Streets for People

Introduction:

This is a summary of the comments made at a public meeting, 'Streets for People', that Portsmouth Friends of the Earth held on Monday 15th October 2018. Over 60 people attended the evening, which started with a presentation by Megan Streb, Sustrans Partnership Manager South. Other contributions were collected during Portsmouth City Council's 'Green Space Challenge' event a few days later, on Saturday 20th October.

People were asked to contribute to the following questions:

- What is your favourite street?
- What is the worst street?
- What improvements would you like to see?
- What's the best idea you've heard this evening? (only asked at the public meeting)

Streets:

There was no outstanding favourite – people have their own personal reasons for liking particular roads – but there were repeats and groupings. Albert Road, Castle Road and Palmerston Road have interest and character. Some are friendly, with a sense of community. Otherwise the main factors were trees, views and open spaces.

> *"Elkstone Road – it's wide, got views, on a hill, white chalk cliffs and friends";*
> *"Moorings Way – the view and the space; I can just cross the road and go on the common"; "Copnor Road – the park nice to stop in when walking"; Langford Road – near cemetery"; "Road down to D-Day Museum – trees"; "Clovelly Road – due to the birds, trees and hazelnuts"; Curzon Howe Road – has trees"; "Arundel Street – trees"; Neville Road – because it's near the park"; "Museum Road – the trees"; "Any tree-lined street"; "I agree".*

Without a doubt the most cited worst road was the London Road/Kingston Road/Fratton Road corridor. Others mentioned were Milton Road, Fawcett Road and Eastern Road. Most factors noted were vehicle-related - traffic, bad air quality, congestion, danger, difficulty in crossing, parking, noise. Other factors included that roads are dull and boring, that shops are closing, there's rubbish and litter, and not enough trees.

> *"Fratton Road – noisy and crowded!"; "Kingston/Fratton Road – polluted, constant traffic jams"; "Milton Road/Eastney Road – I choke when I go down there"; "London Road – pavements are narrow. Traffic too busy"; Elm Grove – a boring long road noisy with loads of traffic and no atmosphere"; "Fawcett Road – a lot of seemingly angry traffic and strangely placed pedestrian crossings"; "Goldsmith Avenue – difficult to cross road"; "Where I live we've got the Eastern Road and it blocks us off"; "Eastern Way – Cycle path needs improving by the bridge at the top – a little bit frightening"; "Jessie Road – used as a quick cheat way through – massive speeding".*

Improvements:
People would like less traffic and better public transport - many recommended cheaper fares and route improvements to bus services, and lots of people liked the idea of trams. Car-free and one-way roads, speed enforcement and traffic-calming, no engine idling, increased time for pedestrians to cross roads were all mentioned. Specifically, several people would like Palmerston Road South to be closed to traffic.

> *"So densely populated. So many cars. Parking is a nightmare. Public transport needs to improve"; "[Portsmouth should have trams] like in Blackpool where I have been this last weekend. Trams are quiet, comfortable and have stops where they are needed"; "Bring back trams or trolley buses"; "Clean trams to replace cars and provide efficient public transport"; "Closure of Palmerston Road south to vehicles – it's an easy win"; "ban cars from whole areas (except residents)"; "more time to cross the road". "Buses should run like they do in Portugal on natural gas"; "Vehicles to turn off their engine when idling."; "More traffic speed enforcement or road calming to make everywhere safer for walkers and cyclists".*

Wider pavements, with less litter and rubbish, would make the walking experience nicer. Better built environment and design, with more considered provision of seating and street furniture would help. Improvements to lighting were requested, to encourage feelings of safety, but some people didn't like the new LEDs as they are so bright and white.

> *"Goldsmith Avenue needs broader pavement! (Feels dangerous right now)"; "London Road – pavements are narrow. Traffic too busy"; "Fratton Road – pavements not wide enough"; Fratton Road – tidy it up"; "Fawcett Road – less stock from shops on street"; "Rubbish bins needed"; "Canal Walk feels like quite an intimidating space, especially after dark".*

Lots of people would like more green spaces and lots more hedges and trees.

> *"Commercial Road – more trees. Make it a bit brighter. It's a bit grey"; "additional trees down streets"; "Fratton Road – not enough trees"; "more trees, wild meadows, wildlife protection"; "more community-led green spaces"; "I'd love to see more plants and flowers"; "More tree-lined streets and wider pavements with increased green spaces"; "More trees/birds".*

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Best ideas:
Lots of the ideas outlined by Megan were popular, such as the Barcelona "superblocks", where traffic is restricted to outside roads, giving the streets back to the residents. Citizen spaces, pocket parks, play streets and modal filters that restrict vehicles entering a road but enable access for pedestrians and cyclists were also popular. Closing roads, even temporarily, could enable children to play in their own neighbourhoods, and friendly spaces outside schools would improve safety.

> *"Planters to make streets pleasanter and they narrow areas for cars = slower speeds but they will need to be adopted"; "pocket parks"; pedestrianizing residential quadrants"; "creating no through roads in residential sectors"; "modal filters [like] in Barcelona"; "temporarily closing roads, say 2 – 8 pm, done by the residents, easy peasy cheap + effective"; "seating outside schools"; "pocket parks in zones outside*

schools instead of zig zags that are ignored"; "Closing streets to through traffic so children can play"; "Bollards at specific points for play stuff"; "Play streets"; "More of the community coming together to enjoy their spaces".

Limiting van parking and stopping rat runs were mentioned. Cycle parking in residential roads could help increase cycling by allowing more people to own bikes and store them safely in special sheds taking up a parking space.

"If there was safe and covered cycle parking in residential areas I think it would be well used. I hardly use my bike now as I have to bring it through a long, newly decorated corridor as there's no space for it out the front."

Conclusion:
This was an opportunity for people to express their views on what would improve our city. Most of all, they want streets that are people-friendly, not car-dominated. They want more trees and green spaces.

Portsmouth could provide pocket parks, small irregular pieces of land that are an oasis for communities. These could be pop-up, not necessarily permanent. They would be particularly useful outside schools, if there was a will to take space from parking and give it to playing. Planters and seating would make these lovely places for families to wait for their children.

Street designs that restrict vehicles entering a road but allows through-access for walking and cycling, or closing off one end of a street, could also improve conditions for some residents. Better planning, enforcement of speed limits and parking rules, support for local shops, keeping pavements clear and clean, all of these would improve our streets.

Portsmouth Friends of the Earth
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