



Maidenhead Civic Society NEWS



Issue 3/12

Aug 2012



*“Google Earth” image of the proposed new site for Furze Platt School
at Spencers Farm (see page 3)*

Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

Chairman's Foreword

According to writer, actor and funnyman Gryff Rhys Jones there's no time like the present to show that we care. As president of Civic Voice to which our Society is affiliated, he said recently: "Everyone has the right to live somewhere they can feel proud of. At this time of financial uncertainty and an increasing desire to involve local people in decision making it has never been more important for everyone to understand their local area.

"What do you want to protect? What do you want to improve? If we are going to ensure that our villages, towns and cities give everybody living in them a good quality of life, we need everyone to get involved."

It's a sentiment that we share as a Society and it's timely...The Royal Borough has embarked on a Neighbourhood Plan for Maidenhead. It's all part of the new planning regime introduced under the Localism Act which is meant to give residents the power to shape their own communities.

RBWM, a "vanguard authority" in this process, has divided the borough into seven Neighbourhood Planning Areas - five parishes and two towns – and their plans will dovetail into the Borough-wide Local Plan which will replace the Local Development Framework.

The Maidenhead Neighbourhood Plan will complement the recently adopted Town Centre Area Action Plan by considering the surrounding areas, including Cox Green. The Civic Society, which is represented on the steering group, is being asked to help find people who would like to contribute their thoughts and ideas to four Topic Groups. These will draw up proposals which, following public consultation, would form the basis of the plan.

The Topic Groups are: Business & Shopping; Housing, Built & Natural Environment; Community, Leisure & Countryside; and Transport. If you are interested, please get in touch.

In Westminster the government has been looking at further ways of streamlining the planning process. Changes to the standard planning application form are being proposed to speed the passage of outline applications, which sounds fine in principle but is there a catch? Another suggestion, to make it easier to find new uses for abandoned buildings, is to allow change of use under 'permitted development rights'. This could improve the situation in our high streets but it might also see redundant farm buildings becoming shops, cafes or music venues in the interests of "supporting rural growth". Both proposals are out to consultation until September.

Time to show we care, again.

Bob Dulson

Planning Matters

There have been three meetings of the Planning Group since the last Newsletter and more than forty applications have been evaluated. Ten proposals have been commented on in detail, but the most contentious scheme has not even reached the planning stage. This is the proposal to relocate a “new-build” Furze Platt Senior School on Green Belt land at Spencers Farm. The project would also involve – and be funded by – the construction of a total of 700 new homes. Our comments were issued in a press release on 11th April, and were reproduced in the last Newsletter.

As a matter of policy, the Civic Society is committed to preventing the erosion of the Green Belt. It is therefore somewhat irksome that a further school building scheme has come along – to re-site Oldfield School from the present site on Chiltern Road to a larger site (with twice the number of pupils) on Bray Road – just south of Chalgrove Close. This is another Green Belt location, which happens to be owned by the Royal Borough. It is adjacent to two Sites of Special Scientific Interest, alongside Maidenhead Ditch – part of the proposals for the Waterways Scheme. A Cabinet decision has been made to choose this site rather than alternatives at the Wimbury School site or on Braywick Road. There is a clearly established need for more primary school places, but the location appears to be driven largely by convenience for existing parents. We believe that the Furze Platt proposals are much more speculative and commercially driven than the need for a larger Oldfield School. Although the decision has been made in principle by the Borough, it has not yet reached the planning stage.

There are two major locations which have come up for re-development. Firstly, the site of the old **Shoppenhangers Manor on Manor Lane**: we regard the proposal for 56 dwellings as over-development, which is out of character with the existing streetscape of Manor Lane. Considerable extra traffic will be generated with a need to widen the eastern end of Manor Lane. A reduced number of more substantial properties should be proposed as an alternative. These were our comments:

“It is appreciated that this site is suitable for development as a genuine brown field site. This is as a result of the unfortunate fire, and the subsequent unheralded demolition of Shoppenhangers Manor. However, any development should not detract from the character of the Manor Lane neighbourhood. It should also protect the Green Belt area which adjoins the site to the south. We note that the scheme appears to incorporate some of this Green Belt as amenity open space. Safeguards should be put in place to ensure that there is no development creep onto this Green Belt at some future stage.

