

ACRA Notes on the Town Centre Strategy December 2015

1. The main differences between this plan and its predecessor are:
 - 1.1. That the proposals to build on some of the car parks on the approaches to the Town Centre have been withdrawn. This is welcomed, but it should be pointed out that this was intended to provide the funding for the improvements.
 - 1.2. It is proposed to fill in the underpass at the top of the High Street and replace the roundabout with a traffic light controlled pedestrian crossing. DCC Highways has suggested that the lights at Stour Road work well, as justification for this idea. However, the number of people crossing the A35 from Bargates to the High Street is many times the number that uses the crossing at Stour Road. Like everybody else we've spoken to we think it essential to keep the underpass given the current and likely future traffic situation.
 - 1.3. A new footbridge is proposed, crossing the Mill Stream adjacent to the Constable's House; part of the 'Heritage Triangle' route.
 - 1.4. A new link road from Barrack Road to Bargates is proposed but the benefits are not made clear.
2. Any attempts to create shared space and a café culture in the High Street must surely be preceded by a traffic management plan. The proposed improvements to the alleyways (gateways in the jargon) to the High Street are difficult to understand because they would need to be much wider to accommodate 'cafes or speciality shops' as proposed.
3. The proposed co-ordination of frontages on to the High Street would improve the visual impact of the High Street.
4. The proposed glazing under the Old Town Hall has been rejected in the past; if implemented, it implies that it will require staffing during the day.
5. Perhaps of greatest significance is the fact that major features of the town are either not identified, or are mentioned without any proposal to improve or develop them. They include: the Beagle Site in Stony Lane; the brown field site between the Council Offices and Stony Lane; the Bowling Green area outside the Kings Hotel; the Magistrate's Court and Pit Car Park. *The omission of these large portions of land from the plans renders the credibility of the overall scheme questionable.*
6. We entertain doubts that any of this will come to fruition in the near future.