



# Maidenhead Civic Society

Estd. 1960

# NEWS

Issue 3/22

August 2022



*An oil rig next to Waitrose? No – it's the soon-to-be Cooper Square  
(see page 7 for comment)*

Visit our website: [www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk](http://www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk)

# The Chairman's Page

Civic Trust's prime purpose when founded in 1957 was to improve the quality of new and historic buildings and public spaces, thereby improving the quality of urban life.

**Civic societies** campaign to improve places, from housing and high streets to climate change and community engagement. They champion the importance of these issues to decision makers and opinion formers; and in doing so they aim to improve the places where people live, work and relax.

**Civic societies** promote and celebrate the best of what is inherited from the past and what is developed for the future. They are a fundamental source of civic pride. This work brings benefits to the whole community and not just to those who are members of civic societies.

**Maidenhead Civic Society** was founded in 1960 to provide a considered community voice on urban planning in the town. I believe our role is still as relevant today as it was 62 years ago, even more so: Preserving the best, improving the rest, making Maidenhead a better place.

In recent years, however, changes of planning policy and working practices in local government have challenged our traditional methods of engagement. Whereas we used to benefit from a decent rapport with the council – regular meetings with planners and ready access to officers and members – today we consider ourselves fortunate if we receive a reply to our email.

The reasons, of course, are plain. Budgetary cuts, efficiency savings, and fewer resources mean staff don't have the time. But at the same time, councils are being urged to ensure they include all demographics when engaging with the public. Consequently, local authorities have turned to technology and the internet, which is fine in principle. However, this has led to an unremitting tide of consultations. As we went to press, there were eight on the go in Maidenhead! And all too often they comprise leading or multiple-choice questions, leaving no space for considered opinion. A council employee told me recently: "If we ask open questions, people just scratch their heads." So no suggestions and no discussion.

And what about the results? Well, a consultation on its corporate plan by RBWM last September drew responses from just 0.3% of residents. And Bucks Council fared little better after asking people what they would like to see in their Local Plan. Only 0.6% responded

Civic Voice, which replaced the Civic Trust as the umbrella body for civic societies in 2009, has an ongoing live poll of member societies which asks:

## How often do you think your views are taken into account in planning decisions?

These are the current results:

- We wouldn't know, they never feedback! 32.26%
- Sometimes 29.03%
- Never taken into consideration 23.39%
- More often than not we are listened to 12.5%
- We are always listened to 2.82%

As I enter the final furlong of my tenure as chairman of the Civic Society, I ask the council one last favour: **Cut consulting, start listening.**

*Bob Dulson*

## Planning Matters

In our last Newsletter we reported on our objection to the application to build a terrace of three town houses on public amenity open space in **Ribstone Road**. This site had been speculatively acquired at auction and any additional residential development would result in the loss of amenity for existing residents and directly impact the privacy and access of those properties closest to the site. Thankfully, a common-sense planning decision has been made to refuse the application, and it is to be hoped that there is no chance of any appeal being upheld. The auction of such pieces of public space and grass verge continues – in some cases with computer images provided of potential dwellings suitable for the site. It is to be hoped that such speculative and intrusive infilling is not permitted by the planners.

Another application which has been refused is for the demolition of **Culpeppers** at 53 Lower Cookham Road (LCR) to which we had objected. This is a substantial plot in the Riverside area which currently hosts a large bungalow with a detached ancillary garden house to the rear. It was proposed to create a terrace of four 2.5-storey town houses along the LCR frontage, with an additional detached house in similar style to the rear, accessed from The Avenue. The site is situated in Flood Zone 3. The height, bulk and mass of the main block of four dwellings was unacceptable and the proposed dwelling to the rear had access issues historically. Furthermore there was no bat survey submitted with the application. Overall, it was regarded as overdevelopment of the site and out of character with the surrounding area. This is a significant decision, because the potential intense redevelopment of large plots in Riverside would detrimentally impact the character of the neighbourhood.

Two applications of note have recently been permitted. For many years there have been applications relating to **Zaman House and Awan House** in Church Road in the Fisheries, and these have featured regularly in our newsletter. Fortunately, the earlier proposal to demolish these adjacent substantial detached properties to create 16 flats

has been withdrawn. The most recent scheme is for six houses in the form of three pairs of very grand semis. Although not really in character with the Fisheries, this is a great improvement on two blocks of flats. It has taken nearly a year for permission to be granted, and we were surprised and disappointed that approval was ultimately granted at planning officer level. Such a long standing and contentious development site should have been at least called in for the Development and Planning Panel. Subsequent applications and modifications for the site only relate to the colour of brick finishes and the internal layout of the dwellings.

