



Maidenhead Civic Society NEWS



Issue 3/15

August 2015



What does the town mean to you?

See page 7 for one way you can tell us

Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

The Chairman's Foreword

What's attractive about Maidenhead? When my wife and I first came here it was the riverside that initially caught our eye. It was summer, there were lots of boats on the water and strings of coloured lights, slung from tree to tree, marked the route down to Maidenhead Bridge. When we explored further we found leafy residential suburbs populated with quality homes, bags of character, a decent town centre and an easy commute. We decided to make it our home.

Thirty years on, there is Magna Carta bunting currently decorating the riverside rather than lights (we never saw those again!) but I guess today's new arrivals would be as impressed as we were. The lively state of the local housing market certainly suggests that they are.

But under intense pressure for new development, how long can Maidenhead maintain its appeal?

Settled in their new home, today's new arrivals will be able to appreciate more of their surroundings. They may admire aspects of our rich and varied suburban architecture, the many tree-lined roads, the proximity to tracts of stunning countryside, the walks, views and vistas, as well as using and enjoying the amenities and facilities that our location has to offer. If they venture into the town centre, they'll see cranes and the early signs of an extensive regeneration programme. They'll probably be aware of Crossrail's arrival in four years' time and look forward to an even easier commute.

It's unlikely, however, that they'll be aware that the Council is in the throes of devising a new Local Plan for the Borough or that, in tandem, a Neighbourhood Plan for Maidenhead and Cox Green (MNP) is being drawn up. Together with the Town Centre Area Action Plan (already adopted), these plans will provide the tools – the policies – to help ensure that Maidenhead gets the kind of development it needs and wants.

Neighbourhood Plans were launched by the government as opportunities for communities to shape the development of their area, but they have been panned by some as a cynical attempt to quell NIMBYism and encourage growth.

Despite much effort, the MNP process has failed to engage the public locally. A well-publicised meeting in July attracted only 18 people. The downside of the repeated calls for public participation is that people are suffering "consultation fatigue" and are just switching off.

But it is worth the effort. Neighbourhood Plans may be optional but where they exist they have been used to overturn unwanted planning proposals. Moreover they can help to secure funding for community projects from developer contributions.

So the Civic Society is playing its part in the MNP process. With members on each of the participating topic groups, we want to make sure that Maidenhead remains as appealing to the next generation of new arrivals as it is now.

Bob Dulson

Planning Matters

In our last edition we reported on two major applications which were in the pipeline – and there is no progress to date on either Sportsable or The Landing. The latter is the major scheme for the redevelopment of the King Street/Broadway/Queen Street triangle. Whilst we support the scheme in principle, there remain serious concerns about the fourteen storey height of the two office blocks with frontage onto Broadway. This highlights a double dilemma for the Town Centre - how high to build and just how much office space is too much? It is understood that a planning decision on The Landing will be made in September.

The application to dramatically enlarge the Sportsable facility at Braywick (with associated parking for 250 cars) has gone quiet. There has been some opposition from adjacent facilities, such as Maidenhead Rugby Club and there is some uncertainty about the ongoing development of Braywick (which is Green Belt). There is speculation that the Magnet Leisure Centre will be relocated to Braywick to allow the current site to be developed as part of the policy to introduce more than 2000 dwellings into the Town Centre.

With such a potential inflow of residents – and their cars, there continues to be a need to review parking provision in the town. This was highlighted in our Chairman's message in the last newsletter. More spaces will be required as part of future residential developments. It is a misconception that town centre dwellers do not have vehicles because of their proximity to trains and buses. The last census indicated that car ownership in Oldfield Ward (which includes the Town Centre) is only marginally lower than surrounding wards. Fortunately, the residential element of The Landing does have significant underground parking included in the proposals. Greater residential on street parking will restrict availability of spaces for shoppers and other visitors.

