implementation of the scheme, subject to amendments.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 A draft scheme for the enhancement of Rochford Town Centre was considered by this Committee on 22nd March 2001. The draft scheme has now been subject to a public consultation exercise and details of the responses are reported below.
- 2.2 The consultation exercise was carried out between 1st - 15th June and the arrangements were followed to ensure wide publicity and discussion of the proposals. A copy of the consultation leaflet is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Consultation Arrangements

- 2.3 Leaflets were delivered to residents and businesses in the Town Centre (South Street, West Street, East Street, North Street and Weir Pond Road). In addition:
- Leaflets and posters were placed in Acacia House and Rochford Library
 - The mobile unit was placed in Back Lane Car Park on Tuesday 5th June and in the Market Square on 14th June
 - Leaflets were handed out to visitors to the Town on Tuesday 12th June.
 - A Press Release was issued at the start of the consultation and there was coverage of the scheme in the local press and on the radio.

3 RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

- 3.1 At the time of writing, 116 consultation responses had been received from about 800 leaflets distributed. These can be broken down as follows:-

Support scheme	-	48%
Oppose scheme	-	46%
Not stated	-	6%

- 3.2 The consultation leaflet asked for comments on a reduction in the maximum waiting time in the Market Square from one hour to thirty minutes to help compensate for the reduction in the number of car parking spaces. Such a change would not, if agreed, apply to the disabled spaces. The response to this question was:-

Support reduction	-	48%
Oppose reduction	-	47%
Not stated	-	5%

- 3.3 It is clear that there is no overall support or opposition to the scheme emerging from the responses received. The number of returned questionnaires is somewhat disappointing given the significance of the proposed changes to the town centre. The responses from the Rochford Market Operatives and a joint response from the Chamber of Trade and the Amenities Society are included in these figures, though these responses are discussed in more detail later in the report.

- 3.4 A series of Appendices to this report provide a more detailed breakdown of the responses.

- Appendix 2 - Oppose scheme and change to waiting times
- Appendix 3 - Oppose scheme but support change to waiting times
- Appendix 4 - Qualified opposition to scheme and changes to waiting times
- Appendix 5 - Qualified opposition to scheme but support change to waiting times
- Appendix 6 - Support scheme and change to waiting times
- Appendix 7 - Support scheme but not change to waiting times
- Appendix 8 - Qualified support for scheme and changes to waiting times
- Appendix 9 - Qualified support for scheme but not change to waiting times

- 3.5 It is suggested that the key Appendix for Members to examine is Appendix 4 which lists a series of suggestions for alterations to the

Town Centre, as alternatives to the scheme as proposed. The key concerns seem to be as follows:-

- There should not be a reduction in the number of free parking spaces available in the Market Square
- The scheme will not stop queuing in West Street
- There is no justification for the flow of traffic to be reversed
- The scheme will reduce the number of visitors to the Town.

3.6 However, it is also interesting to note that a number of those respondents opposing the scheme as drawn actually suggested more radical changes to the Town Centre, including pedestrianisation and the removal of the taxi rank.

Rochford Market Operatives

3.7 The operators of the Tuesday Market raised concerns about the implications of the scheme for the continuing viability of the market. At present, the Square offers the potential for 50 market stalls, but it is understood that the average number filled tends to be 42-44 on a good day.

3.8 There is concern that between 10 and 12 stalls might be lost if the scheme was implemented in its current form. However, discussions have indicated that careful placement of street furniture and the deletion of planters/trees would ensure that perhaps only two market stalls would be lost.

3.9 The operators make several other suggestions about the form of the scheme and a copy of their response is attached at Appendix 10 to this report.

Rochford Chamber of Trade and Commerce Rochford Hundred Amenities Society

3.10 A copy of the joint response from these organisations is attached at Appendix 11. The response provides qualified support from an enhancement scheme, but raises a number of issues:

- Revisions to the positions of speed humps
- The need for pavements to be widened
- Any reduction in the maximum time for car parking
- The reduction in the number of spaces for car parking
- Queuing or car parking should be encouraged, not eliminated.
- The need to reverse the flow of traffic.