“The density of the scheme is quoted at 32 dwellings per hectare. It is not clear if this refers to the whole site (including amenity space). The density would be even higher if based solely on the built up area. The largest proposed properties are fronting Manor Lane, and are of a scale which, whilst smaller than the existing properties opposite, might be acceptable in character and size. Fronting Manor Lane with larger

plots merely highlights the developers' awareness of the unsuitability of the rest of the site. Behind this frontage lie terraces of dwellings and apartment blocks - which are completely unsympathetic to the surrounding neighbourhood. The maximum density should reflect that of Nos. 1-3 and apply across the whole site. The proposed density will generate significant extra vehicular traffic, because the relative remoteness of the location requires a high level of car use. The eastern end of Manor Lane has a restricted width and sections with no footpath. Any road changes driven by the needs of this development will further harm the character of the area.

“Developments of this scale exert increasing pressure on the local infrastructure - education, health, transport, water supply, drainage etc. The never-ending drive towards housing targets is not reflected in comparable investment in the infrastructure - in spite of S106 contributions.

“The existing site is a nature habitat, with numerous mature trees and shrubs. Because of the density of the development many trees will be sacrificed. The layout could be revised to accommodate and take advantage of existing trees.

“In summary, this application represents over-development of the site. The number of dwellings should be significantly reduced, with larger and more individual properties. The adverse impact on neighbours and their locality should be reduced as much as possible. Adjacent Green Belt should be untouched, and protected from any future development plans.”

The second scheme is at the now derelict **Castle Hill Youth & Community Centre**, where 14 houses of 4 bedrooms are proposed. As this is situated in a Conservation Area we are disappointed with the quality of the design of the properties. We also believe that there is an inadequate parking provision. We believe that the number of homes/bedrooms should be scaled down. We wrote to the Planning Department:

“We agree that this site requires a planning solution, and that residential development is the most suitable use. We note the comments from English Heritage regarding the preservation of the main “school” block. However, we believe that the deterioration of the structure is so advanced that it is impractical to renovate and convert to modern-day sustainable residential accommodation.

“We are therefore in favour of the redevelopment of the entire site, but have several reservations about the proposed scheme. It is appreciated that an attempt has been made to emulate a mock-Victorian architectural style. However, many design elements are incompatible. The four houses facing Castle Hill incorporate pillars beside two of the front doors (more mock-Georgian) and rounded windows at third floor level (even Regency). The other ten houses have front door porches more suited to cottages than 2.5 or 3 storey four bedroom homes. Although the artistic representation of the elevations as represented in the application is intended to create an aged feel, we are concerned that in reality the properties will appear very modern when built. Basically, we are disappointed in the proposed architecture for a Conservation Area setting.

“Our other main concern relates to the inadequacy of parking provision. Because there are four bedrooms per house there is a total of 56 bedrooms on the development. There are 36 parking spaces in total, with only four for visitors. Of the residents parking, about half is in garage form - which is likely to be used for other purposes. There is going to be an ongoing parking issue, which is highlighted by the fact that the developer states that purchasers will be precluded from applying for adjacent on- street residents' permits (by agreement with the Borough.) It can be deduced that there is not only inadequate parking on site - but an already existing shortage of on- street parking.

“The level of residential occupancy should be reduced - fewer four bed properties or the same number of three bed houses - preferably a combination of both.”

Two other applications warrant a mention. At **Nos. 3-6 Bridge Avenue** a renewal of outline permission for a 116-bedroom hotel is being sought. At six storeys height, with a lack architectural interest and inadequate parking we have reservations about the proposal. There is also a concurrent application for an office block development.



