

WNDP Forum, Infrastructure Group meeting with the Manager of the Watlington Co-Op Store on 12th May 2017.

Present : Jon Little , Peter Richardson , Tom Bindoff

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the main issues in the Draft WNDP and note any comments raised by the Co-Op . The implications of the recent closure of the High Street and the transfer of the PO to the Co-Op were also discussed .

1. Jon Little , as manager , broadly welcomed the main aspects on the Draft Plan . He felt retail demand from the extra houses would help the High Street but warned that , in his opinion , the size of the likely new development would not support a separate convenience store on the development sites . It was explained that this is not in the Plan .

2. He was not particularly concerned at the loss of passing trade resulting from an alternative route to the B4009 , feeling that this would be more than compensated by additional demand resulting from an improvement in the ' public realm ' around the Town Hall which should make Watlington a more attractive place to visit .

3. He also welcomed the fact that traffic consultants were currently examining Watlington's problems and would study with interest any potential traffic management improvement measures that were suggested .

4. After the inevitable teething problems , the operation of the Post Office within the Co-Op is now working well but does not yet seem to have brought extra business .

5. Turnover during the three weeks of the High Street closure to traffic was affected but it coincided with the Easter period so it is difficult to attribute any direct effect .

6. Jon Little's main concern involves the Hill Road car park . He believes that some years the Co-Op has contributed £ 8000 to the cost of its maintenance . He understands that , as by far the largest retail operation in Watlington , the Co-Op should pay the largest contribution to the car park . However it is his experience that :
   There is no transparency on how the Co-Op's contribution is spent
   The lack of monitoring in the car park means that customers complain that they are not able
      to find a convenient parking space
   There is a belief that some businesses make no contribution and others pay a very small
      amount
It was explained that a joint WNDP/Parish Council working group had been agreed to discuss all aspects of the car park and would start work after the current WNDP Consultation was completed .

7. There is a practical problem in the car park involving the area where the trolleys are stored .
As this is under a substantial tree , the trolleys are sometimes covered with bird poo which raises hygiene concerns . TB agreed to discuss the problem with the Tree Warden , Robert Barber .

Notes taken by T Bindoff
16.05.17