

Comments on “Your Vale Your Future” from The Friends of Abingdon

Redevelopment of the Abbey Shopping Centre in Abingdon

We have given much thought to the redevelopment of the Abbey Shopping Centre and have reached a consensus on the following:

Refurbishment

We do not think the canopies should be removed unless they are to be replaced by something better. Ideally the whole area should be covered to provide a simple modern arcaded space, where people can shop in a relaxed way whatever the weather. We don't agree that the precinct should be replaced by a pastiche of an old market town street. We have old streets already and a well planned modern shopping street would provide variety.

Someone has suggested that “the superficial aspects of the 60's design could be removed, the structure of the canopies strengthened and an arched open ended glass panelled canopy built between the front edges of the existing canopies. The unity of the shop fronts could be maintained while doubling up the actual units in order to accommodate larger shops”.

We would like to see the Bath Street aspect of the new development improved with shop windows and an entrance to the new building and greater access between the older and newer streets.

The Health Centre and Library

Abingdon has a large number of older people and parents with young children and many others with mobility problems and to locate public facilities, particularly a health centre, at first floor level makes no sense at all. The health centre also needs to remain near chemists so that prescriptions can be collected easily. Easy access by bus is another important consideration.

Shops

We don't believe we need another large food store in the middle of the town compromising any chance of smaller more varied shops (we no longer have a butcher or greengrocer). The present balance of two large food stores (Waitrose and Tesco) together with smaller ones in the town centre and other parts of the town is more than enough choice.

When people visit a large supermarket, they tend to load their cars and then go home before their food deteriorates. This is not conducive to going out into the town to browse. A large, relatively upmarket store selling a variety of clothes (such as Marks and Spencer) is more likely to encourage further browsing. (Would it be possible to incorporate the empty office block at the corner of Stert Street and Stratton Way into the plans to maximize floor space?) Witney has such shops, why not Abingdon?

Otherwise, Abingdon needs to promote its differences (specialist shops such as Masons, Eileen, Marie, La Patisserie, Added Ingredients, Price's, the independent bookshops etc.).

Overall we need a wide selection of shops and boutiques to make the town a place to visit with plenty of pedestrian access between different streets in the town. We have the history and the eating places we just need attractive shopping

Car Parking

Certainly the car parking situation should be addressed bearing in mind that we wish to attract people from the surrounding country and that they might be driving 4x4s and other larger vehicles so that plenty of space should be allowed in at least some of the parking bays. However, we think a large ground level car park would be an unsightly mistake, and separate the new store from the rest of the town.

Any car park should also be free flowing with both cars and service vehicles able to drive through and we think it would be a mistake for the exit to the car park to be in Stert Street resulting in traffic being directed through the town centre. There is already a lower storey in the present car park which could possibly provide a drive through bay for loading and unloading.

The Friends of Abingdon February 2010

Outcome: A new consultation on a revised plan is taking place until **Friday 23 September 2011**