

# THE TRUE COST OF REDEVELOPING WOKING

Iain Wakeford 2018



Following on from my ramblings last week about sleepless nights, and the numerous possible plans for Woking Town Centre in the mid 1960's, I should point out that even at that time many had reservations about what was envisaged (and how much it would cost to achieve). One local reporter noted the council's claim that the 'great space-age plans to revolutionise shopping, living and working in Woking town centre' would cost the equivalent of three jet aircraft, asking whether that was 'a simple way of explaining a complex and costly programme' – 'or a skilled publicist's way of putting over something difficult for the average man to comprehend'?

'Putting it bluntly' he went on to explain 'the dream of super town square, pedestrian precincts, ring roads, concourse over the railway, multi-storey car parks, bigger and better shops, and flashing parking signs, is estimated to cost around £20 million' 'or £250 per man, woman and child' in the district.

But as the canny correspondent noted, that was the estimated cost in 1966, and 'by the time that work commences in earnest, after the present economic crisis and credit freeze and suspension of capital programmes are all over, the cost may well be double' – 'and by the time it is complete it could be almost any price'.

There were building sites throughout the town centre in the 1960's, with large areas of car parks breaking up the shopping centre, but it would not be until the 1970's that a comprehensive plan was agreed (only for a completely new plan to be devised in the 80's and then the 90's and then...

He concluded with a comment that perhaps the present planners should bear in mind. 'Woking town centre certainly needs some sorting out, but surely what is needed is a programme that can be pushed through despite the economic situation, one that is less dream-like and consequently less costly, one that we can afford'.

It took almost twenty years before the programme was finally 'pushed through', but whether that was because the Council were making certain they could afford it is debatable. It seems they have always had bigger and better plans, no matter what the cost.

What they need to remember is that the 'cost' is not just so much per resident (or even a multiple of jet aircraft), but also the cost to local businesses and residents who are caught up in all the disruption.

From the mid 1960's onwards Woking was a constant building site and the uncertainty of how long it would take to start (let alone complete) the new shopping centre was putting people off visiting the town. The disruption of delay was having an effect on many local businesses with companies such as A.A. Humphries, Ladies Outfitters, announcing the closure of their redevelopment-threatened shop in Duke Street in July 1965.

**CLOSING DOWN  
SALE**  
Commencing 9.00 a.m.  
**THURSDAY, JULY 15th**

OWING TO SALE OF PREMISES FOR RE-DEVELOPMENT, THE DIRECTORS OF  
**A. A. HUMPHRIES LTD.**  
HAVE DECIDED TO RETIRE FROM BUSINESS

All Stocks **MUST** be CLEARED. There will be Good Opportunities for Genuine Bargains in

\* Coats \* Costumes \* Dresses  
\* Jersey Two - Pieces \* Rainwear  
\* Anoraks \* Slacks \* Skirts  
\* Casual Jackets \* Blouses \* Woollies  
and Millinery

The Directors take this opportunity of thanking all their customers for their loyal support over the past years.

**A. A. HUMPHRIES LTD.**  
6/7 DUKE STREET - WOKING



Why it was called A.A. Humphries I do not know, as the shop was apparently started by the Misses E & M.J. Steere just after the Second World War. Miss E was a Company Secretary in Guildford, whilst her sister had been manageress of the coal department at Gloster's before they started the new business with just one assistant. They were later joined by another sister (Ann) and by the time they closed in 1965 employed a dozen people.

It is true that a few new stores were opening in the town, such as Halford's who were advertising 'opening offers' at their new shop in Commercial Road at the beginning of May

1965, but they appear to have been something of the exception, rather than the rule.

At their opening sale you could apparently buy added extras for your car, such as an interior

mirror for 2/11 (saving 7d), a wing mirror (13/11, saving 2/10) or a reversing lamp ('an important winter accessory') for 12/5 (saving 3/6 on the normal price) – were they not standard requirements in 1965?



wokinghistory.org

**HALFORDS  
INTERIOR  
MIRROR**

**SAVE  
7d**

Universal fitting, with 6" x 2" non-distorting glass. Supplied complete with self-tapping screws.

**LIST PRICE | OPENING OFFER**  
3/6 | 2/11

*take a good look into a*

**HALFORDS  
WING MIRROR**

**SAVE  
2/10**

When pulling out or overtaking, you're safer if you have a Halfords wing mirror to look into. Brass-backed on die-cast bracket. Heavy chrome-plated finish. Adjustable-left or right-hand fitting.

**LIST PRICE | OPENING OFFER**  
16/9 | 13/11

**HALFORDS  
reversing lamp**

**Important Winter Accessory**

**SAVE  
3/6**

Fit this essential piece of equipment before the long winter nights set in. Throws a powerful, fan-shaped beam, and makes reversing easy in the dark. Fully chromed, 12 volt.

**LIST PRICE | OPENING OFFER**  
15/11 | 12/5

**Be seen— HALFORDS PARKING LAMP**

**SAVE  
17'9**

Don't take chances this winter; make sure your car is seen—with a Halfords Parking Lamp. Fitted with universal bracket for sliding and winding windows. Smartly styled in latest Continental fashion.

**LIST PRICE | OPENING OFFER**  
7/3 | 5/6