3.11 Whilst the response does indicate support for enhancement, it is clear from the detailed comments that an enhancement along the principles

of the draft scheme would not be possible if all identified concerns were to be taken into account.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 It is clear that there has been a mixed response to the scheme as proposed. Given the range of changes proposed, it is not surprising that this is the case.
- 4.2 Members will need to consider the following:-
- Whether the enhancement should proceed as per the proposed draft scheme
 - Whether the enhancement should proceed subject to amendments to take into account some of the responses received
 - The 'do nothing' option
 - If a scheme is implemented, the justification for a reduction in the maximum waiting time from 1 hour to 30 minutes
- 4.3 From the consultations received, one of the key issues, if a scheme is to be implemented along the lines proposed, would be to ensure the continuing viability of the Tuesday Market. It is suggested that the deletion of trees/planters and careful placement of street furniture would ensure a minimum impact from the scheme on the Market.
- 4.4 It is considered that subject to minor amendment, the proposed scheme is acceptable and should be progressed. If Members do support the scheme, the build phase will need to be carefully planned to ensure the minimum disruption to traders and it is considered that there should be no building work on Tuesdays to allow the market to continue to operate.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The key principle of the Town Centre Enhancement Scheme is to achieve a better balance between pedestrian and vehicle usage of the Market Square.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A budget of £100,000 is available for Town Centre enhancement. In addition, a grant may be available from English Heritage through the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme.

7 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That, subject to comments from Members on adjustments to the scheme, arrangements be made to implement the Rochford Town Centre Enhancement Scheme. (HOPS)

Shaun Scrutton

Head of Planning Services

For further information please contact Shaun Scrutton on:-

Tel:- 01702 318100

E-Mail:- shaun.scrutton@rochford.gov.uk

TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE - 4 July 2001 Appendix 1



Rochford Market Square Enhancement

Rochford District Council, in conjunction with Essex County Council has prepared an enhancement scheme for Rochford Market Square and is keen to receive your views on the proposals.

The purpose of the scheme is to make the Market Square a significantly more attractive space by adjusting the balance between pedestrians and vehicles. Effectively, the draft scheme is designed to create a much more pedestrian friendly environment, whilst at the same time retaining some short-term parking provision. Further short-term parking may be provided in North Street and East Street, but this will be subject to further consultation.

A sketch of the proposed scheme is provided on the reverse of this leaflet.

Please return your response by 15th June to: Rochford Enhancement, Rochford District Council, South Street, Rochford SS4 1BW or email them to: market.square@rochford.gov.uk

Key Features

- Widening of pavements where possible
- Narrowing of the vehicle entrance and exit from the square
- A Safe pedestrian route from one side of the square to the other
- A change in the direction of vehicle flow
- New paved areas and street furniture
- Traffic table in West St to reduce vehicle speed
- Kerb realignment at the South St / West St junction
- Better street lighting

The scheme does not propose to make any changes to the provision for taxi parking in the square, nor to the space available for the Tuesday Market, which it is hoped will continue to be popular in a new setting.

Recognising the value of some short-term parking in the town centre, views are sought on the principle of reducing the waiting limit to 30 minutes to ensure there is a rapid turnover of vehicles in the square.

A large scale plan of the proposals can be viewed in the Planning Department at Acadia House, 2 East St, Rochford or in the Library. The Council's mobile exhibition unit will be in Back Lane Car Park on 6th June and officers will be available to discuss the scheme.

Your views are sought on the following

- Do you support the key elements of the proposed enhancement scheme?
YES / NO
- If you do not support the scheme as proposed, please indicate how you think it might be improved.