There is an application to provide more parking which is related to the offices component of the proposals for The Landing. Two and a half storeys would be added to the Nicholsons Centre multi storey car park. This would provide 350 spaces for office staff (Mon to Fri) and additional parking for shoppers at weekends. The existing car park will be refurbished and entry and exit arrangements will be reconfigured. We believe that the revamped south elevation of the car park – facing Broadway – is already “dated”, with an angular girder-like surface adornment intended to create some architectural interest. It is hoped that something less obtrusive can be proposed as an alternative. There is a view that a completely new replacement car park is required. Obviously, the car park application will be dependent on the outcome of pending decision on The Landing.

Our monthly Planning Group meetings continued with more than forty applications being considered in detail. Two applications of a similar nature warrant specific comment. There is a proposal to construct four detached houses on the site generated by the demolition of No.3 Westmoreland Road. More than ten years ago permission was refused for the construction of two dwellings in the back garden of the existing property. Furthermore, at 55/57 Lower Cookham Road, there is a further proposal to demolish the two substantial detached dwellings and replace them with eight detached houses. Large areas of residential Maidenhead are characterised by significant houses sitting on large plots. Demolishing one perfectly habitable home to be replaced by four new dwellings may appear an easy (and profitable) way to increase our housing stock. However, there will be a major negative impact on the visual character of the area, and visual intrusion and loss of privacy for existing neighbours. If the trend to squeeze in such developments continued unabated, localities will be unrecognisable from the spacious, leafy residential environment enjoyed today. Furthermore, there is an ecological cost of demolishing and disposing of perfectly good houses. In fact, even the horrible prospect of more back-garden infilling with residential development may be less of an evil. At least the original house is retained and the streetscape preserved.

There has also been an interesting application for a change of use at The Amber Centre on the east side of Oldfield Road.



The Amber Centre, Oldfield Road

Currently occupied by Colourgen, it is intended to relocate Maidenhead Tyres and Exhausts to here from Grenfell Road. There are three sites between Oldacres and the railway embankment/arches on Oldfield Road. All of these sites were identified for

potential change of use in last year's planning exercise by RBWM to propose brownfield sites suitable for residential development. Unit 5 (which is furthest from the railway) now has planning permission for a development of nine houses. The Amber Centre is next door and was an ideal candidate to be next in line for residential use.

However, at July's Development and Control Panel this longer term objective was ignored by councillors who voted 8 to 1 in favour of the tyre retail and fitting change of use. This highlights the dilemma of identifying long term policy objectives for the "greater planning good" – when decisions are then made on the basis of short term expediency. Instead of the intended continuous residential development on the eastern side of Oldfield Road, the new houses will have a tyre and exhaust centre as a neighbour. In fact as this goes to print, an application has been submitted for the residential development (into nine apartments) of the used car site next to the railway arches on Oldfield Road.



The Thames Auto Sales site next to the Amber Centre on Oldfield Road

In spite of the confused thinking illustrated by the above, the Maidenhead and Cox Green Neighbourhood Plan is an essential element in the ongoing regeneration and development of the town. About twenty individuals are currently involved in working groups to analyse various topic areas and make recommendations going forward. Of these twenty people, five are members of Maidenhead Civic Society – so we are well represented! However, the real issue is the lack of input from a wider public base – all those people who sit on the sidelines with their opinions but don't get involved. It is also regrettable that there is little representation from ward

councillors (other than those with a planning remit). The working party for the Neighbourhood Plan is too small and too narrowly based for something so important in determining the town's future.

Finally, an update on the progress of Berkeley Homes application to develop Mill Lane, Taplow (Skindles, the Paper Mill, etc). There has been a further public consultation and the application is now with South Bucks planners. We continue to liaise with other interested parties on the Bucks bank, and all submissions on the proposed scheme are due late July. In summary, we approve of the reduced number of dwellings, although there will be a second phase to build more homes on the area around the (to be removed) gasholder. The public access to the riverside provided at the site of the current National Grid yard (to the north of the Sea Cadets) and the public parking at the same location are also a positive. On the location of the existing mill industrial buildings we support the proposals for the reduced scale of the apartment blocks – a reduction and variation in height, with three blocks reduced to two. The styling of these two blocks has been changed to a more traditional brick-built warehouse style rather than the previous metal and glass. We believe that the proposed roundabout on the A4 (to the east of the VW garage) is a much better traffic management solution than the original traffic lights. We are of course delighted that the footbridge to Ray Mill Island (originally suggested by ourselves) remains a key feature of the proposals.