The currently empty properties at 3 – 6 Bridge Avenue

“We believe that the building will be too high at six stories, and that parking provision is inadequate for 116 bedrooms. Furthermore, there is a lack of information regarding the architectural style of the proposed structure. Because of the size and mass of the hotel, there is a major opportunity to introduce design interest. With the arrival of Travelodge by the railway station (singularly bland), and the pending construction of a Premier Inn off West Street, an assessment is required of the potential hotel-room demand in Maidenhead town centre. There is a parallel planning permission for an office block on this site, so it can be assumed that the applicants are unsure of the most suitable development use for this location.

“As previously stated, it would be beneficial to all parties if the ultimate development brief for Bridge Avenue was properly established. This is now even more relevant, given the Michael Shanly consultative proposals to develop the Chapel Arches area which is alongside the waterways regeneration scheme and adjacent to this Bridge Avenue site.”

And finally, at **12-14 Craufurd Rise** (below) there are strange goings-on. Previously, permission was unfortunately granted for three blocks of “Shoppenhangers Road” type flats (28 dwellings in total). We were encouraged by a more modest scheme of a terrace of six 2-bed houses behind the existing Victorian villas. This would involve the demolition of the two large houses, but see the development and parking taking place in the back gardens. Mysteriously, this latest scheme has now been withdrawn.



MAIDENHEAD TOWN FORUM

This Forum met in July and our chairman had submitted a request for an overview of the Maidenhead and Cox Green Neighbourhood Plan and the Borough Local Plan (to include the Furze Platt petition and an update on Ockwells Manor).

Simon Hurrell, Head of Planning, responded noting that the Council had decided to re-designate the field opposite Ockwells as green belt in the Local Plan. The Furze Platt petition relates to the proposal to move Furze Platt school plus playing fields to green belt land north of North Town Moor. The site is crossed by the streamside walk, the Green Way, that would be severely impacted, if it goes ahead.

The question of whether the neighbourhood plan or the local plan would take precedence was also discussed.

Martin McNamee and Bob Dulson

Millennium Walk

Formal Opening of Missing Link

On Saturday 12th May, in glorious sunshine, the more athletic among us walked from Pinkneys Green to Temple Golf Club (having been dropped off there by coach from Hurley) for the formal opening of the new link. In the presence of the Mayor, Asghar Majeed, speeches were made by Cllr John Stretton and Peter Thorn, both of whom have responsibilities for improving access to the countryside, and our chairman Bob Dulson on behalf of the amenity societies.



Society Chairman Bob Dulson welcomes everyone on behalf of the amenity groups

The new section, which includes a path across Berkshire College of Agriculture land and a crossing of the Henley Road, was formally opened by the former college Principal, Peter Thorn, now chair of the Local Access Forum, who gave permission for the permitted path.

The movers and shakers (l to r): Anthony Hurst, (RBWM's Principal Rights Of Way Officer), Ann Darracott (Civic Society), Cllr John Stretton (chair of Rights of Way Licensing Panel), Margaret Bowdery (East Berks Ramblers), Peter Thorn (chair Local Access Forum - LAF) and Stephen Brown, (RBWM's Head of Highways). Not in the photo, Andrew Fletcher, Secretary of LAF





The safe new crossing in action for the first time



Peter Thorn (far right), poised to cut the tape!



Walking a section of the new path, skirting the College land

Apart from those already mentioned, we also had help from Keith Adderley, Secretary of Temple Golf Club (quite apart from the wonderful refreshments they laid on!) and also from Quentin Vincent of Scottish and Southern Electricity PLC who provided information on power lines from the sub station. Last, but certainly not least, we had help from our MP Theresa May who wrote to the Department of Transport and obtained from them clarification that the warning sign we wanted to use was legal. Unfortunately, Theresa was not able to attend the opening, but she did send us a message of support:

“I am delighted to welcome the opening of the new section of the Millennium Walk and I would like to pay tribute to the Maidenhead Civic Society and East Berkshire Ramblers Association, who have worked so hard to reach this point. Thanks to their efforts, and the cooperation of Berkshire College of Agriculture, the improved Millennium Walk will encourage many local residents and visitors to get out and experience the exceptional natural surroundings that this area is blessed with.”

