



Consultation on the future of Bracknell Market and Winchester House (former 3M building)

November 18, 2013, to January 13, 2014



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The owner of Winchester House, the former 3M building, has put forward proposals for the replacement of Winchester House with high quality town centre buildings.

Bracknell Market is currently located on the ground floor of Winchester House. The council has a lease on the market hall.

The proposals include demolishing the existing building and constructing around 300 new flats with leisure facilities such as a gym, restaurants and shops.

What about Bracknell Market?

If Winchester House is demolished, the market obviously cannot remain in its current location. The developer is clear that if the market remains, it will not redevelop the site and Winchester House will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

The council needs to consult widely with the public to seek their views on three options for Bracknell Market:

- 1. Leave the market in its current location and retain Winchester House.**
- 2. Move the market to an outdoor space elsewhere in the town and redevelop the Winchester House site.**
- 3. Close the market completely and redevelop the Winchester House site.**

It is not possible to provide an alternative indoor location for the market as there is nowhere big enough to accommodate it. The council does not have funding available to build an indoor market without passing costs onto all local council taxpayers.

Option one:

Keep Bracknell Market and Winchester House in its current location

This is the only option in which the market can continue to operate as present. The option would see the council keep its lease of the market hall, which forms the ground floor of Winchester House. This would allow the market to remain in the immediate future, but would prohibit the demolition of Winchester House and redevelopment of the site. The developer would leave Winchester House as it is for the foreseeable future.

Key issues

- The condition of the market hall is declining. Patch repairs have been undertaken, where possible, but the hall is suffering from the derelict building above.
- In 2013, emergency repairs were made to keep the market hall open but it is becoming more difficult to keep it wind and water tight. The council cannot guarantee how long the market can continue to function safely in the existing hall.
- The number of market traders in the existing market hall has declined from an average of 38 to 13 per day between 2000 and 2012.
- The council has limited enforcement powers over Winchester House. Should it make the land owner carry out works on the derelict building, under the terms of its market hall lease, the council would have to share the financial burden, which would be footed by taxpayers. Initial estimates show the council would need to contribute at least £350,000.
- It is unlikely that any alternative to the current proposals would come forward in the near future if these plans are progressed. Therefore, Winchester House would remain and would continue to deteriorate.
- The principal developer for the town centre, Bracknell Regeneration Partnership, has confirmed the condition of Winchester House continues to hinder major retailers signing up to the new town centre.
- The owners of Winchester House have confirmed it is not viable to bring forward housing on this site with a market hall underneath. The council's external advisor has verified this.

The market continues to make a loss for the council:

2010/11 - loss of £14,400

2011/12 - loss of £10,500

2012/13 - loss of £10,300

Future running costs will increase due to the additional maintenance required.

Option two:

Relocate Bracknell Market to an outdoor location

Under this option, the council would relocate the existing market to an outside location to allow Winchester House to be demolished and the site redeveloped.

This option has a two-stage solution. The final proposed location for an outdoor market is Market Square next to the new mixed-use development when it is completed. However, it would not be practical to have the market in this location until the redevelopment is complete. The market would therefore be based in the High Street East/Charles Square area in the interim, though this would be subject to discussions with the owners and occupiers of nearby properties.

Key issues

- This option would allow for the immediate demolition of Winchester House and for planning of the new development to start as soon as possible.
- The existing traders would be offered stalls in the replacement outdoor market. However, changes to the way the existing market traders operate would be required.
- An outdoor market is a different kind of offer to residents. Some may prefer the informal, outdoor nature, others the existing offer.
- There are some thriving outdoor markets in the UK but the council cannot guarantee the success of one in Bracknell.
- The temporary solution would provide activity in the High Street East/Charles Square area while a significant amount of the town is closed for the redevelopment.



What would an outdoor market be like?

Market Square

The Bracknell town centre masterplan envisaged an outdoor market provided in Market Square, next to the proposed redevelopment on the Winchester House site. Detailed plans would be put forward as part of the planning process.

The proposals include power, drainage, lighting and storage for the market stalls. The stalls would be put up as needed with space available for a limited number of trades run from vehicles, such as a café or a butcher.

It is proposed that a general market would still be on offer but the space could also be used for specialised facilities such as a farmers' market or antiques fair.

A market of up to 30 stalls is seen as suitable for Bracknell town centre but there is room for growth as a large space is available.

Temporary relocation to Charles Square/High Street East

During the demolition and redevelopment of Winchester House, Market Square would not be a suitable site for an outdoor market due to construction traffic, dust and noise from the directly adjacent site. Therefore, a temporary site would need to be provided at the centre of High Street/Charles Square.