In the February Newsletter we referred to the change of use and refurbishment of the first floor of **129 Bridge Road** - the defunct Barclays Bank. We objected because all three proposed flats did not achieve the minimum Nationally Described Space Standard. However, permission has been granted for the scheme to proceed.

There are three significant applications currently in the pipeline. The most concerning is for 330 dwellings and a 3-form entry primary school at **Spencers Farm**. This piece of Green Belt has been released for development in the Borough Local Plan. There remain issues with the poor and limited access to the site and the number of vehicular movements, the number and mix of dwellings and the size of the school – the largest primary in Maidenhead, until a 4-form entry primary is built as part of the redevelopment of the Golf Course. Indeed, will we need both?

### **Our formal response to Planning Applications 22/01537 and 22/01540 – Land at Spencers Farm**

“It is accepted that this Green Belt site has been identified for residential development within the local Borough Plan. However, our concerns about the site (as highlighted in our BLP consultation comments of December 2019) continue in three main areas: the vulnerability of the site to flooding, the unsatisfactory location of the single access to the site and the proposed scale of development on the site.

Firstly, the flood risk associated with the site is well recognised and the proposed earthworks, attenuating ponds and additional drainage outlined in 22/01450 are evidence of the effort which is required to mitigate against flood issues. The development will be concentrated towards the west of the site on higher ground and the application refers to the provision of surface drainage. However, the eastern section of the site is prone to ground water flooding which will only be exacerbated by the eastwards flow of surface water off the built up areas to the west. We await further assessment of the proposals from the Environment Agency who are statutory consultees in such matters.

Our second concern relates to access. It is proposed to have only one access point from Gardner Road/Cookham Road near Aldebury Road – within 100 metres of the hump backed railway bridge to the west. Visibility over the bridge when approaching from the west is very restricted. There is a proposed second access point for emergency vehicles via Westmead. However, it is evident that the provision of only one poorly sited access point to service 330 homes and a three-form entry primary school will create road safety issues and parking congestion especially



during school drop off and pick up times. A development of this magnitude requires a second access – even to the west onto Maidenhead Road – although this is complicated by the railway line. It is noted that the planning application refers to the site address as Summerleaze Road, but the location is presumably too far removed for an access from the southeast.



*The proposed Spencers Farm development area is outlined in red. The developer's initial proposals can be found on their website at [www.spencers-farm.co.uk](http://www.spencers-farm.co.uk)*

The scale of the development is our third concern. 330 homes is excessive and there are too many flats within the proposal. It is accepted that a number of flats will be required to deliver affordable homes (which we welcome) but with the oversupply of flats in the town centre it is felt that the provision of yet more open market flats is undesirable in this location. The choice of this site to provide a three-form entry primary school is illogical. It will be situated to the north east extremity of the town,



and will be far larger than is required to serve the families of the nearby new homes. There will be many school run journeys by parents living to the south with a great deal additional mileage and parking congestion. This is especially the case during afternoon pick up, which requires parents to park up for longer rather than just drop off as in the mornings. It is noteworthy that the afternoon school run traffic movements are not recorded in the Traffic Analysis submitted with the application because they occur outside “rush hour”. It should also be noted that this will be the only three-form entry primary school in the Royal Borough with up to 600 pupils and staff in a geographically remote location, with difficult access and parking. Is a school of this size required in NE Maidenhead when another is proposed as part of the SW Maidenhead 2000 plus dwellings development of the Golf Course?

It is noted that this site is a missing link of the Millennium Walk and consideration should be given to incorporating this footpath in the landscaping and layout of the site.

If “Extraordinary Special Circumstances” have been proved to include this Green Belt site within the BLP then the scale of the residential development including the mix of flats, the provision of a second road access and the size of the primary school should be reviewed.”

A more satisfactory large-scale **Spring Hill** development is proposed by Berkeley Homes to the south west of the Golf Course, bounded by Harvest Hill Road, Kimber’s Lane, A404M and Manor Lane.



