

## Chris Esplin Jones – Romsey & District Society

### Planet Panel: 9<sup>th</sup> Nov Crosfield Hall

Members: Graham Smith, Peter Baird [Perkins and Wills] and Alison Barnes CE New Forest National Park and Chris Esplin-Jones (RDS)

#### **Introduction**

I am a member of Romsey and District Society. A society which, - perhaps like you - sees itself in the role of the “Man on the Clapham Omnibus” with his [or her] down to earth views.

The Society was founded in 1974 when towns people felt that a proposal to widen Greatbridge Road was completely contrary to the vision of a small market town and should be opposed. 45 years later the Society has around 950 members. It works through committees, which address strategic and site planning matters, public services, the natural environment, footpaths, and of course, provides social events [the glue which holds the society together].

If you are not a member you should join!!

The aim of the Society is to promote **high standards of planning and architecture** and to secure the **preservation, protection, development and improvement of features** of natural, historical or public interest in the area.

We are involved in, or have close links with, the Romsey Buildings Preservation Trust, King John's House, and Romsey Forum .

Recent strategic [or perhaps overview] level involvement has been in:

the town edge supermarket proposal,  
the design of our upgraded market place using Ben Hamilton Baillie's ideas about “shared space”,

the future of Fishlake Meadows as a nature reserve, and the coming Whitenap development.

We published “Thoughts on the Future of Romsey” in 2013.

14 members of the society were involved in the early stages of the Romsey Future Project including membership of the drafting group producing the first scoping report. This encouraged looking at possible better use of the South of Romsey Town Centre.

As a fundamental tenet - the society accepts that the Romsey - Town and Extra - population will grow by 25% from 21K today to 28K by 2035 and **therefore we must plan for it.**

Briefly as regards myself - I have been involved with the Romsey Future project from the beginning and have been chairman of RDS.

### **The Society’s vision for SoRTC**

Over the next two decades, we believe the town will evolve into the place of choice for the residents of the Southern Test Valley - small towns, hamlets and villages - to congregate for social interaction.

During this period energy costs will continue to rise. Between the ages of 20 and 75 adults will continue to aspire to own a car. Petrol/electric car prices will continue to rise sufficiently to make consideration of bus and train use attractive. Bus transport will remain underused unless timetabled to meet user convenience. This is important for mobility in outlying villages and within suburban Romsey. I believe the advent of autonomous vehicles has been addressed already.

We want to see our town becoming more attractive with enhanced streetscape, facilities, infrastructure and transport. We see increased footfall arising from an enlarged population [+7000], expanded street markets and promotion of its eating and shopping places.

The “high street” will change to reflect the increasing use of the Internet for shopping.

Car parking will continue to be restricted **or perceived to be so** unless action is taken to improve the situation. Provision should not be to scale but be sufficient to attract footfall. The society does not see pedestrianisation of the town centre as a benefit.

**So how can a South Of Romsey Town Centre development contribute to this vision of vibrancy and an attractive meeting place by improving the area around the Crosfield Hall and the Bus Station?**

**The Society answers the question with six points:**

By having a financially viable roll out plan which is self-funding and which can withstand political and worldwide perturbation. There is potential to increase the area available for redevelopment if Edwina Mountbatten House was relocated - possibly to the south of the bypass.

By replacing the current Crosfield Hall with an energy efficient one - of a size and design to cope with meeting attendances of up to 500 but with sufficient smaller rooms available for meetings and active clubs.

By road design which functions to control vehicle speed and Improves the link **or links** to the bypass.

By providing parking capacity to reflect the need to attract footfall to the town

By providing bus set down and pick up points near the town centre while relocating bus parking away from a valuable central town site

And finally

By ensuring pedestrian access to the evolving town centre is straightforward and designed to be attractive.