- Do you support a change on the maximum stay for vehicles from 1 hour to 30 minutes
YES / NO

Name: _____

Address: _____

Responses to the consultation will be considered by the Council on 4th July and it is hoped that construction of the agreed scheme will commence in Autumn.

10/00/01

Appendix 2 Oppose scheme and change to waiting lanes

Support Scheme	Comments
Yes	Change of traffic flow will cause congestion.
No	Scheme will not stop queuing in West St.
No	Alternatives only require re-surfacing. Altering junction will make congestion increase, difficulty for buses.
No	More parking. Support traffic table in West St.
No	No restriction in parking, max possible. Change of traffic flow will cause congestion.
No	Junction South subsequence barely wide enough already. Improved busings down West St instead.
No	Need to encourage motorists to stop in Rochford. This scheme drives them away.
No	More car parking spaces in the Square, no limit on parking in East St.
No	Reduce taxi spaces to one car.
No	Support speed capping measures in West St, other proposals would not make it safer/more attractive to pedestrians.
No	Change of vehicle flow & change entry/exit will increase congestion. Second speed ramp West St no loss of parking.

4 July 2001

Appendix 2

12068/01

Appendix 2. Oppose scheme and change to waiting times

Support Parking Charges	Other Comments
No	Will discourage shoppers if they have to pay
No	Waste of money
No	Not long enough. Scheme involves 50% loss of parking. Insufficient consultation
No	Do not change something that works well
No	Need to enhance above ground level
No	30 mins not long enough. Proposals will hasten demise of Square
No	Proposals will close down all the shops, a very bad plan for Rochford
No	30 mins not enough
No	Reducing parking deters shoppers. Scheme is thought out. Vandalsism?
No	Rural residents need the parking spaces retained, scheme will cause congestion
No	
No	
No	
No	

13104011

Appendix 3 Oppose schema but support change to waiting times

Support Schema	More parking spaces in Square	Yes
No	Road to narrow to improve	No

19.10

19.10

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Appendix 3 Oppose scheme but support change to waitings times

Support Parking Changes	Waste of time/money	Other Comments
Yes		
Yes		
Yes		

19.11

19.11

Appendix 4 Qualified opposition to schemes and changes to walking

Support Scheme	Qualified Opposition
No	CCTV cameras (extra sealing attracts jobs) Suggests... Change of vehicle direction increases congestion, speed ramps in West St above taxi rank, ban licensed vehicles from parking in the Square
No	Narrowing entrance exit to Square, extending on-path will create extra hazards delivering to 2 West St. (Taxis)
No	Increase number of parking spaces not reduce
No	Increased difficulty for buses turning into square. Change of entry will permit queues jumping.
No	Provides free planning as this will reduce market stall space and therefore market operations
No	Ban parking altogether. One way system for Rochford. Free parking for first hour in Back Lane. Taxis in North St
No	Entry/exit changes will cause traffic jams. Extension paths may affect market. Simultaneous re-generation of West St.
No	Reduce taxi spaces to three, stop taxis parking in Square itself
No	Change of traffic flow will cause congestion, increase detached parking and move to corner by Pizza Cafe
No	Change of traffic flow will cause congestion.
No	Pedestrians use the Square West St. No parking
No	Pedestrians West St. move bus stop taxi to Nth St. entry/exit to Market Square via South St. Main car park fire
No	Reason existing direction of traffic flow, bollard perimeter of pavement in Square, raise road adjacent to entry/exit Sq.
No	Scheme will not stop queuing in West St.
No	Widen pavement outside shops on north side of square rather than put crossings either side of taxi rank
No	New free car park with limited walking
No	Support for change in direction of traffic flow. Other proposals unnecessary.
No	Pavements only require re-surfacing. Altering junction will make congestion increase difficulties for buses
No	More parking. Support traffic table in West St.
No	no reduction in parking, if possible. Change of traffic flow will cause congestion.
No	More disabled spaces, more speed bumps. Better signage for entrance/exit. No beer drinking on Streets
No	Increase parking spaces by reducing size of entry/exit. Speed bumps South West St., reduce taxi parking
No	Retain same no. of parking spaces.
No	Junction South St/Square barely wide enough already. Improve buildings down West St instead
No	Corner/entry too much on Square and shops down West St which are unattractive to shoppers
No	Will stop people shopping in Rochford, the whole area needs to be renovated
No	Need to encourage motorists to stop in Rochford, this scheme drives them away