*The **Spring Hill** development will cover the hatched area shown above.*

214 new dwellings are proposed in a satisfactory mix of house types, with some low-rise flats including affordable housing. The overall design and spatial layout is impressive, with an “eco” area being created to create a buffer between the development and the road noise of the A404M. It is to be hoped that the Cala Homes development of the Golf Course can achieve the same standard.

There is already permission granted for change of use of **Mattel House** on the Vanwall Industrial Estate. 28 residential units have been permitted within the existing 2-storey block, with plentiful parking provision. There is now an alternative proposal to demolish and replace with 91 flats in blocks of four or five storeys and only one parking space per flat. If RBWM parking standards for 2-bed/4-person flats are to be achieved then a further 52 parking spaces are required. The proposed redevelopment is too large and in a non-residential setting. The developers, Bellway, have stated that if the latest application is unsuccessful then they will implement the permitted change of use to 28 units. It should be noted that Bellway are the same developers that applied for change of use of Liberty House and Moorbridge Court – the two office blocks on Moorbridge Road to the north of Waitrose. Once change of use was obtained they moved onto a scheme to demolish and replace with blocks up to ten storeys high, which is now manifested as the under-construction eyesore that will be known as Cooper Square (see front cover).

We are currently submitting comments on two Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which have been published for consultation. **SW Maidenhead Draft SPD** primarily relates to the proposed redevelopment of the Maidenhead Golf Course site. Although our final submission has not been finalised there are several issues that give cause for concern in terms of housing, the total number of dwellings; the mix of family houses to flats; the mix of tenures (including various types of affordable housing) and the building heights of those blocks to the north of the site, closest to the railway station. In terms of infrastructure and layout there seems to be inadequate provision of access points to the site, and poor vehicular permeability within the site. In addition to the occupants of 2,300 homes – say 6,000 people – there are more than 2,000 children, plus teachers and staff, attending the two large schools within the site as well as a substantial health facility. In spite of the proximity to town, the traffic generated by the site will be substantial and appears largely to access and egress via a partially upgraded Harvest Hill Road. The provision of a “Green Spine” to encourage walkers and cyclists will not diminish car use – except for visits to town or the station. The “local centre” to the south of the site will struggle to survive, when the town centre is so close to the north. It is the very proximity to the town that makes the site appealing as a development opportunity. There are many other areas of concern: drainage, landscaping, maintenance of public realm, bus services etc.

There has also been a consultation on improvements to the **A308 Corridor** which concluded at the end of July. This is an attempt to address the increased traffic resulting from the regeneration of the town centre. Interestingly, it fails to resolve the issue that both routes eastwards from the Golf Course site – Harvest Hill Road and Shoppenhangers Road – do not facilitate right-hand turns for southbound traffic onto the A308 Braywick Road.

And as we go to print another SPD has been published for consultation - **Tall Buildings**. Although required by the Borough Local Plan, surely the horse has bolted as far as building heights are concerned.....

## **RBWM Authority Monitoring Report - Year Ending March 21**

### **Summary of Housing Development**

The Annual Authority Monitoring Report for the year to March 2021 has been published by RBWM since our last Newsletter. The report was published in April this year, and as always has the disadvantage of being one year in arrears in terms of data. The main highlights are as follows:

- **Total number of completions:** The figure for 20/21 was 328 dwellings, which is surprisingly low, and will probably be blamed on Covid. In fact, the number is down from 705 in 18/19 and 404 in 19/20. Nine years' figures are recorded and the previous lowest figure was back in 13/14 when there were 360 completions. This figure does not reflect the perceived level of activity, and is all the more surprising when it is remembered that 72 dwellings in the Redrow "The Loftings" development (Vicus Way) were carried over from the figures for 19/20. This deferral was used as an explanation for the figure of only 404 in the 19/20 report. The figure for this year would be only 256 if The Loftings carry over is netted out.
- **Outstanding Permissions:** Only 553 new dwellings were granted permission during the year 20/21. This compares with 1,175 granted permission the year before – a significant decrease. The number of outstanding, unimplemented per-missions has increased to 3,094 from 2,902 in the previous year. Of the 3,094 there were 1,385 dwellings under construction, compared with 1,800 in 19/20. It is interesting that of the 1,800 in the pipeline for the previous year only the reported 328 were completed in 20/21. Where are all these pipeline developments going? It should also be noted that the number of unimplemented planning permissions continues to represent the equivalent of more than four years of the annual planning target of 712.
- **Housing Type and Mix:** Of the total 328 new dwellings 267 were flats – a percentage of 81%. Having previously peaked at 84% in 18/19 it dropped to 68% in 19/20. We are now back above 80% flats with only 61 houses being constructed, which is half the number of 128 houses for the previous year. In fact, 61 houses is the lowest figure for nine years; the peak was 236 houses completed in 15/16. In terms of number of bedrooms 38% were 1-bed, 50% were 2-bed and 9% were 3-bed. This shift towards smaller dwelling units has been consistent over the past three years and is a reflection of the increased number of flats as opposed to family homes. The demand for more family houses remains unsatisfied and positive action is required to establish a more balanced housing stock.