Just so you know how much effort is involved in obtaining new footpaths, my records show that achieving this link took almost exactly 14 years and needed the cooperation of all the organisations mentioned above to make it happen.

And in case you've forgotten: the Millennium Walk runs 7¾ miles from Hurley through Pinkneys Green to Maidenhead Riverside. It connects with the Thames Path and the Green Way and also links common land held by the National Trust. It still has two missing links.

The event seems to have been a success at raising awareness of the Millennium walk – we even made it into the latest edition of the council's newspaper "Around the Royal Borough".

The first Millennium Walk map leaflet was published jointly with East Berks Ramblers to mark the opening of this new link. Copies of the new leaflet were available for everyone who attended the opening ceremony. We are grateful to the Kidwells Park Trust, administered by the Royal Borough, and to the Shell Employee Action Scheme for grants towards the costs the publication the cost of the opening ceremony. You should have received a copy of the leaflet in the last Newsletter. Anyone wishing to purchase additional copies (50p each) should contact Ann Darracott on 01628 620280.



Dave Ramm of East Berks Ramblers, designer of the new leaflet, flanked by Margaret Bowdery, left, and Ann Darracott, right

An electronic version has been requested by the National Trails Office for Natural England, for their website. They note that it provides opportunities for circular walks with the Thames Path. We hope they will give us support in completing the remaining missing links.

Ann Darracott

North Town Pond

The restoration of North Town Moor pond was a Civic Society project begun in 1986 when a digger was hired to remove the accumulated silt and reeds out of the pond which at that time was primarily a breeding ground for mosquitoes. In those days the dredged silt, after removal of foreign objects, was spread around the adjacent banks.



The pond in 2010

Now it needs restoring again but if the pond is contaminated with oil (it gets run-off from the roads nearby) any silt would need specialist, expensive disposal.



The Make Space for Life Group headed by Jonathan Howe, Landscape Officer of RBWM, and Paul Biddle, National Trust Warden, who have been doing sterling work improving North Town Moor, asked if the Society could help. We undertook to find funding for the analysis of the sediment in the pond to establish whether or not it is contaminated with oil and we are very pleased to announce that a generous grant towards this study has been obtained from the Louis Baylis (Maidenhead Advertiser) Trust.

Make Space For Life volunteers removing decayed vegetation from the pond

Visit to Shottesbrooke Church

Blessed with good weather, on Monday 21st May we toured the iconic C14th church of St John the Baptist at Shottesbrooke ably guided by Keith Hasted. Jeff Griffiths talked about the work of the Landmark Trust, founded by Sir John Smith and based at Shottesbrooke.



The idyllic setting of Shottesbrooke Church (photo courtesy Jeff Griffiths)

The collegiate church, founded by William Trussell in 1337, was probably completed by 1348. Keith pointed out that complete churches built afresh during this period (the Decorated Period) are rare. This dating fits with an initial assessment of who was represented by the armorial glass once in the church, of which a few remnants remain. We know what was there in the mid-C17th because Elias Ashmole visited and made drawings. We are in the process of obtaining a set of these drawings from the Bodleian Library to complete a report on the armorial glass. Shottesbrooke has strong links with Bisham Abbey.

William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, who founded the priory at Bisham (also in 1337) appears to have been one of Trussell's donors. As Bisham Priory church had already been demolished by the mid-C17th and most of the glass lost, the hope is that studying the Shottesbrooke glass could indicate what was once at Bisham. We hope to have more on this in a later Newsletter.



Keith Hasted (left in the picture) pointing out some finer points of the Church's architecture

There was awaiting list for the visit so we will try and arrange another date later in the year.

Ann Darracott

Future Events

The Society has no plans for any talks or other events during the usual quiet summer period and we hope to resume in the autumn. However, Members may be interested in the following:

TALK – Tuesday 23rd October

The Marlow Society have invited members of the Civic Society to attend the talk to be given by the well-known TV personality **Lucinda Lambton** who will talk on “**Palaces for Pigs and Other Beastly Dwellings**” in the Liston Hall, Marlow, at 7.30 pm. Cost £5.00; tickets available with s.a.e. from Peter Bailey, Woodwind, Henley Road, Marlow, SL7 2VZ.