TO VIEW

Appendix 4 Qualified opposition to scheme and changes to wording

Support scheme	
No	Residents parking Nth St. more people will try to park Nth St. for free, better signage for car park
No	Encourage shop owners to changes facades to a more historical appearance
No	Entire west St. pedestrianised, all traffic prohibited
No	See Appendix 11 for details
No	More car parking spaces in the Square, no limit on parking in East St
No	Reduce taxi spaces to one car
No	Support speed curbing measures in West St., other proposals would not make it safer/more attractive to pedestrians
No	Change of vehicle flow & change entry/exit will increase congestion. Second speed limit West St. no loss of parking

18/06/01

TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE - 4 July 2001
Appendix 4

Item 19

Appendix 4 Qualified opposition to scheme and changes to waiting

Support Parking Changes	Comments
140	More fuelless parking scheme will increase congestion.
141	Free zone parking in Square free parking needed as close to shops as possible
142	Reduction of parking space and time allowances will affect trade
143	Reduced parking spaces/time will discourage shoppers (elderly particularly)
144	Loss of parking
145	No parking at all, exhaust fumes etc.
146	50 mins too short. Reduction of 5 mins deters shoppers. Free parking essential
147	Landscape features a waste of time/money
148	Will discourage shoppers if they have to pay
149	Proposes 15 mins max
150	Tighter control of the parking. Attached plan has full details
151	Waste of money
152	No cost/benefit given
153	Shoppers will be deterred, residents parking already difficult. Permitted parking scheme?
154	Not long enough. Restrict parking to one side in Well Pond, East St. & Rocheford
155	Not long enough. Scheme involves 50% loss of parking. Inadequate consultation
156	Do not change something that works well
157	Need to enhance above ground level
158	30 mins not long enough for elderly and disabled
159	30 mins not long enough. Proposals will hasten demise of Square
160	Not long enough
161	Proposals will close down all the shops, a very bad plan for Rochford
162	Use traffic warden
163	Retain 1 hr limit. Proposals discourage people from coming to shop.
164	30 mins not enough
165	No

16/06/01

Appendix 4 Qualified opposition to scheme and changes to waiting

Support Parking Changes	Other Comments
No	
No	Reducing parking deters shoppers. Scheme ill thought out. Vandalism?
No	
No	Rural residents need the parking spaces retained. Scheme will cause congestion
No	
No	
No	
No	
No	

18/06/01

Appendix 5 Qualified opposition to scheme but support change to walking times

Support Parking Changes	Other Comments
Yes	Waste of time/money
Yes	retain all existing bus stop
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	Reduction will give more people a chance to shop/bank
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	Generally waste of money.
Yes	Reduced walking time may improve traffic congestion
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	

18/02

Appendix 7 Support scheme but not changes to waiting times

Support Scheme	Support Parking Changes	Other Comments
Yes	No	
Yes	No	
Yes	No	not what there is no option between 30 mins & 2 hrs in Back Lane
Yes	No	
Yes	No	
Yes	No	making waiting time shorter will not alleviate congestion problems
Yes	No	Taxis 20 or 30 mins to be served in Post Office
Yes	No	

