

CHILHAM SQUARE

Community Engagement Exercise

Open Workshop – 7pm, Thursday 27 May, Chilham Castle

Meeting Record

Note: The attendance list, handout and presentation slides for the meeting are attached to the back of this meeting record.

1. INTRODUCTION

The meeting commenced with Huw Jarvis introducing himself, Simon Doyle and Geoff Dear and briefly explaining his role as independent chairman. Huw Jarvis then handed the leading of the meeting to Simon Doyle.

Simon commenced by dealing with a number of practical matters concerning the venue. He also asked the meeting whether agenda item 9 (case studies) could be left to the very end of the meeting and possibly omitted to allow an early end if needed. No one objected.

2. RECAP ON PROCESS

For the purposes of making sure everyone was acquainted with the process and its broader background, Simon briefly outlined ...

- the history leading up to the current exercise,
- certain details concerning the current exercise, and
- what would follow if the community was able to identify a single buildable scheme.

3. CURRENT PROBLEMS & ISSUES

Simon asked the meeting what it didn't like about the Square. Table 1 overleaf summarises the opinions expressed. Certain things said were more properly proposals or recommendations concerning solutions than problems and issues. They were recorded anyway for the problems, issues and concerns they imply.

Parking and traffic movement problems featured amongst the problems and issues raised. Further, the meeting clearly felt that Taylor's Hill car park and Taylor's Hill are key to any solution.

4. GROUP EXERCISE

After Simon had re-visited the matters of aspirations, design parameters and scheme elements, and clarified what needed to be done during the group exercise, attendees were split into eight randomly-allocated groups to identify community aspirations for the Square and the design parameters that would capture them.

Apart from being asked not to take things too far (i.e. being artificially specific or taking matters to a level of detail they were not comfortable with), groups were also asked to focus on identifying where they agreed and disagreed.

Table 1: Problems, Issues & Proposals

Problems and Issues	Proposals and/or Concerns over Potential Proposals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Square used as a car park • totally lacking in greenery • emergency access difficult, if not possible (the word "compromised" was also used) • cars park around the Square and tables and chairs and tables are placed on the road • economic value of the Square and village are undermined • no room available for community activities • over-bearing attitude of residents • inconsiderate users, particularly car parkers • Square used as a rat-run • nowhere to safely walk, especially school children • no restriction on the speed or flow of traffic • ignorance of Taylor's Hill car park • properties endangered • not enough emphasis on people • there is no problem with the Square except perhaps its perimeter • no sense of history or aesthetics • Square is ugly • Taylor's Hill car park signage is incorrect • Square problems are only perceived not real • Square problems are real • poor driving behaviour • pedestrians get "pushed off" roads • emergency access a problem (specific instance of an ambulance not being able to get to a property was raised) • children's safety compromised (discourages walking from Taylor's Hill car park) • conflicting interests, particularly those of broader community and local residents • adults don't feel safe walking up feeder roads • residents don't know why they can't use the Square if adequate space is left for emergency access • Square not useable • incorrect signage, particularly the one indicating parking in the town centre • Taylor's Hill car park not used because insecure • Taylor's Hill not very safe for pedestrians (because of its width) • church access is often blocked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for a vote on the acceptability of the Jacobs report and its recommendations • Taylor's Hill car park needs ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ restriction signs ○ better entrance ○ gateway to discourage vehicles from using Taylors Hill ○ picnic facilities • parking meters could help • Taylor's Hill cap park is key to any solution • alternate pedestrian route from Taylor's Hill car park to Square should be investigated • one-way system around and including certain feeder streets should be investigated • Christmas tree opportunities need to be maintained • knock-on effects of any scheme on feeder streets • Square is needed for parking • bed and breakfast needs must be accommodated • business needs must be accommodated

5. GROUP FEEDBACK

All eight groups, through a spokesperson, gave feedback on the group exercise emphasizing where they agreed and disagreed. It was generally acknowledged that there was more common ground within the various groups than had been expected. Further, the re-iteration of certain themes during the feedback session confirmed that the common ground was not only within groups but across groups. Table 2 overleaf summarises the group feedback.