However there are several aspects of the scheme which remain causes for concern. There remains very limited access to the river frontage of the Thames. Three “viewing points” have been designated, but they have very limited vistas. A fourth “viewing point” is proposed, but over the Jubilee River. Skindles is still proposed to only be a restaurant at the southern end of the current site – with a terrace of seven townhouses (with private river frontage) alongside. We would still prefer to see Skindles retain its role as a boutique hotel or similar. The preservation/renovation of the gentlemen's residences within the site is to be welcomed. Whilst there is a proposal to improve and upgrade the existing boatyard, there is a lack of other river/leisure related activities within the scheme. The new public access and parking area referred to above will have a “cafe cart”. We believe a more permanent facility should be considered. Whilst some may disagree, we still strongly believe that it is a mistake to cut off Mill Lane at the bridge over the Jubilee River. This requirement was part of the original design brief inherited from Barratt Homes, and should be challenged. The desire to stop through traffic using Mill Lane as a cut-through no longer applies with the improved roundabout junction onto the A4. It makes no sense to isolate Taplow itself from a significant new population within the village boundaries.

Martin McNamee

“Maidenhead and Me” - celebrating where we live

The Civic Society marked Civic Day in June with the launch of our art competition *Maidenhead and Me*. The competition aims to get people thinking about the town and what it means to them. Maidenhead MP Theresa May dropped in to lend a hand and architects’ models of new developments planned as part of the town centre regeneration programme were on display to stimulate interest and debate.



Our 2014 under-16s winner Sophia Carter (7) at the launch with Theresa May (centre), Nicholson's Centre manager Jane Wright (right) and other entrants (photo courtesy of the Maidenhead Advertiser)

Artists from 124 Studios in the High Street also joined in the fun in the Nicholson's Centre with an active art project, inviting visitors to record how long they'd lived in Maidenhead. All the paintings, drawings and photographs entered in the competition will be exhibited in Nicholson's from September 26th and have the chance to win up to £250 in prize money.

Entry forms are available from Bovilles Art Shop and the Nicholsons Centre or can be downloaded from www.maidenheadartmarket.org/art-competition-2015.html. There are two categories: Adult and Under-16s. The closing date is September 12.



Models of the various proposed Town Centre developments helped bring in the visitors to the Society's stand



Our first *Maidenhead and Me* last year was a huge success. It attracted more than 60 quality entries and it also won us an award from Civic Voice. Let's hope this year's competition can do even better!

Bob Dulson

Projects

York Stream diverted as part of the Waterways Project

York Stream on Town Moor was diverted into the dry flood relief ditch in February by a barrier near to the difffluence but the stream still had water in it until mid-July.



Barrier in February 2015



.....and end of June 2015

There is some leakage through the barrier but mostly, until recently, the stream flowed due to pumping to dewater the ground so that underground car parks could be built for the current redevelopment of Chapel Arches. Storm drains also discharge into the stream. Pumping has now ended and the stream next to the library on the 19th July was almost dry (see below).



Unfortunately a shoal of fish has been trapped in a pool running between Crown Lane steps and Chapel Arches bridge. The Environment Agency hotline was contacted on 19th July and hopefully will rescue the shoal. Dredging out the stream for the Waterways scheme as of 19th had not yet begun.

We have been monitoring the aquatic fauna from both sides of the barrier and in the flood ditch. In May the flood ditch and to a lesser extent the stream above the barrier showed the greatest faunal diversity, whilst immediately below the barrier there was little life. However, the vegetation in the previously dry flood ditch has grown rapidly due to the more abundant water and now appears to be obstructing flow and decreasing the diversity of life in the ditch.