18/01/01

Appendix 8 Qualified support for scheme and changes to waiting times

Overport scheme	Yes
Expand marked into West Street, some measures to bring people to lower end of West St	Yes
Widening along widened north and west pavements	Yes
Speed bumps in North St. Traffic Warden needed	Yes
Provide 12 bays for motor cycle/mopeds in Black Lane	Yes
Reduce parking. Traffic calming in East St. Pedestrian crossings East St. to Square via North St.	Yes
Installation of city cameras in Square. Additional speed reduction at end of West St	Yes
Reduce and ejector, existing number makes passing a stopped bus difficult	Yes
Taxi rank and buses should not interfere with flow of traffic	Yes
Move taxi rank	Yes
More regeneration of empty shops, encourage new business	Yes
Rejoin bus stop in Square	Yes
Retain existing direction of vehicles in Square	Yes

12/05/01

Appendix 8 Qualified support for scheme and changes to walking times

Support scheme	Qualified support for scheme and changes to walking times
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	Extra parking behind library redesign parking NE corner, full pedestrian Sq. 12 in Walling Lay-by/Span redesign in 70a
Yes	Change in direction of traffic flow will cause problems in South/East St. Junction
Yes	No waiting in West St if parking spaces full, re-route buses out of square, re-surface all paved areas
Yes	Offer free parking for the first hour in Back Lane car park
Yes	Free parking in North St, speed ramps
Yes	More scaling
Yes	Two traffic tables in West St, restful
Yes	

Appendix 9 Qualified support for scheme but not change to walking times

18/01/00

Support Scheme	Comments
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	Most of scheme unnecessary. Change in direction flow will be confusing. Supports speed restrictions in West St
Yes	
Yes	Any new parking should be free
Yes	Signpost in Square indicating shop names in each street
Yes	
Yes	More traffic tables in West St, reduce taxi rank to one line
Yes	Any development must retain the old character of the surroundings. Ultra modern would be wrong
Yes	Change of traffic in Sq. & back logs into 5th St. Would like improvements in shops and landscape
Yes	
Yes	Also false hope to building east end of Square (Spar?) to improve appearance
Yes	Additional speed limit between church and the alley to Back Lane (route for prescriptions from surgery)
Yes	Alteration to entry/exit arrangements will cause greater congestion
Yes	Action needed regarding bus (or taxi) premises in West St
Yes	Only penalising private drivers if taxi allowed to maintain present numbers.
Yes	

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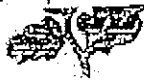
Appendix 9 Qualified support for scheme but not change to waiting times

Support Parking Charges	Other Comments
No	
No	
No	Convenient affect on shops
No	30 mins too short for trip to shops/bank
No	
No	30 mins not long enough
No	Not whilst there is no option between 30 mins & 2hrs in Bank Lane
No	
No	At least people seem to stay for short periods anyway
No	
No	
No	
No	Walking waiting time shorter will not alleviate congestion problem
No	
No	30 mins barely enough time for able bodied
No	Takes 20 or 30 mins to be served in Post Office

TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
- 4 July 2001

Item 19

Appendix 10



ROCHFORD MARKET OPERATIVES

(R. F. James & D.J. Reeve)

10 Harewood Avenue
Rochford
Essex, SS43AY

Telephone 01703 543289

16.6.01

Dear Sir,

Rochford Town square enhancement plan

With reference to the above suggested alterations to Rochford Market square in relation to the Rochford Tuesday market. If the plan remains, as it is it will mean the loss of 10 to 12 market pitches, this would create a serious situation on the viability of the market both from both the Trader and Organisers. The other points of concern are;

The two quadrants (One outside the "Takeaway" and one outside the "Supermarket") with railings around the curved section, planted trees or planters would lose nine places and still have a problem of where to place the skip. The Proposed new footway outside the Bakers with trees and or planters, seats and bollards would lose a further three. Trading off the pavement has been suggested but the siting of trees etc. would cause somewhat of a problem. No doubt some of these points could be discussed and some form of compromise reached. The siting of the Fruit stall would create an obstacle, as the stall and van are more or less a combined unit block of five spaces. The use of the new pavement on the North side, in our opinion is not feasible, as the stall would have to be on two different levels, part on the new pavement and part on the square. To say that to build up onto pavement level, the part of the stall in the square could well bring into account legal possibilities in case of accidents. The problem being all of the stall should be on the same level. This could possibly be over come by moving the stall two feet further into the square bearing in mind such a move could create difficulties in the siting of other stalls.

