

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL – UPPER MEON VALLEY WARD

Updated, Parish update for February 2025

Salt Lane mobile mast

Just over a year ago planning permission was given for the mobile phone tower towards the end of Salt Lane by the junction with Stake's Lane. The tower was built shortly afterwards, however, some residents in Upham raised questions as to whether the tower was operational as they have seen no improvement in signal.

We thought our findings worth sharing with the other parish councils and meetings given the central proximity of the mast which was designed to improve the signal not just in Upham but also to parts of Owslebury, Beauworth, Preshaw, Kilmeston and Morestead.

The tower is owned and operated by WHP Telecoms Ltd. We managed to track down the head of construction at WHP who is investigating the state of operation of the tower.

So far, they have reported that the mobile operator, Three, went live back in October last year and it is planned that Vodaphone will also go live very shortly.

The tower can support a maximum of four mobile phone network operators and usually only three. In the UK there are only four mobile phone network operators, namely, Three, Vodaphone, EE and O2, soon only to be three as Three has just merged with Vodaphone. We are still waiting to hear if there are plans for EE and O2 to operate from the tower.

There are four Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) that use Three's network, specifically SMARTY, iD, Superdrug Mobile and Honest Mobile. If you use any one of these providers, then so long as you are within a reasonable proximity to the tower and have line of sight to the antenna you should get a signal. If, however, you are in a hollow or behind dense woodland and do not have line of sight then you may struggle to get a signal.

When Vodaphone goes live, there are four other mobile providers that piggyback off Vodaphone's network, which are also available. These are VOXI, Asda Mobile, Lebara and Talk Mobile.

Boomtown Festival licensing review – par deux

We reported in the last couple of parish updates that Hampshire Constabulary had requested a Licensing sub-committee hearing to review the licensing for the Boomtown Festival on the grounds of crime and disorder, sadly due to another death at last year's festival.

You will remember the Police withdrew their representation and the meeting was adjourned in order to provide additional time to reassess the resubmission of an updated subcommittee information pack and the manner in which the adjourned subcommittee hearing will be heard at a future date to be agreed.

That meeting took place on 30th January 2025, and after considering the 17 other submissions from local parish councils and residents and a number of representations at the meeting the subcommittee decided to approve the review of the licence with no changes to the original licence.

The withdrawal of the representation by the police unfortunately, in our view, left the subcommittee with little choice but to wave the licence through, as any other imposition of further conditions would have led, almost certainly, to judicial review that the council would have lost a great cost.

In essence, the licence review was called for by the Police on the grounds of crime and disorder as is their right. By withdrawing their request for the review, any conditions subsequently imposed by the sub-committee would lack the support of the Police and on appeal would likely be overturned.

Many of the other representations by residents and parish councils were brought under prevention of public nuisance, generally in respect of sound levels and operating hours of the festival that have not changed, in any significant way, since the original licence was granted. These matter although raised were not up for review under the terms of the original application and so again any imposition of further conditions would likely result in a costly appeal that the council would have lost.

In summary, it seems to us that with the benefit of hindsight it would have been better, once the Police had withdrawn their application for the review, that the review did not proceed from that point and other representations were not heard, as the entire basis of the review had gone away. This would have saved everyone involved the unnecessary trouble of sitting through two hearings.

It remains the case that Boomtown are engaged in consultation with Hampshire Constabulary to agree any measures the Police feel might be necessary to reduce the further risk of death by drug misuse and retain the right to bring a further review if they cannot reach agreement.

South Downs Local and Management Plan Reviews

At the parish engagement event at Petersfield on 29th Jan the SDNPA team invited engagement on both the Local Plan Review and the re-write of the Authority's Partnership Management Plan. The latter was presented as the statutory, higher-level strategic document that sets out the Authority's purposes and objectives for the coming 5 years; the Local Plan, by contrast, is the framework within which some of these objectives will be achieved for anything that requires a planning consent.

The following link takes you to the presentation slides:

<https://scanner.topsec.com/?d=2475&r=show&u=https%3A%2F%2Furlsand.esvalabs.com%2F%3Fu%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fwww.southdowns.gov.uk%252Fplanning-policy%252Fthe-south-downs-local-plan-review%252Fconsultation-hub%252Fonline-webinar%252F%26e%3Dfca4e4f1%26h%3D303f9613%26f%3Dn%26p%3Dy&t=104f6e1a02691c1aa0f577c810931fc89c3259c7>

There is a further engagement event in Winchester on Fri 14 Feb specifically for the Partnership Management Plan and we would encourage you to be represented. Register at this address: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/urban-edge-south-downs-engagement-event-tickets-1219536399199?aff=oddtcreator>

For the Local Plan Review, the Midhurst team is looking for further candidate sites that could support limited development in the context of the landscape-led plan. For our villages it would be particularly useful if Parish Councils could also provide, as part of their consultation response, an up-to-date and realistic assessment of their needs for affordable housing. At present the Review contains some development sites but no figures for the housing need that should be met through the life of the plan. Both the Park and Winchester City Council needs to understand the true demand for development in the rural villages, and a full picture of the available sites, as a starting point for negotiation on how future top-down housing targets across the whole District.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

The Deputy Prime Minister has announced that the combined Hampshire and Solent region will be part of the first tranche of Strategic Mayoral Authorities to be established.

Consequently, the County Council elections scheduled for May 25 will not now take place and there will be an election next year for the Hampshire/Solent Mayor, who will also take on the duties currently discharged by the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Integrated Care Board.

Winchester City Council has also been tasked, working with other existing local authorities in Hampshire, to formulate initial proposals for a new single-tier authority to take on the services currently provided by Winchester City Council and Hampshire County Council, by 21st Mar 25, with a full proposal to be submitted by 26th Sep 25. By anybody's measure, this is a racy timescale. It will require collaboration with other District councils to propose the footprints of the future 'unitary' authorities that will provide many of the services currently provided by a mix of Districts and County. There will likely be elections in May 26 to establish a 'shadow authority'. As will be appreciated, the pace of change is high and may well increase!

Please spare a thought for the position of all Council officers in both Winchester City and Hampshire County. County staff have been subject to a 'Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme' since last Nov, and those in Winchester City are now subject to the same degree of uncertainty.

The white paper says little about the role of the parishes, so we thought it worth highlighting what it did say:

“We will also rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice.”

“We will also work with the town and parish council sector to improve engagement between them and Local Authorities.”

It is largely thought that this means more responsibility and greater involvement of the parish councils. In what form this will take we are yet to discover.

The following questions are worth debating amongst parish councillors and considering your view, as these are likely decisions that will have to be taken.

- Could being part of a new Town Council make sense for your parish?
Winchester Town Forum has started the application process.
- Is there any interest in consolidating your parish with others to create more scale in the same context of new very large unitaries?
- Are there district functions or assets you would like to take on or protect?
It is almost certainly the case that funding will not come with any assets as there is no additional funding available to the councils for the local government reorganisation.
- Some areas of the district may feel closer to a neighbouring unitary. Would you want your parish to be considered under a different unitary?
Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for the unitary proposal, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes may be considered.

Kind Regards

Jerry Pett

Neil Bolton

Winchester City Council Ward Members for Upper Meon Valley