

Press release: Silver Hill - a new architectural vision for Winchester's decaying core - Petition demands call-in and rethink

Working with outraged Winchester residents, SAVE has launched a petition directed to Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, requesting an urgent call in of the controversial Silver Hill scheme.

Thousands of residents have objected due to the overwhelming scale of the proposed buildings. The petition says, 'a dull and uniform mass of such size will suffocate the appeal and character of an historic cathedral city. It will jeopardise the city's future vitality and its outdated retail concept will emasculate the city's thriving high street, the oldest in northern Europe.'

To sign the petition click [here](#)

SAVE continues to work with the Winchester architect Huw Thomas on evolving a new approach and scheme for the city's controversial Silver Hill site. Two new watercolour drawings of the Victorian Antique Market and Friarsgate show the character of the new scheme. The aim, as with the successful SAVE scheme for Peninsula Barracks, drawn up by Huw Thomas, is to produce a viable, fundable and deliverable alternative to the Henderson Scheme.

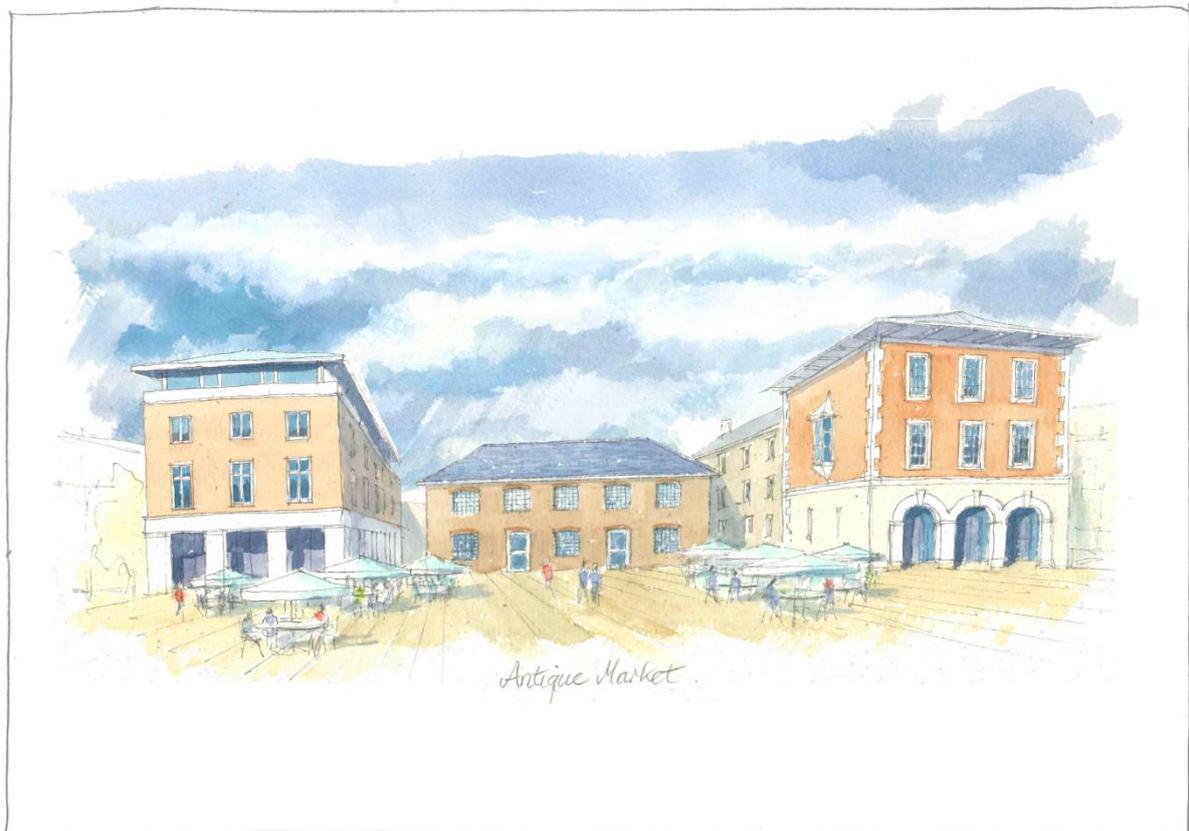
The SAVE scheme will incorporate a working bus station and retain the existing St Clement's Doctors surgery with provision for expansion.

The principals of the SAVE scheme are;

- A greatly reduced bulk with buildings principally of three and four storeys.
- A lively mix of retail and residential with new uses for key historic buildings on the site.
- A warm, varied, and colourful palette of building materials
- Individual buildings in a wide range of styles reflecting Winchester's historic character ranging from Hampshire vernacular, contemporary classical and strikingly modern.

While the Henderson scheme was designed by one architectural practice, Allies and Morrison, SAVE's proposal is to involve a wide selection of talented Winchester

architects to design individual buildings and groups of buildings across the site. Harmony will be achieved by limiting plot sizes and heights of buildings to ensure that no individual building overly dominates the others.



The Victorian Antique Market, which Henderson proposed to demolish, shown opened up to view, with a small square in front of it with a traditional building on the right and a contemporary classical design on the left. These drawings have been prepared to show the proposed character and scale of the SAVE scheme.

