



## May 2018 Forum written Q&A

### **Topic: Claire House, James House and the Riverside Park**

***Q: Church Street over-ran by many months. How will the disruption of demolition and build be managed?***

A: Demolition and construction will be managed primarily by a series of plans and conditions set out as part of any planning approval. Surrey County Council Highways are required to be consulted on all planning applications. They have indicated that they would require a Construction Transport Management Plan to be submitted for approval before beginning any development as a planning condition, should full planning consent be granted.

***Q: How will the proposed plans for Claire House and James House preserve the nature reserve/wildlife and keep the quiet space by the river? Will you advance the pedestrian bridge to protect the wildlife? What chance of opening up the river walkway from the town centre through to the splash and possibly further?***

A: We are undertaking detailed ecological and environmental surveys of the area designated within the Masterplan as the wider Riverside Park, not just the area adjacent to Claire House and James House. We propose to engage with local wildlife and conservation groups as part of that process. More specifically, as part of the public consultation on the current proposed scheme for Claire House and James House, we will be asking for feedback on the concepts for the Riverside area adjacent to Claire House and James House. The development of proposals for the wider Riverside Park (such as the pedestrian bridge or river walkway) will follow at a later stage.

### **Topic: Flooding**

***Q: When will the flood risk be substantially reduced?***

A: The Environment Agency's temporary flood defence plan to mitigate the risk to those properties in Minchin Close and lower lying properties in Emlyn Lane is now operational.

The Environment Agency's latest modelling work, however, has demonstrated that to protect Fetcham, there is a need to address surface water flood risk at the same time as the flood risk posed by the River Mole. This makes finding a long-term solution more complicated and further analysis to identify options for evaluation is being undertaken.

## **Topic: Swan Centre and High Street retail**

***Q: Can we please put a small play area within the centre for babies and toddlers to give mums a chance to relax and shop further?***

A: That's a great idea. We are looking at a range of offers for the long-term remodelling of the Swan Centre so this is something we can consider. In the meantime, we have some space available to let and would welcome an approach from a creche operator.

***Q: Could we bring in a butcher, fresh fish shop, and a delicatessen? Some pop up style shops might help.***

A: We are targeting pop up style shops, especially local operators, to populate the former Carphone Warehouse unit in the Swan Centre and our recently purchased unit at 21 High Street. Find out more about the letting options here.

We are aware of the interest in traditional village store operators, and will look at options for accommodating their specific requirements within the Town Centre.

For bringing in butchers specifically there's quite a few legal requirements over meat preparation and separation that would need special consideration - see this article for more information.

***Q: In the light of financial turmoil in retail. Can you justify your current strategy there are fewer shops and rents are dropping. Will the Swan centre be viable?***

A: We are keeping a close eye on the retail sector and are aware of the changing role of the High Street. As a result, we have appointed retail experts Cushman & Wakefield to advise us on the right mix of uses for a remodelled Swan Centre. John Percy from Cushman & Wakefield was at the forum and as he explained, it is the right time to evaluate the options for the Swan Centre, as the current climate requires us to pro-actively develop the Swan Centre to ensure that it is fit for purpose and viable.

***Q: Is attracting new businesses to the area going to push out local independent stores and businesses?***

A: On the contrary, we anticipate a remodelled centre as an opportunity to accommodate a mix of national and independent businesses. We believe this mix will create interest and vibrancy to the High Street, so that it becomes a 'destination local centre'. Leatherhead's core purpose will be convenience for the local community but we aim to also create a 'wow' factor to attract visitors from a wider area. To achieve this we aim to create an original and unique offer and are looking to create smaller stores for independent businesses. In the meantime, we are welcoming pop-up retailers and exploring ideas for markets as a way of supporting local enterprise to create future businesses for the area.