Common ground existed on ...

- doing something about parking
- doing something about Taylor's Hill car park
- doing something about traffic movement - particularly circulation, signage and a greater emphasis on pedestrians
- de-cluttering and simplifying the Square generally
- giving priority to normal rather than special use

Differences existed concerning ...

- parking - how much, where and who for
- features and materials

It was pointed out from the floor that there were not many Square residents represented at the meeting, and that this would skew opinion against them.

6. RANKING OF ASPIRATIONS

During the group feedback, Simon Doyle had been summarising community aspirations. He now asked the meeting to confirm and rank the major aspirations that had been raised during the group feedback.

The meeting ranked them in the following order:

1. PARKING - control of some type, with Taylor's Hill Car Park being an integral part of any solution
2. MOVEMENT - ensure simple and safe movement, particularly pedestrians
3. GUIDANCE - signs required to clarify routes and location of parking
4. ATMOSPHERE, APPEARANCE & USE - whatever is done needs to be simple, in-keeping with historic character, protective of building and castle-church views and flexible enough to allow community use

In order to gain greater definition concerning community opinion, Simon asked a series of questions covering a range of themes. Table 3 shows the questions asked and the response, by show of hands, received. In summary, the voting exercise indicated the following:

1. Unanimous support for doing something.
2. Clear case against treating the Square as a pure through route or completely pedestrianising it.
3. Clear case for a substantial but not "draconian" reduction in parking provision.
4. Strong support for retaining school drop-off/pick-up activity in the Square.
5. Very strong support for seating plus space and electrical supply for special events. Greenery not quite as popular. Lighting and special features very definitely not popular.
6. Clear case for minimal or low level traffic delineation and public space features and keeping parking out of sight line between church and castle. Maintaining sight lines down side streets had support, but not nearly as strong as keeping Square building frontages and church-castle sight line clear.

Table 2: Group Feedback

	White	Yellow	Light Blue	Grey	Dark Blue	Purple	Pink	Black
Areas of Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •no parking around the edges of the Square or the approaches into it •no fountain •more greenery •more emphasis on pedestrians than cars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •limited parking in the Square (for residents, disabled and some for visitors) •safety (cctv and/or lighting) and signage improvements to, from and in Taylor's Hill car park •provision of some area (preferably green, even if just a few tubs) in the Square for meeting and sitting •gradual approach •bring back May Fair •interest from some in the group to re-visit Jacobs report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Square needs to look nicer - de-clutter •some parking control to improve access •ordered parking in the Square •safety for all •green space and trees •community space (use for all) •improve Taylor's Hill car park and signage for it to encourage better use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ordered parking and traffic flow •improved signage throughout village to encourage use of Taylor's Hill car park •more emphasis on pedestrians than cars •greener Square •make Taylor's Hill car park safer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •keep it simple and "in-keeping" with history •reduce parking and improve traffic flow, including no parking around the edge of the Square in the daytime •improve signage (Taylor's Hill car park; limited in Square) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •controlled parking (more space for pedestrians) •Taylor's Hill car park for visitor use •one-way system in the Square •improved signage •normal use •no issue maintaining deliveries in Square •bicycle rack needed •some (limited) public seating •power points in Square •green issues to be integrated •only the church-castle vista is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •improved signage for Taylor's Hill car park •restriction on parking in the Square •provision disabled parking •seating and tables in the Square and Taylor's Hill car park •power supply •emergency vehicles •better signage to take people to the right places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •parking for residents, businesses and disabled - all other parkers encouraged to use Taylor's Hill car park •encourage cycling •need to review traffic flow options •make Square a community and business space with seating, etc. •improve Taylor's Hill car park (lighting and safety) •no fountains or artwork •subtle, diffused/low level lighting •school parking in Taylor's Hill (walking bus)
Areas of Disagreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •level of parking provision •use of yellow lines •degree of pedestrianisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •materials used to control traffic •level of parking control in the Square 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •how much parking and who for •type of parking control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •type of landscaping in Square •how much and location of parking in Square 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •parking control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •materials (markings, trees and finishes) •features (fountain or major installations) •lighting level (none or limited) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •parking provision and arrangement in Square •parking controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •parking provision

7. IDENTIFICATION OF REPRESENTATIVES

Because it was not practical to involve every member of the community in the subsequent scheme development workshops, the community was asked to identify representatives to participate on their behalf. A total of 18 people volunteered, all of whom providing their names and contact details after the meeting.