On the plus side, the treatment of the banks with herbicide in July and October 2014 seems to have created the opportunity for a range of wild flowers to grow.

The following photos trace the changes to the town centre section of York Stream since 1973:



*Left: 1973; York Stream after clearing and with newly grassed banks.
Right: March 2006. In 1987 the Green Way path was created along the eastern bank as a planning gain when the old bus station and cinema site was redeveloped.*



February 2015: Trees felled and herbicide applied July and October 2014



9 July 2015: Wildflowers galore on the banks of York Stream. A temporary car park on the opposite bank to the Green Way is where the Wharf (multi-storied blocks of flats/offices) will be developed. By the 19 July the stream here was only a trickle.

Ann Darracott

Events

HERITAGE OPEN DAY AT BISHAM ABBEY - Thursday 10th September 2015

Bisham Abbey has again agreed for us to open the house for Heritage Open Day (HODS) on Thursday 10th September, from 10am-4pm. Entry is free and refreshments will be available. The Civic Society will be managing this event and in the meantime, if anyone would like to volunteer to be a guide or runner (to spell the guides) for this event, please contact Ann Darracott on Maidenhead 620280. Training will be provided.

JAZZ BY THE RIVERSIDE Saturday 26th September 2015

We're planning another evening of traditional jazz with Cookham's *Fabulous Shirtlifters* at Maidenhead Rowing Club to round of the summer on Saturday 26th September.



If you like a measure of fun in your musical cocktail, the return of the *Shirtlifters* promises to be a treat. Lovely setting, lots of laughter, great music. As before, you are invited to bring your own food to enjoy a picnic-style meal using the tables and chairs provided and there will be a pay bar.

Doors open at 7.30 and the evening begins at 8.00, with a final bow at 11.00 pm. It's an event that's proved extremely popular in the past – both previous occasions sold out – and we are keeping the cost as low as possible at just £12.50 a head. So make a note of the date, ring your friends and send in the booking form at the end of this Newsletter to Mike Copeland **by Tuesday 1st September at the latest** to reserve your places.

Society members may also be interested in the following talks organised by local history and archaeology groups:

Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society (MAHS)

(Talks held the York Centre, 42 York Road, Maidenhead SL6 1SH; 7.30 for 8pm; visitors £2; contact 01628 630924 for more details)

Saturday 5th September: Day trip to Cirencester with guided walk and on to Kelmscott Manor (William Morris's home) £32.

Wednesday 30th September: *The Vikings*, by Barbara Askew

Wednesday 28th October: *Lewis Carroll - His Life and Works* by Roger Askew

Wednesday 25th November: *Vanished London* by Tony King

Marlow Archaeology (MAS)

(Talks held at the Liston Hall, Marlow, SL7 1DD; £4 non-members; contact 01628 523896)

Thursday 10th September, 8pm: *Winchester – a city in the making*, by Ben Ford

Thursday 15th October 2015, 8pm: *The search for Great Marlow manor house – latest discoveries*, by Janet Smith

Thursday 26th November 2015, 8pm: *Members' presentations on local archaeology & history* (informal social evening with light refreshments – visitors welcome).

Archaeology in Marlow (AiM)

(Talks held at the Liston Hall, Marlow, SL7 1DD; £4 non-members; contact 01628 485961)

Thursday 17th September, 8pm: *Buckinghamshire Pots and Potters*, by Mike Farley

Thursday 22nd October, 8pm: *Talk* (to be arranged)

Thursday 5th November, 8pm: *The Thames Discovery Programme and the Archaeology of the Thames Foreshore*, by Elliott Wragg of Museum of London Archaeology

Subscriptions reminder

We would like to remind our members who pay by cheque that your subscriptions are now due. If you would like to change the way you pay to a Standing Order the details are: Lloyds Bank, Sort Code 30-95-36, account number 00277876. Subscriptions have not changed for the coming year but could you please check that your Standing Order is for the correct amount as listed below. Your prompt payment would be appreciated as this helps the Society carry out its good work on behalf of the members and to the benefit of Maidenhead.