### **Topic: Bull Hill/Red House Gardens**

***Q: Can you clarify what will happen to Bull Hill's green spaces and play areas?***

A: At this stage of the initiative, any comment on the redevelopment of Bull Hill is speculation. Our priority is to first understand the mix of uses that can be accommodated within the Swan Centre. We also need to understand, through the Transport Study and subsequent analysis, the capacity of the highways network in and around Leatherhead and how the concerns around accessing the Town Centre might be addressed. Once we have a better understanding of these, we will be in a position to consider the mix of uses that can be accommodated on Bull Hill. This will be based on the findings of the Masterplan, a further masterplan for the site and ongoing feedback received.

***Q: What will the impact of Bull Hill development be on the one-way system?***

A: We have appointed transport experts WSP to undertake a Transport Study, and they will shortly be visible in the town collecting data (find out more). This will be modelled so we can build a detailed understanding of the current traffic issues. Working with Surrey County Council (who manage the roads), we can then explore some of the ideas for changing the road layout identified in the Masterplan and assess the impact on the surrounding road network. The future redevelopment of Bull Hill will then be considered in the context of this study, and the future uses of the road network.

***Q: Because of the over effusive statements that the buildings show in the 'artists impressions' are only that, it is worrying to note that the buildings shown are of a size and***

***scale totally out of keeping with the town. What trust can one have that the scale of the new will not ruin the old and leave us with less green space?***

A: The future redevelopment of Bull Hill will be subject to a site specific master plan, planning policy, and further public consultation at various key stages to ensure that the new development is complementary to the High Street and the Swan Centre whilst providing all the ingredients identified as part of the Masterplan.

## **Topic: Transport**

***Q: What consideration will be given to improved bus services? We need frequent regular bus services - not just Randall's Road - to a. bring people into town, b. relieve traffic and parking pressures. c. bring in a shuttle service for Ashted, Fetcham etc.***

A: We are working with our colleagues at Surrey County Council in relation to sustainable transport initiatives, such as improved bus services, in partnership with the relevant bus operators.

***Q: What do cyclists do now [that the cycle path schemes are not going ahead]?***

A: The proposal for a cycle route to connect the business park with the town centre has been discontinued because the proposal did not meet the criteria for grant funding, private landowners not consenting to public access across their land and there being insufficient highways space, we will continue to work with Surrey County Council on alternative sustainable transport schemes.

***Q: Leatherhead was originally at the major cross roads beside the bridge over the river Mole. The current road system effectively bypasses the town completely - comment please.***

A: We understand and agree, and the area at the centre of High Street, Church Street, North Street and Bridge Street was identified as the 'Heart of Leatherhead' in the Masterplan. The Transport Study will allow us to evaluate different options for altering the road system.

***Q: Could the public make suggestions for how the transport model should model? Such as: looking at vehicles from 3.30pm in the High street; pedestrian on Sundays; pedestrian only 24/7; full vehicle 24/7 including kerbs, parking bays and areas for taxis and cabs; reopening Church St/Bridge St link; making Bridge Street one way?***

A: These are all great suggestions and we are aware of many ideas following the Masterplan and consultation. We continue to receive similar feedback, so thank you. The model is being built to model peak-time traffic flows and will be populated with the data obtained through the transport data collection and surveys. We will share these ideas with WSP who are developing the model to identify to what extent it is possible to model different options and combination of options to identify the effect any alterations will have on the wider area as well as the town centre. We will of course share the results, and the team would welcome any further suggestions.

### **Topic: Parking**

***Q: Parking was one of the most important priorities when Transform first started, still appears to be low on your lists. Station car park is often all full - how does that effect travelling and what do you intend to do about this?***

A: Parking remains a priority for the Transform Leatherhead initiative. We are aware of the lack of long-term parking for commuters and business, the issues residents have with on-street parking and the short-comings of the town centre car parks. As a result, we have allowed long-term parking in Station Road as well as Randalls Road. We are also undertaking some works to improve the Swan Centre car park, which is under-used. Once the Transport Study and the Mole Valley district wide parking strategies have been concluded, the team plan to commission a more detailed car park study to identify future parking requirements and how best to accommodate them.

***Q: If the riverside area is pedestrianised what provision is being made for alternative parking to Minchin close?***

A: There are no proposals within Transform Leatherhead to pedestrianise Minchin Close.