- **Geographical Development:** Although the Maidenhead Neighbourhood Plan Area has not been formally recognised, the report shows that 202 net completions took place in Maidenhead – 62% of the total. Windsor was next with 14% followed by Bray at 7%. This is similar to previous years and highlights the focus of development on Maidenhead.
- **Previously Developed Land:** The percentage of dwellings on PDL was the highest for nine years at 93.7%. The balance was on back garden infilling, although only 22 such dwellings was the lowest for nine years. For the only time in nine years there was no dwelling completed on a Greenfield site.
- **Green Belt:** In addition to the development of a 23-bed nursing unit for Thames Hospice on Windsor Road, there were 30 dwelling units completed on Green Belt – 8.5% of the total. The highest number of units on Green Belt was 140 (26%) in 17/18. This reflected the permission for development of the former Park and Ride at Stafferton Way, which was “classified” as Green Belt.
- **Conversion of Offices to Residential:** Of the total 328 dwellings completed 62 (19%) were office conversions. This is a more modest level. This figure peaked in 18/19 when 216 units were converted (30.6%). It is understood that this occurred largely in Windsor Town Centre and partially accounted for the very high number of completions and flats in that year.
- **Affordable Housing:** The RBWM continues to struggle to achieve the target of 30% “affordable” housing, although the reported figure of 26% for 20/21 is an improvement and the highest percentage for nine years. The number of affordable dwellings completed was 85 units – nearly all Shared Ownership. In 13/14 there were 84 units (23%) delivered, the majority rented. Recent applications have shown that there may be a change in emphasis from Shared Ownership back to Social/Affordable Rental, which is a reflection of the un-attainability of the funding requirements associated with Shared Ownership.

### **Key Issues:**

- Only 328 new dwellings were completed in 20/21 – 46% of annual target of 712.
- Proportion of flats at 81% remains too high – more family homes required.
- There is still no type/mix analysis provided of the 3094 outstanding permissions.
- With 3,094 permissions in the pipeline only 328 were delivered – 11%.
- The delivery of “affordable” housing remains a challenge.
- With 62% of completed units in Maidenhead, **a Neighbourhood Plan should be a priority.**

*Martin McNamee*

## High Street Improvements

Much of our focus has been on the development of the Maidenhead Waterways area, and also on the proposed large housing schemes on the edge of the town centre. But changes are being slowly made in less glamorous places, such as the middle section of the High Street. Many readers may not be aware of these, sometimes subtle changes. Here's one example: the former "Poundstretcher" store sandwiched between the Chinese restaurant and the HSBC bank building.



*As it was until a few months ago*

*Partial demolition and refurbishment now in progress, by Sorbon Estates (part of the Shanly Group)*



*And as it will – hopefully! – look when completed*

*Editor*



# Heritage & Environment

## THE CIVIC SOCIETY PLATINUM JUBILEE BENCH

We were hoping members joining our projected walk to Battlemead Common on 17<sup>th</sup> July would have been able to have a look at the new bench on the river near to Battlemead Common – our contribution to commemorating Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Unfortunately the walk had to be postponed because of the record-breaking hot conditions. Here's what they missed seeing:



*The new bench and a close-up of the inscription.*

Given by Maidenhead Civic Society  
to mark H.M. the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022



*The bench has been sited to give a wonderful view along Cliveden Reach*



The bench was made by the Rustic Wood Company, of Pembrey, Carmarthenshire, who also inscribed it. It was installed by ANB Groundcare on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May using a technique that secures the bench to the site and prevents theft (see below).