The temporary market would be capable of hosting between five and 16 stalls depending on demand. Below is an artist's impression of what the area could look like.



The council is still considering whether the stalls would be fixed to the ground and would remain in place throughout the week or whether they would be dismantled after trading. If the stalls remain throughout the week, they could be used for a range of other events like food fairs and arts and crafts days to help boost the town centre during this period of change. They could also be taken down if needed.

Option three:

Close Bracknell Market and provide no alternative

This option would see the council close the market hall. It would allow Winchester House to be demolished and the site redeveloped. No alternative venue to the market hall would be provided.

Key issues

- This option would allow for the demolition of Winchester House and for planning of the new development to start as soon as possible.
- A market has operated in Bracknell since 1975. The town centre masterplan, which outlined the vision for the regenerated town centre, includes an outdoor market.
- The market has some customers who use it for their weekly shopping, this complementary retail offer would be lost.
- Markets can help in regenerating our high streets.
- There are between six and 15 regular stall holders in the existing market who would cease to operate under this option.
- This option would provide savings to the taxpayer of around £10,000 each year. The cost of the market, and potential saving, is likely to increase in coming years due to the worsening condition of the building.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why can't the developer replace Bracknell Market in a new hall as part of Winchester House's redevelopment?

The developer is planning a high quality residential development, a market hall would reduce the value of the homes – making the scheme not viable. The council has had this confirmed by external experts. The location of a market in a residential block is not a suitable proposal.

Will the redevelopment actually happen?

The developer understands that now is a good time to redevelop the site due to the retail-led regeneration of the main town centre.

There is always a risk with development sites but that is the nature of the business. However, the developer has guaranteed imminent demolition of the existing Winchester House site once Reserved Matters planning is granted, but only if the council can provide vacant possession of the market hall.

The developer envisages starting construction within the next three years.

Why is the council so keen to see Winchester House demolished?

The town centre masterplan always showed Winchester House being redeveloped as part of the town centre's regeneration.

The upper floors are derelict and there is no market demand for refurbished office space. The building is in a poor state of repair and will continue to decline if not redeveloped.

Residents repeatedly identify the demolition of this building as a priority and the principal development partner for the town centre, Bracknell Regeneration Partnership, sees Winchester House as a stumbling block to attracting national retailers.

Would an outdoor market attract new and diverse stalls?

Many markets have a wide range of stalls that respond to local demand, making them appealing and attractive to the public. That is not currently the case with Bracknell Market. We can't guarantee what type of stalls would form an outdoor market. Conditions would be put in place to limit certain uses, such as the number of takeaway foods stalls, to ensure a vibrant mix and help improve the quality.

Would the outdoor market stalls all be standard?

No. Different stalls have different needs. For example, a café is likely to need a mobile unit and fish offers are usually from a van.

Why don't we have a farmers' market or other niche markets?

These would be welcome but would not replace a general market. Options would be explored as to whether hosting niche and farmers' markets is possible.

Where would the traders and members of the public park in the High Street and Market Square relocation options?

Traders and the public would need to park in the public car parks - Albert Road car park will be allocated for traders as it is at present. Vehicles moving within pedestrian areas are not safe. Traders would be allowed vehicular access during limited hours to set up and pack away. This is usual practice with outdoor markets and operates successfully elsewhere.

Why can't we have a new indoor market elsewhere in the town?

There are no indoor buildings within the town centre big enough to relocate the market. The cost of building a new facility could not be done without increasing the council tax for everyone and councillors are not prepared to do this.

What research has the council undertaken on other successful markets?

The council has looked at successful markets nearby and further afield. It has also asked Grenchurch, its current market operator, for advice on what makes a successful market. Grenchurch runs other successful markets such as Moreton-in-Marsh and Cheltenham; it believes Bracknell Market's location is its biggest drawback.

What happens if the developer's Reserved Matters planning consent isn't approved for the new redevelopment?

There is already outline permission for the redevelopment. The developer has stated it will keep seeking consent and so the council is being proactive and not waiting until Reserved Matters is granted before making a decision on the future of the market.

When will demolition start?

The developer would like to start demolition as soon as possible in 2014.

When will the council make a decision on the future of the market?

The council will make an informed decision after the consultation closes in January 2014.

I have other ideas. Will they be considered?

Of course. Please feed them through to bracknell.regeneration@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Who is carrying out the consultation?

The consultation is being carried out by Qa Research, an independent company who have been commissioned by the council.

Copies of this booklet may be obtained in large print, Braille, on audio cassette or in other languages. To obtain a copy in an alternative format please telephone 01344 352000.

Nepali

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