### **Topic: Leatherhead Theatre**

***Q: Why are all the stars [outside the theatre] male? When will actresses be added?***

A: We are grateful to the Leatherhead Residents Association for this great initiative which showcases a number of actors who have performed at the Leatherhead Theatre. The stars were re-used from another project, and this limited the choice of artists.

***Q: Can MVDC be more positive about the Theatre, Rep season, Drama Festival, and really demonstrate its goodwill, endorsement and encouragement of everything happening at the Theatre?***

A: We are delighted to work with the Theatre to hold our six monthly forums, and were especially pleased to support Dandelion Theatre with their half-term workshops. We think it's fantastic that they won the Muddy Stilettos award for Best Theatre in Surrey. We are pleased to continue to support the theatre on the Transform Leatherhead social media accounts along-side other Leatherhead businesses and organisations.

### **Topic: Infrastructure**

***Q: With all this new proposed development will there be new infrastructure to deal with it? In particular GP's and social care?***

A: We are actively engaging with the relevant partners such as Surrey County Council and the CCGs as we believe that there is an opportunity to support these needs within the town centre.

### **Topic: Heritage/Conservation**

***Q: How will you blend all this development with historic/conservation areas and protect and enhance historic buildings (e.g. the historic theatre in the High Street)?***

A: High quality design is key. Through the planning process, new development provides opportunities for enhancing the historic buildings and other heritage assets. This approach will seek to assure the future of Leatherhead as a modern market town, with a convenient and accessible offer that is respectful of its heritage, and creates an appealing destination.

### **Topic: Funding**

***Q: What was the point of the meeting if there is no funding?***

A: In addition to commissioning the Transform Leatherhead Masterplan, MVDC has approved initial funding of £1 million pounds to facilitate the delivery of the initial projects within the Transform Leatherhead initiative. This funding is supporting the preparation of

the Claire House and James House outline planning application and preparatory studies, the Transport Study and the Swan Centre Viability Study as well as evaluating options for housing delivery. Further investment has been made to enable the acquisition of 21 and 23 High Street in April 2018 to give MVDC an enhanced stake in the High Street, and to fund the first phase of improvement works to the Swan Centre Car Park, and other improvements such as the refurbishment of the public facilities in the Swan Centre. We have also obtained grants from the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership towards the development of the Masterplan, to support the acquisition and redevelopment of the Claire House and James House site, and the Church Street improvements (in partnership with the developer and SCC). Once the individual projects have been sufficiently progressed, we will be able to put forward business cases to apply for further grant funding or look to include a partner to fund in return for sharing both risk and return.

***Q: Why spend this amount of money?***

A: We consider that investing this money to bring forward the different projects within Transform Leatherhead is critical to unlocking access to funding and investment from other partners, both public and private sector.

***Q: Are there full financial statements for the project (actuals, budgets, forecast etc.) available online?***

A: The document entitled Funds Flow Forecast and the Funds Flow Forecast and Programme Notes in the **downloads section** set out the financial basis of the Transform Leatherhead programme. Mole Valley District Council publishes details of expenditure on its website on this page. Detailed project accounts are not published online.

**Topic: Governing structure**

***Q: Who has been involved in the TL project? Government bodies? Organisations? Local council? And is this a government agenda or an MVDC one?***

A: The Transform Leatherhead initiative is a Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) one. The Environment Agency (which is funded through Defra), Coast to Capital Local Enterprise

Partnership, and Surrey County Council are working with MVDC to deliver the objectives of the Masterplan. In relation to sustainable transport and improvements to Church Street, these have been or will be supported through developer contributions. Delivery of the Masterplan involves MVDC working with specialist advisors and consultants and contractors and in later stages, we anticipate that implementation of the schemes may involve the procurement of delivery partners.

