

TEAM ABERGAVENNY

BETTER, TOGETHER

Report of Team Abergavenny to the North Monmouthshire Area Committee Meeting on 25th September 2019.

1. Our report to your July Meeting was not considered as there was no meeting of your Committee in July. This report adds to the one presented to your July meeting.
2. Public Realm and Traffic Management. We understand that Welsh Government have still not agreed a solution to the bus stop needed in Park Rd by Tesco. This is a major disappointment in relation to the actual decision and the time it has taken to reach it. The design qualities of the phase 2 and 3 were utterly dependent on the installation of that vital public service. We understand that a further meeting is being arranged with WG officials on site and we hope that by the time your meeting takes place there will be some good news to report. The production of a publicly available plan for the bus stop and pedestrian crossing arrangements would be invaluable to all stakeholders. The rest of the Phase 3 Town Centre scheme seems to be receiving positive support from the public. However planters in Frogmore Street from Whitehorse Lane to the War Memorial, street signage and some public seating are still to be completed along with the Cycle contraflow lane in Lion Street and signage in Frogmore Street to allow cyclists contra-flow up Baker Street. We are unaware of when this will be completed and we are asking Engineers for an update meeting and a chance to assist with the design detail, particularly in Lion Street.

There are several traffic issues worthy of further consideration; the first is the no left turn sign at the Baker Street end of Princes Street. It effectively prevents access to Frogmore Street for vehicles and in practice it is being ignored. Common sense suggest that it should be removed to allow left turns as no traffic now comes up Baker Street and it is not heavily used. It would help to support businesses in the northern end of Frogmore Street, and it is difficult to see why residents of Princes Street should get better treatment than residents of many other streets in the town.

The second issue is to establish whether MCC Licensing are managing the use of street space in Frogmore Street and specially allocated trader street furniture areas as well as the rest of the pedestrianised area. The trader use certainly adds to the ambience of the area but without management some retailers will probably push the boundaries and inconvenience those with mobility and disability issues.

Thirdly, Bus sizes may be a problem with buses from Tredegar to Abergavenny. Evidently the larger bus from Tredegar is changed to a smaller bus when it reaches Brynmawr so that there are sometimes problems for people wanting to join the bus after Brynmawr due to lack of seats. This may be a problem which is worth pursuing.

3. Town Hall. At the time of writing we are not aware of any further developments on this scheme although work is seen to be progressing. It would be useful to know in detail what is intended for the furnishings and internal layout before any purchasing commitments are made so that all the stakeholders who will be using the first and ground floor have confidence that their detailed needs have been accommodated effectively. Would it be appropriate for this committee to invite the scheme manager to make a presentation to your next meeting?

4. King Henry VIII new school. Since your Committee agreed last time to invite Mr McLean to present proposals to you, we have been invited to meet with one of his colleagues to be made aware of the details and what opportunities there will be for Public Consultation.. We look forward to further public conversations in due course on the proposed strategic optional layouts of the site, the

scoping of its potential intended uses and a demonstration of how all opportunities are being taken to improve the “active travel” infrastructure in this whole area of Abergavenny. We assume, in line with current Welsh Assembly planning procedures that pre-app consultation based on strategic options for a masterplan will be fully consulted on with the public ahead of any discussion with planning officers and that we assume this will be done with MCC’s preferred architects and project manager leading those public conversations. Having a timetable for this pre-app consultation would be invaluable at this stage. We hope that the planned rebuilding of the Leisure Centre will be part of this consultation process.

5. Local Development Plan. Our concerns reported last time, that the MCC Strategy for jobs does not have any solid basis to attract new work to the north of the county is addressed in the work being done on the LDP, with the publishing of the 8 different options for growth at various levels. We are reassured to some extent by the Welsh Government’s National Development Framework that the LDP will have to conform with but we remain concerned that any option that has housing figures proposed without any convincing employment strategy will simply confirm the dormitory status of Abergavenny, thereby ignoring the need for reductions in travel to work. We are concerned that sufficient lower-cost (social rent) housing is factored in to ensure some balance for the population of the town. Now that MCC have formally declared a Climate Emergency an obvious immediate target is to reduce by any means possible the volume of commuting by car to work through the provision of a convincing deliverable employment strategy for the North Monmouthshire area linked to a vigorously invested public transport network.

6. Aldi Store.

It has been noted that a planning application to extend the Aldi Store onto the existing ATS site was in existence, with ATS being moved closer to the Gavenny. The present application shows almost no additional landscaping, and it is felt that this vital opportunity to enhance that important entry to the town should not be missed. Could Team Abergavenny’s Enhance Environment Group be asked to come forward to this committee with options to discuss that would embrace the edge of the bus station car park and landscaping along the Gavenny?

7. Car Parking

We have noted that it has been a big problem in Abergavenny this summer on Tuesdays and Saturdays. In particular there is a problem with the Traffic Lights controlling the Fairfield Car Park exit opposite Morrisons as it rarely allowed more than 3 vehicles to leave on one green light and often not at all if the main road is congested. This puts people off using it. An alternative exit needs to be considered together with directions for those not knowing the area to get them back to the main road. It was noted that lack of car parking had been compounded by the contractor’s street works using some parking spaces and that would not be an issue next year.

6. Event Planning. The Team has been engaged via its Spreading the Word Theme group in the preparations for this year’s Abergavenny Arts Festival. The Festival took place when the Cycling Festival was in progress and on the day of the revived Carnival. It is possible that next year there may need to be a slightly different approach to avoid too much happening on the day.

7. Future Public Realm Involvement. We are now considering how we should go forward. The Team has as its main focus the prosperity of the Town and surrounding area, and we will be looking at our plan to see where we should focus our efforts in future. We hope that on the basis of the contributions made to Phases 1 to 3 by this volunteer group that further public realm improvement projects such as the Baker Gabb Garden in Baker Street could also involve this group who can bring considerable professional skills to it. It would be good to have a number of shovel-ready projects available should funding suddenly become available.

13 September 2019