Heritage Open Days (HODS)

ST LUKE'S CHURCH, MAIDENHEAD

On Saturday 8th September, St Luke's Church, Norfolk Road, will be participating again in this national scheme organised by the Civic Voice, English Heritage and the National Trust. The church will be open from 10am - 1pm and then from 3 - 4pm, as there is a wedding at 2pm. There will be guides, teas and a small exhibition

In the past St Luke's has had visitors who were particularly interested in the fresco tile painting *Jacob's Ladder* on the chancel arch, made by W.B. Simpson & Sons in 1885. However, the church also has a magnificent collection of stained glass, given by various donors and made by different glaziers. The memorial window to Charles West Cope R.A., which used his own drawings, is particularly distinctive. Guides at the church will be able to provide details of the glass. For information in advance of your visit see the photo gallery on the church website <http://www.stlukeschurchmaidenhead.org.uk>.



The memorial window to Charles West Cope RA, d.1890, with detail of the inscription

Announcements

SUBSCRIPTIONS

We would like to again remind members who have not updated their Standing Orders to the current subscription levels (£12 single, £18 family membership) to please do so as soon as possible. If you are still short of the correct contribution this year, cash or cheque to the membership secretary will put the status of your account to 'Paid in Full'. Subscriptions became due on 1st June for the next year, i.e. 1st June 2012 to 31st May 2013. Please ensure you have paid as this helps the Society carry out its good work on behalf of the membership and to the benefit of Maidenhead.

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

We would still like to hear from any one who can assist with the distribution of the Newsletter. The areas where we particularly need help are Cookham, Pinkneys Green and Holyport/Bray. If you feel you can lend a hand, please contact Sue Ross on 01628 626849.

CLEARING THE PATH FOR THE BOUNDARY WALK

With the kind permission of the Edwards family we will again this year be clearing the path from the Lower Cookham Road to the Thames Path, for Maidenhead Rotary Club's Boundary Walk. All necessary equipment is provided by East Berks Ramblers and we supply upmarket drinks and biscuits. Clearing, which takes a couple of hours at most, will take place on Tuesday 11th September from 10am. If you would like to help, contact Ann Darracott on 01628 620280.

News from the Heritage Centre

The Centre's new lobby has proved a great success; it has been funded by Biffaward through a scheme involving landfill tax.

A variety of exhibitions continue in the Baylis Gallery on the ground floor; details can be found at www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk. On the first floor, the Grandma Flew Spitfires gallery and Spitfire Simulator continue to be a great draw from individual visitors, families and club visits. Civic Society members who enjoyed the visits to West London Aero Club at White Waltham will love this unique gallery, dedicated to the amazing people of Air Transport Auxiliary.

The new gallery has reached the final stage of the National Heritage Awards, and fingers are crossed that the public vote will go our way; success would bring a prize of £2000 and an appearance on a special BBC TV show.

The 2013 Maidenhead calendar will be on sale in the Heritage Centre gift shop in August and as usual has a wonderful collection of photographs of places in and around Maidenhead.

More details from the Heritage Centre website: www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk.

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 8th September 2012
Heritage Open Days

St Luke's Church, Norfolk Road
 Open 10.00 - 1.00 pm, & 3 - 4 pm.

Tuesday 23rd October 2012
Talk

"Palaces for Pigs and other Beastly Dwellings"
 By Lucinda Lambton. At Liston Hall, Marlow

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2012

Parish Centre in St. Luke's Church, at 7.45 pm.

10th January, 14th February, 13th March, 8th May, 12th June, 10th July, 11th September, 13th November, 11th December

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS FOR 2012

Parish Centre in St. Luke's Church, at 7.45 p.m.

10th April, 9th October

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 21st November 2011 in the Wesley Hall at the Methodist Church at 8.00 pm.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
 of the Newsletter is 13th July 2012.**

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Printer by: **Denwal Press, Park House, Warren Row, Wargrave, Berks, RG10 8QS**
denwalpress.co.uk