### **Topic: Consultation**

***Q: All this is based on a consultation taken 2-4 years ago, before people really thought about or knew what this would mean - esp. on Bull Hill and taking away Green Space - is there chance to do this consultation again?***

A: The consultation taken 2-4 years ago led to the adoption of the Masterplan. This identified a set of objectives and recommendations and proposed a future action plan, which is being implemented as outlined. We regularly update and discuss this, and are aware of the concerns. However, all the elements of the plan, such as Claire House & James House redevelopment and Bull Hill, will be subject to further detailed consultation with the public at key stages as we move forward. This consultation will be carried out by the Transform Leatherhead team and as part of the official process of future planning applications.

### **Topic: Experiences and perceptions of Leatherhead**

***Q: How is TL going to change the perceptions of Leatherhead for outsiders and the experience of Leatherhead for residents and workers?***

A: As the projects progress perceptions will change. Leatherhead has a strong population and is in a strategic location with excellent transport links however the Master Plan Baseline study revealed that only a small percentage of the population use Leatherhead to shop. By creating a better offer within Leatherhead perceptions will be changed. Positive perceptions and experience will start with existing residents and workers, and this will extend to outsiders as word spreads and through our ongoing promotion.

## **Topic: House prices**

*Q: How much do you think house prices will increase by as a result [of Transform Leatherhead]?*

A: As a result of Transform Leatherhead, we anticipate the choice and range of housing to improve. Town centre living appeals to the 'millennials' who look to live, work and socialise in one location and to the downsizing older population who are looking for convenience and community. However, house prices are influenced by many factors.

## **Topic: Live. Work. Visit**

*Q: Your tag line is 'Live. Work. Visit.' Do you aim to balance all three of these or do you perceive one element to be more important than the others? Are you targeting residents or office workers or visitors to Leatherhead? Each group has different requirements, how can they all be accommodated?*

A: The future of town centres like Leatherhead is to balance the needs of residents, workers and visitors by offering a mix of uses and enough shops to create a draw to make it worthwhile shopping there so that it becomes a destination local centre.

## **Topic: Visitors to Leatherhead**

*Q: At the moment many people from outside the area do not know where Leatherhead is. Is what are you going to do to put Leatherhead 'on the map?'*

A: Leatherhead benefits from a strategic location close to the M25, with excellent transport links yet close to countryside, which is why it has such a strong local population. The creation of a destination local centre will not only serve the existing residents and workers, but encourage visitors living in the surrounding areas and beyond.

## **Topic: Young people**

*Q: Are you trying to bring in younger people to the area? How do you think the project affects the demographic of the area?*

A: Leatherhead has a varied and diverse population, and we believe Transform Leatherhead offers an opportunity to create a mix of uses with offers that will appeal from the very young, through to the older population to bring the community together.

## **Topic: High Street Feature**

***Q: The terrible feature at the bottom of the High Street needs removing.***

A: We are working with Surrey County Council on a range of highways matters, including this feature. In the short-term, we are looking at options to improve the maintenance requirements of the feature working within SCC's budget and pending a decision on the future use of the High Street.

The Transport modelling work will inform the options for the use of the High Street, which in turn will feed into a Public Realm Strategy. If the feature were to be removed, we would wish to see the ironwork re-used and retained rather than being discarded.

## **Topic: Accessibility**

***Q: Those who are not mobile should also be considered. I only shop in the town if I can drive up to the Sainsbury's outlet and others. I am not able to carry shopping so far.***

A: We would like to explore and work with Shopmobility to identify opportunities to improve accessibility to Leatherhead High Street and Swan Centre. We consulted with the Mole Valley Access Group to inform the proposals for the improvements to the Swan Centre car park and accessibility needs were also a design consideration for the Church Street improvements.

## **Topic: Business parks/industrial areas**

***Q: The Masterplan is great and coherent. Can you clarify how the business/industrial areas will be connected with the town centre to support its long-term viability?***

A: We engaged with a number of employers in the development of the Masterplan and continue to seek to widen and deepen that engagement through various means. Whilst the Randalls Road cycle path initiative (which would have provided a link from the business parks to the town centre) has been discontinued for the reasons set out above, we will continue to seek opportunities to incentivise employees in those areas to spend time in the town centre.