8. INFORMATION NEEDS & SOURCES

Simon briefly outlined the information available to the scheme development exercise and likely information needs. Volunteers would be needed to undertake additional traffic surveys. Further, the community was invited to forward old photos and plans as well as tourist or visitor statistics that they might have that would be useful to the current scheme development exercise or subsequent scheme design stage.

The names and contact details of volunteers were recorded after the meeting.

9. CONCLUDING MATTERS AND MEETING CLOSURE

Huw Jarvis brought the meeting to a formal closure by asking for further comments. He also wanted the meeting to confirm that everyone had had their “say”. The latter was confirmed.

Simon then provided his contact details.

Table 3: Group Feedback

	How many in favour of ...	%	Comments
Generals	1 ... doing something?	100%	Unanimous case for doing something. Expected.
	2 ... doing nothing?	0%	
	3 ... whatever is done must be safe and secure?	100%	
	4 ... whatever is done must be affordable?	100%	
	5 ... whatever is done must be accessible for all "design" users?	100%	
	6 ... whatever is done must be sustainable in terms of maintenance, lasting style, etc.?	100%	
	7 ... whatever is done must be attractive?	100%	
	8 ... whatever is done must maintain resident's privacy?	100%	
Parking	9 ... there being no parking provision on the Square?	0%	Clear case against treating the Square as a pure through route or completely pedestrianising it.
	10 ... there being only minimal parking provision (< 10 bays) on the Square?	5%	Clear case for a substantial but not "draconian" reduction in parking provision.
	11 ... there being only moderate parking provision (10 to 20 bays) on the Square?	64%	
	12 ... there being substantial parking provision (30+ bays) on the Square?	32%	
	13 ... retaining existing parking provision (space for approx.47 vehicles) on the Square?	0%	
	14 ... maintaining resident and business owner/staff parking privileges on the Square?	12%	Validity/fairness of question disputed because Square residents outnumbered.
15 ... maintaining school drop-off/pick-up activity in the Square?	64%	Strong support for retaining school drop-off/pick-up activity in the Square.	
Aesthetics & Use of Public Space	16 ... providing seating on the Square?	76%	Very strong support for seating plus space and electrical supply for special events. Greenery not quite as popular. Lighting and special features very definitely not popular
	17 ... providing greenery on the Square?	63%	
	18 ... providing space for special events on the Square?	75%	
	19 ... providing lighting on the Square?	2%	
	20 ... providing electrical supply on the Square?	76%	
	21 ... providing special features on the Square?	0%	
	22 ... preserving building frontages and views on the Square?	100%	Clear case for minimal or low level traffic delineation and public space features and keeping parking out of sight line between church and castle. Maintaining sight lines down side streets had support, but not nearly as strong as keeping Square building frontages and church-castle sight line clear.
	23 ... maintaining sight line between church and castle?	100%	
24 ... maintaining sight lines down approach streets?	58%		
verall Scheme	25 ... doing nothing at the Square (i.e. leaving Square "as is")?	0%	Repeat of Q2
	26 ... only light touch changes at the Square (i.e. basic appearance and function retained)?	NA	Meaning of question disputed, so did not proceed with it. Fact that only 37% indicated they'd like "significant" changes (Q27) and even less (14%) indicated they'd like "substantial" changes (Q28) suggests most people probably want something between "light" and "significant".
	27 ... significant changes at the Square (i.e. noticeably re-modelled, but still Square "recognizable")?	37%	
	28 ... substantial changes at the Square (i.e. completely re-modelled Square)?	14%	

Annexures

Attendance List

Handout

Presentation slides