Single membership	£12.00
Family Membership (2 members at one address)	£18.00

News from the Heritage Centre

It was good to see several Civic Society members at our marquee in Bridge Gardens for the Magna Carta River Relay. I wonder if you spotted in the parade of boats a 1935 motor cruiser carrying a Maidenhead Heritage Centre banner?

The parade of boats was extremely colourful, as is our summer exhibition **MAIDENHEAD'S THAMES**, which runs until mid-September. You can discover how Maidenhead grew up when the first wooden bridge was built 750 years ago, and how in Victorian and Edwardian times Boulter's Lock was the centre of the summer season on the Thames, with Ascot Sunday on the river the absolute highlight. But how many bathtubs of water would Boulter's take to fill? You can discover all this and more, on our interactive computer which also has plenty of photos and even newsreel film of the great flood of 1947. A visit to this exhibition will really help you to enjoy Maidenhead's beautiful riverside scenery even more. On September 3rd and 8th you can take a *real* voyage of discovery on one of our River Thames Historical Cruises, which allow you to see the river from the river! Enjoy a 5-hour cruise, departing Maidenhead (Riverside Gardens) at 10am returning at 3pm. We cruise gently upstream along beautiful Cliveden Reach, passing Cookham and Marlow until we reach Temple Lock. Going downstream we go past Maidenhead and down to Bray before returning to Riverside Gardens. En-route there is a live commentary describing the river, its wildlife, its boats and its bank-side buildings - not to mention stories about the inhabitants of those riverside buildings! Bring your own picnic and enjoy a fabulous day out. Tickets £20 (£15 special rate for Friends of Maidenhead Heritage Centre). Phone 01628 780555.

AUTUMN EXHIBITION FROM MAIDENHEAD FROM THE AIR 17 September to 19 December 2015

Fascinating aerial photographs of Maidenhead and the surrounding area, dating from the 1920's to the present day. Some of the photographs were taken by Fairey Air Surveys, based at White Waltham for 20 years, while others have been taken by modern drones.

SUMMER HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

If you are looking after little children or grandchildren during the holidays, the Heritage Centre offers *free* family drop-in activity days on 29th July and 5,19,26 and 29 August. Youngsters can raid our dressing up box too - Edwardian lady or Roman centurion?! Full details on our website at www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk/events.

Booking Form

Jazz By The Riverside

at Maidenhead Rowing Club, Taplow

Saturday 26th September 2015

Please cut out and send this completed form,
together with your cheque/postal order,
payable to "MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY", to reach
Mike Copeland, 14 Laburnham Road, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 4DB

not later than 1st September 2015

NAME

ADDRESS

.....

.....POSTCODE

TELEPHONE No.

E-MAIL ADDRESS

(Please include this if you have one)

I wish to book..... places at £12.50: = £

Please treat any profit on this event as a Gift Aid Donation (please tick).....

(You must pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your donation)

If you have any problems or for last minute cancellations, please contact Mike Copeland without delay on 01628 634181 or mobile 07770 421221

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Dates for your Diary

Tuesday 11 th August 2015 Outing	Visit to Stonor Park, nr Henley 1.45 pm at Stonor Park.
Thursday 10 th September 2015 Event	Heritage Open Day Bisham Abbey & All Saints Church, Bisham. 10am-4pm.
Saturday 26 th September 2015 Event	Maidenhead and Me; presentation of prizes by Theresa May MP. Nicholsons Centre.
Saturday 26 th September 2015 Social Event	“Jazz by the Riverside” with the <i>Fabulous Shirtlifters</i> Maidenhead Rowing Club, 7.30 for 8.00pm

CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

President of the Trustees	John McIntosh, 26 Harvest Hill Road, SL6 2QQ	633259
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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2015

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

13th January, 10th February, 10th March, 12th May, 9th June, 7th July, 1st September, 10th November, 8th December

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS FOR 2015

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

14th April, 13th October

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 18th November 2015 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 9th October 2015**

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