*The photos show the metal pins inserted into the legs of the bench and the four position holes. Water is poured onto the quick-dry cement in the position holes. Once the cement sets removal of the bench becomes difficult.*



*Bottom right: our Chairman, Bob Dulson (whose idea it was), with Dave and Alistair Hampshire of ANB Groundcare*

To help fund the bench we used a donation of £500 given to us many years ago by Val Mason, a former member of the Society, in memory of her mother. The only stipulation was that it should be something related to the river, which the bench certainly is. It is being well used.



As it happens, Val, who now lives in Bath, recently visited Maidenhead and we were able to direct her to the bench and she kindly had this photo taken for us.



*Val Mason on our Platinum Jubilee bench*

## **MAIDENHEAD BOUNDARY STONES – RECENT DISCOVERIES**

Readers may know that to mark its new boundary in 1934 the Borough of Maidenhead placed Cornoloth stones at strategic intervals bearing the legend “**MB 1934**”. Two “lost” boundary stones have been recently re-discovered.

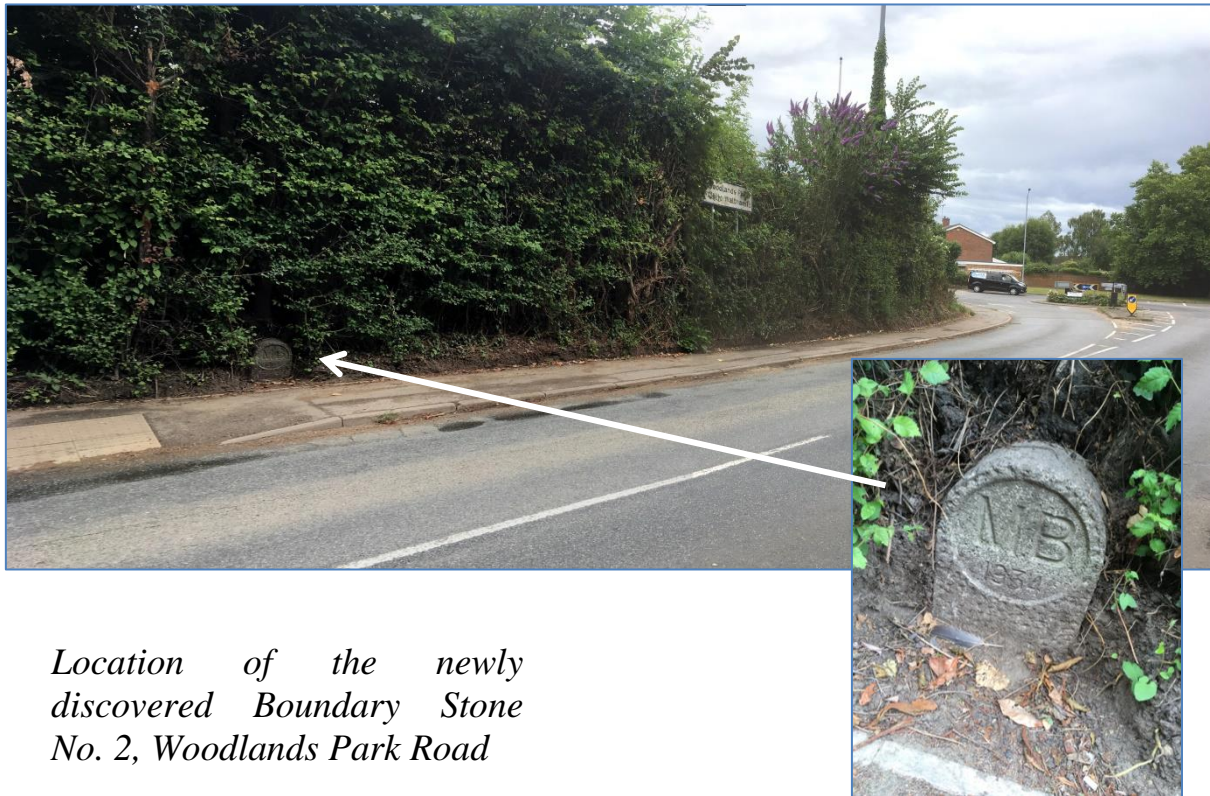
### **Boundary Stone No. 2 (BS2)**

In June the Society was contacted by Cox Green Parish Council asking whether we had any more information about a stone marker, dated 1934. This had been uncovered by a community-minded local resident who had cleared, at his own expense of time and effort, overgrowth of vegetation on Woodlands Park Road that had been obstructing the footway. The obstruction had led to pedestrians having to step into the road to pass each other.