The reduced entry to the square will have to bear in mind access of Traders vehicles and also would it be possible for the "island" to have a run in kerb for the fish and butchers to have easy access.

We understand that the alterations will take about six weeks, again this could affect the Market. If it meant closure for that period, traders would seek out stopgap alternatives for Tuesdays and ultimately not return to Rochford. However I believe it may be possible to suspend work on Tuesdays but still leave the places where working took place usable by stalls and the general public.

We would appreciate an early reply to our comments and concerns as we have a liability and understanding with the Traders, which we do not wish to place in jeopardy.

May we once more say the present proposed plan would have serious consequences to the Market. It is only a small Market, which is part of its popularity, and any loss of stalls would cause gaps and thus lose its appeal to the general public.

Yours sincerely


PP. R.F. JAMES and D.J. REEVES

S. Scovell Esq
Rochford District Council
South Street,
Rochford,
ESSEX.

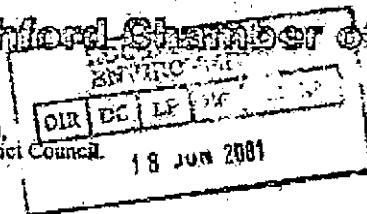
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Rochford Town Centre improvements response, page 1

Rochford Hundred Amenities Society

Rochford Chamber of Trade & Commerce

Shaun Scotton,
Rochford District Council



15th June 2001.

Dear Shaun,

Re Rochford Town Centre Improvements

Last Monday evening representatives from these two local organisations met in order to formulate a combined response to the recently issued study brief. I have been asked by both groups to write to you expressing their reactions.

We were all agreed that the overall scheme has potential, and most of the suggestions contained in it are acceptable. There is no doubt that our town desperately needs some attention, and the work put in by you and the Study Group is appreciated. There are a number of issues on which we would comment.

1. The speed hump proposed for the entrance to West Street might benefit, we feel, from being moved to the western end of the Market Square, in line with the pavement running down the western side, and a second hump installed at the junction with Back Lane. These humps so placed would give better facility to pedestrians whilst making speeding down the length of West Street less attractive.

2. Whilst widening of pavements, particularly at the southern boundary of the Square, is definitely desired, we feel that 3m is too much. We also feel that there is little need for any widening on the other three sides of the Square - or if any is done, perhaps a further 0.5m would suffice.

3. The reduction in parking time from one hour to thirty minutes is a major concern. There is no doubt that the traders in our town are barely surviving; the slightest drop in revenue could well make the difference between survival and collapse. Whilst the suggestions might seem in theory to benefit traders in that the number of cars visiting the Square would increase, in practice it is felt that there is simply not enough time for folk to park, visit the bank, call on a couple of shops and be back in their cars within thirty minutes. The suggestion that by park in Back Lane car park again sounds reasonable, but shoppers tend to try to park close to their destination and, faced with having to use a car park seen as being a distance away, will simply drive straight out. Such shoppers might perhaps be more willing to use the Back Lane facility were the first thirty minutes there to be free.

4. The serious reduction in the number of parking spaces within the Square is our other serious worry. This large reduction is inevitably going to hit the town centre trade; the fewer the number of shoppers able to pause and shop, the lower the trading done. Once again, traders face a drop of sufficient size to make survival highly problematical.

