

CHICHESTER COMMUNITY ASSETS PROJECT 2013



Abridged Version

April 2013

Background

This project commenced in October 2012 and was undertaken by Richard Cole in response to a request by Councillor Richard Plowman.

The project is intended to provide background data which can be used to formulate the City Council's response to Chichester District Council's next round of Local Plan consultation.

Its primary objective is to identify what the citizens of Chichester value about their own immediate area, about the City and its setting and what improvements they think should be made to the City (the City is here taken to mean the "parish", some respondents referred to aspects outside the parish).

The project should be seen as a complement to the study by Hyland Edgar Driver which is intended to identify the impact on the character of the City by the development of the current so called "strategic housing sites".

Terms used

Aspect = a general non-physical characteristic of an area eg. "friendly"

Vote = number of times a topic is mentioned in the returns

Concern = a negative aspect physical or social in need of improvement

Methodology

The approach used has been as open and freewheeling as possible.

- All the Residents' Associations (RA) recorded as being members of CRACG were contacted
- Café sessions were held with those RA's which responded
- Residents of Toll House Close were consulted by letter from their RA
- City centre RA's, the Cathedral Friends and members of the CCCI were invited to a café session in the Assembly Room
- The Chichester College and University were contacted but no responses were received
- All pro formas were assessed by Richard Cole and grouped :
 - first according to type of response and source
 - then according to topic and location

Initial findings

These were presented as a series of tables and are divided into the following groups of responses :

- General Responses
- City Centre
- Whyke
- Summersdale
- Parklands
- Southern Gateway
- East Centre

Views gathered from, The Chichester Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chichester BID, Toll House Close Residents, the Friends of Chichester Cathedral and The Bell public house were distributed according to the location to which they relate.

General Responses

Positive location or facility (Figures in brackets indicate overall position)

Rank	Issue	Votes
1(10)	Canal and link to sea	36
2	Centurion Way	27
3=	Brandy Hole copse	19
3=	The twittens (a twitten is a Sussex term for a small pathway between buildings)	18
4	Oaklands Park	9
5 =	Pubs (listed)	8
5 =	Cycle routes	8

Positive Aspects

Rank	Issue	Votes
1(1)	Compact, walkable and friendly	139
2(4)	General open-space provision	54
3 *(6)	Proximity to the Downs	50
4*	Proximity of coast	43
5	Provision of trees generally	33
6	Good rail and bus connections and proximity to regional facilities	29
7	Sign post of Cathedral	23
8	St Richard's Hospital and	15
9	the Festivities	14
10	Friendly people - the schools	9
11 =	The allotments generally - role of churches	7 each
11	The University	5
12 =	The College, - Support for the elderly, - The Jazz Festival, - 20mph	4
13 =	Small scale developments - Planning controls and range of cultural facilities, no tall buildings	2

General Concerns

Rank	Issue	Votes
1	Improve cycle facilities	30
2	Park and Ride needed	18
2 =	Perceived Traffic growth	18
3	Fear of Flooding	10
4	Affordable housing needed	13
6	Fear of overloaded infrastructure	10
7 =	Loss of small shops - need for Northern bypass - replace signs	6
8 =	Cycling on pavements - parking too costly (free for elderly?)	3

Conclusions

- 1 Clearly there are dangers in drawing firm conclusions from such a small sample of views drawn from a self selecting group of people, however there are some pointers to aspects of our city that require care when considering its future.

Overwhelmingly respondents saw Chichester as “..a compact and friendly city..”. This is their perception, it is how they see the city. It is interesting to contrast this “compact” image with how people value the “open” character of some of the areas in which they live. See Parklands and Summersdale.

Will the proposals in the emerging local plan threaten the compact character of the city? They almost certainly will but that compact nature has already been compromised. The 1960’s and 70’s developments at Whyke, Parklands and Summersdale had already destroyed the truly compact nature of the original city. Yet the perception of a compact city remains.

Conclusion 1 *The perception of a compact city must be enhanced and maintained. This can be achieved through the form of and connections to any new development and this should guide the selection of any location for major new development.*

- 2 A feature of the city that is very highly valued is the view of the cathedral. Whilst this is an important characteristic of the city it does not appear to be threatened by any proposals currently put forward in the emerging local plan.

Conclusion 2 *No development should be permitted that compromises close or distant views of the Cathedral.*

- 3 Many of the respondents were concerned about the capacity of the existing infrastructure (roads, sewers and health services) to cope with new development. The relevant authorities seem to be well aware of this concern. What seems to be needed is a real and firm assurance that infrastructure is provided in a timely manner. What appears to be lacking is a trust that the fragmented character of agencies involved in infrastructure provision are capable of delivering what is needed and that other demands will allow development to take place ahead of the necessary infrastructure.

Conclusion 3 *Some mechanism needs to be established that will co-ordinate the provision of infrastructure and new development. That mechanism should have the ability to stop development if infrastructure provision gets out of step with new development*

- 4 A significant number of things that people value or feel need improvement are outside the scope of local planning. The concern about the disruption caused by the level crossing, and the removal of "A" boards are examples.

Conclusion 4 *Much of what people are concerned about in the city is capable of resolution by local action outside the planning process. They do however require joint working beyond the confines of the narrow remit of individual authorities.*

- 5 Much of what people have said seems to stem from a fear of the new, a distrust of authorities and a feeling of powerlessness. This could be overcome by a more open attitude by the authorities and in the case of proposed major new developments by local involvement in master planning.

Conclusion 5 *A more open attitude needs to be developed by officers and members at all levels and in all authorities.*

*Richard Cole
April 2013*