Recognising the marker as one of the Boundary Stones, we put the Parish Council in touch with Maidenhead Bridge Rotary Club who, apart from running the annual

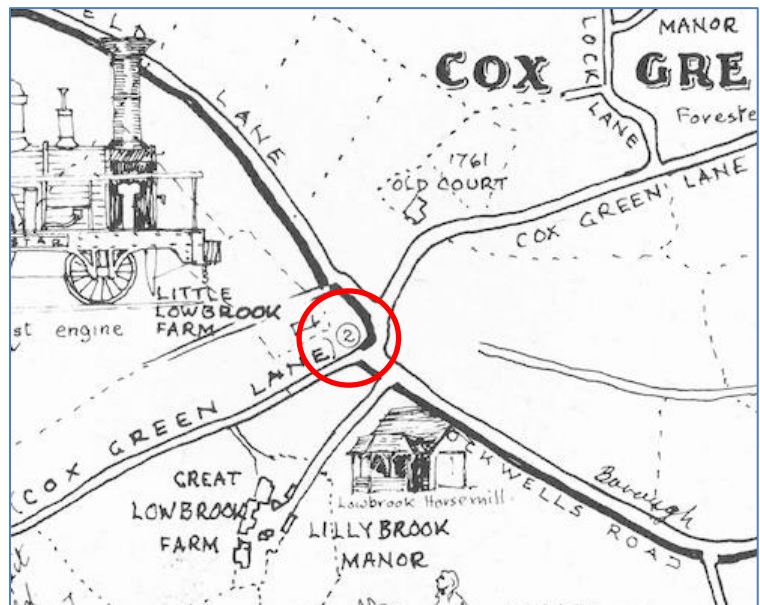


charity Boundary Walk, publish every year a map showing the location of all the boundary stones. However, the 2021 map did not show a stone in this position.



*Location of the newly discovered Boundary Stone No. 2, Woodlands Park Road*

Research by Eddie Piekut of Maidenhead Bridge Rotary Club found out that BS2 had evidently been drawn in the wrong place on all their recent Boundary Walk maps. Fortunately, a map by the late Michael Bayley – a long-time Society member – showed its correct position and the new map produced by Rotary Bridge for the 2022 walk will reflect this. Recent Boundary Walk maps had located BS2 on Ockwells Road, so no wonder we couldn't find it!!



*Detail from one of Michael Bayley's historic maps showing the correct position of BS2. The map shows it near the road junction with Ockwells Road. Construction of Shoppenhangers Road, after the covenant was lifted in 1967, led to the re-location of the main junction further north; it seems the western limb of Cox Green Lane became Woodlands Park Road.*



### **Boundary Stone No. 29 (BS29)**

The Society takes a particular interest in Guards Club Park as it was our 1977 Silver Jubilee project. So we were delighted when two members, walking on Guards Club Island a while ago, found a boundary stone that had evidently been uncovered when recent tree work led to overlying vegetation being cleared.



*Boundary Stone No. 29  
“found” again on Guards  
Club Island*



On two previous occasions the Society was instrumental in locating and re-installing misplaced or hidden boundary stones – those at BS25 and BS26, both on the banks of the White Brook on Battlemead Common. Erosion of the banks of the brook had led to the boundary stones falling out of position; in the case of BS2 and BS29 overgrowth of vegetation was the culprit. Maybe there are more to find!!!

*Ann Darracott*

# Dates for your Diary

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022  
**Society display**

**The Town Show**

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022  
**AGM**

**Civic Society AGM**  
Venue TBA. 7.45 for 8.00pm.

## MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY

Patron                      The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

### KEY CONTACTS

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### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2022

All meetings are online via Zoom until further notice

11<sup>th</sup> January, 8<sup>th</sup> February, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 7<sup>th</sup> June, 12<sup>th</sup> July, 13<sup>th</sup> September, 11<sup>th</sup> October, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 13<sup>th</sup> December

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 8.00 pm

**The closing date for copy for the next issue  
of the Newsletter is 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

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