Incidentally, we all questioned the rationale behind the provision of six taxi spaces. There may well be a need for that many taxis to be on hand in the evening but we would suggest this is not the case during the day. Three spaces would be adequate. If more taxi drivers wish to be on hand, they can park in a "holding area" somewhere else and be called forward as needed - after all, they are all in radio contact with their base. The Riverside Estate springs to mind as a possible overflow; it is within a few hundred yards of the Square.

With regard to both items 3 and 4 above, it is significant that during the week when South Street was closed, shoppers could still park and visit our local shops simply by making a minor detour. The Square was still available, as was Back Lane. Yet the Spa store saw a 20% drop in trade during that week.

5. The plan we were given has two significant omissions. It has no comparison with what exists at present, and it lacks any dimensions. Thus we were unable to calculate by how much the market place will shrink, and see how much stall space will be lost on market days. Some reassurance on this issue would be helpful.

6. It appears that the revised layout is intentionally designed to prevent shoppers from queuing to park in the Square (e.g. narrowing the Horner's Corner/Market Square link to allow only one vehicle width at all times). One of the positive factors of parking in the Square is the rapid turnover of parking that encourages queuing, in the knowledge that it is only for a few minutes.

7. Why was it deemed advantageous to reverse the entrance and exit to the Square for parking cars? We were concerned over what a driver turning left out of South Street might see as they drive down the road, the entrance to the Square being directly over their heads. 10 71

- 4 July 2001

Appendix 11

Rochford Town Centre Improvements response, page 2

8. There is one specific issue on which we feel singularly aggrieved. Beryl Webb of this Society received her copies of your study paper on Saturday 2nd June; Eric Jobson of the Chamber of Trade received his on Monday 4th. The paper demanded responses by Friday 15th, less than two weeks later. You will be well aware that it takes time to set up meetings of interested parties, for those parties to agree on a response, and for that response to be typed and submitted. Our meeting on Monday night actually finished at 10.10; I then sat and wrote this letter, I delivered copies of it by hand to all the people who were at our meeting as I needed their agreement to what I had written; they had to consider carefully my wording and pass their comments; I then produced a revised draft and again sought their agreement. All this before I could send the letter to you. What adds to our annoyance is the knowledge that the Town Centre Study Group last met in January, which means your office has had five months in which to prepare your study paper.

Humphrey Squier, the newly-appointed Chairman of the Chamber of Trade, very recently received a fax from Cllr Vic Leach following a conversation Cllr Leach had had with you, stating that this current consultation is actually merely the first; there will be at least two more before any final decisions are made. This totally contradicts the tenor of your paper, which said responses must be with you by June 15th to go to the Council at its meeting in July for final agreement, thus allowing work to start "in the autumn." We are more than a little confused as to what is actually happening, when any final decisions will be made, and what opportunities for input from our two organisations will be provided?

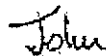
9. Finally, we are concerned over the future of the Town Centre Study Group. It has met precious few times over the past two years; will it wind up once the £100,000 has been spent and the improvements completed, or will it continue in office to monitor future changes? If it does continue offering what we consider could be a helpful input into local affairs, we would hope it is opened up more to interested bodies. As currently formed there seems to be a very large number of council - be it district or county - officials and members, whereas other bodies not directly connected with either council have been effectively side-lined.

To summarise: whilst we quite like many of the changes suggested, there is little which will assist the trading potential of the town. These proposals may well improve the environment and its attractiveness but they reduce the facility for visitors driving into it.

It was noted that the study paper bore the name of a firm of consultants. We would imagine that that firm offered a number of options and alternatives, yet we are given a package on an "all or nothing" basis. It would have been helpful were those other suggestions made available to us prior to our considering the scheme.

These comments are intended to be considered positively and we hope that there is still the opportunity to make changes to what we broadly consider to be a beneficial scheme, which will contribute to the health of Rochford Market Square and its surroundings.

Sincerely,



John Stanton
On behalf of the RHAS & RCT&C.

3 Leicester Avenue,
Rochford, SS4 1JL
01702-545470

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