SAVE the landmarks

A key principle is to preserve all surviving buildings of significance and character:

- The Kings Walk Antique Market an attractive red brick Victorian building which is slated for demolition under the Henderson scheme. This is a much loved emporium and must be allowed to survive.
- Woolstaplers Hall to be a new civic and community hub with gallery and workshop space.
- The 1930s bus station with its characteristic saw tooth roof will be an open and covered market entered from the High Street.

SAVE was instrumental in preventing the demolition of a similar building in Portsmouth historic Dockyard, Boathouse 4, condemned as an eyesore but now restored to its original use of building small boats and about to reopen in August.

Boat house 4 shows the wonderful internal light that can be provided by north roof lighting in a factory type building. The bus station is built to exactly this pattern and will provide a light filled spacious interior providing protection from the weather in winter.



A view of the junction of Middle Brook Street and Friarsgate (where Iceland sits today). A strikingly transparent modern corner building provides a contrast to neighbours with more traditional pitched roof and gables. Ground floors will accommodate a wide range of small independent retailers and artisan shops.

Open up the Views

The lanes descending through the site to the High Street provide vistas of important elements of the cathedral including the magnificent Norman tower. These views must be preserved and reopened.

The SAVE proposal is to reopen the medieval streams through the site. This runs behind the glorious group of Victorian alms houses with tall spiral chimneys and gables which are at present unseen. A towpath will show them in full splendour amidst leafy gardens.

New housing

The evolving SAVE brief proposes a mixture of housing including a number of handsome four bedroom terraced houses, but also housing for young professionals and retired couples wishing to downsize as well as affordable accommodation, principally

apartments which will be built to the recently published new National Space Standards. These are intended to put an end to the evil manner in which developers have progressively shrunk residential accommodation until there is sometimes not enough space to walk around a bed in a bedroom. These restore the post war Parker Morris standards which ensured that council houses were more spacious than many private modern developments.

Shopping

The new brief is based on expanding Winchester's shopping offer to provide a shopping destination to compare with the Lanes in Brighton or the Shambles in York. The new shops will not be the chains usually found in large urban or suburban shopping centres.

The overriding principal of the new SAVE brief is that the scale and bulk of new buildings and the amount of accommodation provided should not be allowed to overdevelop the site.

Uses

The aim is to have a mix of uses providing important facilities for city residents.

The Surgery - The existing doctors' surgery will remain on the site with the potential for its extension and additional facilities.

Hotel - A boutique hotel aimed at the large number of visitors looking for a centrally located hotel with distinctive character.

Building Materials

The brief will stipulate a range of different building materials to avoid monotony but will encourage widespread use of warm Hampshire (Michelmersh) red brick which is traditional in the town, as well as attractively coloured render.

Planting

Streets will be enlivened with attractively planted pocket gardens. A Living Wall will be a major feature with lush planting trained up a full height wall.

The aim will be to bring Winchester all that is exciting and innovative in modern city living but in a revived quarter with a strong sense of tradition.

Respect the archaeology

Important research and fieldwork over several decades has revealed that Winchester is one of the oldest and most significant cities in England, laid out first by the Romans and then by Alfred the Great and his predecessors.

With its scheme for Peninsula Barracks SAVE paved the way in designing a development that would respect the archaeology. The previous scheme would have been highly destructive of the below surface remains of both Charles II's unfinished royal palace and the Norman Castle. By designing a new raised garden on the parade ground Huw Thomas, the architect, left the archaeology undisturbed.

At Silver Hill there is an important new opportunity to revive the historic street pattern and expose long lost features.

The narrow endings to the alleys opening onto the High Street at this point were a deliberate defence measure introduced by Alfred the Great during his long battle with the Vikings. They were intended to make the High Street a defensible space.

This pattern of narrow alleys is ideal for recreating a shopping and residential quarter that is entirely pedestrianised and without vehicular traffic.

Still more important are the waterways. These consist of the largely unseen Lower, Middle and Upper Brooks, each of which carries a steady flow of clear water. They date back to the time of St Ethelweld, rebuilder of the second minster. His renown as a kind of saintly sanitary engineer derives from a much quoted passage in a Latin poem attributed to the monk Wulfstan the Cantor: 'He brought here sweet streams of fishful water: and an overflow of the stream passes through the inner parts of the monastic buildings, cleansing the whole monastery with its murmur.' The flow of the water also served to carry off foul water to the south of the monastery and minster.

Uncovering buried streams has had huge impacts in places as diverse as Seattle in Washington, Kalamazoo in Michigan, and Seoul in South Korea – improving local water quality, providing habitat for fish and birds, and turning neglected parking lots and roads into public parks that boost property values and revitalise cities. In Yonkers, the fourth largest city in New York State a 'daylighting' project – the term used for opening up underground streams – has transformed a much neglected part of the city.

Marcus Binney SAVE's Executive President says: "As at Peninsula Barracks we are preparing a scheme which can be a credit to Winchester, one of the most important cathedral cities in the country. It will be viable, attractive and built with a sense of place, as well as responsive to local needs and aspirations. We are also entering into discussion with developers with a view to finding the necessary investment so the scheme can make a significant contribution to the local economy without being in any way a burden on ratepayers."

For more information and images, please contact the SAVE Office on 0207 253 3500 or office@savebritainsheritage.org

Notes to editors:

SAVE Britain's Heritage has been campaigning for historic buildings since its formation in 1975 by a group of architects, journalists and planners. It is a strong, independent voice in conservation, free to respond rapidly to emergencies and to speak out loud for the historic built environment.

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