

Maidenhead Civic Society Estd. 1960

NEWS

Issue 3/25 Aug 2025



The "Boundary Stone Seekers & Movers" have been out and about again (see page 11 for the story)

Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

Chairman's Piece

The biggest area of concern locally with the redevelopment of Maidenhead Town Centre is the lack of parking. In the *Maidenhead Advertiser* dated 18th July, they refer to the demolition of Nicholson's Centre with the proposed re-development and associated car parking. A meeting has already taken place between members of Maidenhead Civic Society and Areli, who are re-developing the Nicholsons Quarter proposals. Maidenhead Civic Society have already raised significant objections to the lack of car parking being proposed for general use by shoppers visiting the town centre.

According to Will Robinson from Areli, the Council has agreed on the parking provision for the new development. The new development is only providing 100 spaces for shoppers and 21 spaces for blue badge holders, which is plainly ridiculous, as the previous Broadway Car Park had 734 parking spaces before its demolition. The Officers and Council administration must rethink this stupid idea of providing less car parking if they want residents to use the town centre, or their re-development proposals will become a white elephant and the town centre will die.

Anybody with a modicum of common sense will tell you that for a successful town centre, it has to be vibrant, and you must increase the footfall into the town centre. Residents and visitors use their cars to come into the centre to do their shopping, and, for that, you need to provide adequate car parking. The developers obviously looked at the temporary surface level car parking, on the former Broadway Car Park site and thought 100 spaces were all that was needed. The lead member for parking likes surface-level car parks; a multi-storey car park is what is needed and should at least provide 800 - 1000 spaces for locals and visitors to keep the town centre vibrant.

The new Lexicon development facility in Bracknell is provided with 'The Avenue' car park, providing 1224 spaces, and it is quite obvious to anybody visiting Bracknell that it has been designed with larger spaces for modern vehicles and is attracting people to the town centre. Retailers will only come to set-up their business, if they know the footfall is going to be present.

Meanwhile, the officials at the Council who make these decisions need to take a close look and see where success is happening elsewhere, and at least provide sufficient spaces to attract people to the town centre for the greater good of the community.

Derek Wilson

Planning Matters

The most significant planning issue in recent weeks has been the formal submission of the Areli application for the town centre redevelopment known as **Nicholsons Quarter**. This was covered in some depth in our last newsletter and subsequently we submitted a letter of objection which is reproduced below. The dramatic reduction in shopper/visitor parking provision is the main concern. Following our objection Areli requested a meeting to clarify the "rationale" behind the reduced parking capacity when compared with their permitted 2021 application. It transpires that the reduction has been agreed with RBWM – although it is not clear if this was with elected representatives or with planning officers. A separate piece **Parking – Planning a Decline for Maidenhead** is featured elsewhere in the newsletter. It is anticipated that the submission of the latest Nicholsons application will be made in September.

A number of new build residential blocks have recently been approved. As anticipated **West Street** will have a 6-storey block (overlooking the Portland Arms) and a further 7-storey block further west on the old Wilkinsons site. Out of town on the site of **Highways House**, **Norreys Drive** two new residential blocks have also been permitted. Another major development to receive approval is the Taylor Wimpey scheme for 225 dwellings on land **South of Kimbers Lane**. This is the site surrounding a pre-existing sewage works which was discussed in our last edition.

You may recall that the refused development of a 5 to 6-storey block on Land South of Stafferton Way was awaiting the result of an appeal. This site is the car storage lot alongside York Stream – to the east of Lidl. The proposed scheme is quite inappropriate for this site – and it is good to report that the appeal has been dismissed. With high housing targets and the increased drive to get applications through the planning process, it is encouraging that the appeal process does occasionally offer some protection. Currently, there is a policy to apply a "tilted balance" when considering new applications and any objection must be on the evidence of "significant and demonstrable harm" in the event of permission being granted. This can be hard to establish and represents a swing in favour of the developer in line with central government policy.

In terms of significant new applications, it has been relatively quiet over the past three months. In fact, three applications of interest have all been previously submitted in previous months or even years. There is a large double residential plot at **31 to 33 Belmont Road.** Since 2007 there have been numerous applications relating to this site – which have featured in many previous newsletters. Although several schemes have been permitted, nothing has been constructed to date. In summary, there have been 9 refusals, 8 permissions and 4 appeals – of which 2 were allowed and 2 dismissed. The latest application is for 6 dwellings in 2 terraces of 3 houses. - 2 x 2 bed and 4 x 3 bed. The houses have reasonable amenity space to the rear, but the layout is cramped to the front of the development, allowing only one

parking space per dwelling. The application asserts that the site enjoys "good accessibility" so that only one space is deemed necessary. However, RBWM parking policy requires 2 spaces per dwelling and clearly any visitors etc. will be required to find nearby on-street parking which is very limited. It is to be hoped that adequate parking can be created on site so that at last this plot is satisfactorily developed and added to Maidenhead's housing stock – which is long overdue.



The double vacant plot on Belmont Road

Secondly, the disused convenience store **Best One, 3a Altwood Road** has resubmitted plans for change of use, this time to 3 residential units. Previously, an application for 6 sub-standard studio units had been refused. The revised plans are for 3×1 bed units and much more acceptable and adequately sized, although there is no car parking or amenity space because of the limitations of the site. Nevertheless, it does create 3 additional dwelling units from a dormant site.

The third application to be submitted is for Prior Approval for change of use at **Thames House, 17 Marlow Road**. This office block was permitted change of use to create 40 dwellings back in 2021. Subsequently, there were two applications to add a further two new floors with additional units -33 dwellings in 2022 and 27 dwellings in 2023. These applications were refused with the 2023 application also being dismissed on appeal. It is presumed that the 2021 permission has lapsed because a new application to create 40 dwellings has been submitted. It is good to report that all of the dwelling units are well-sized and as an ex-office block there is adequate parking provision.



Thames House, in red, on Marlow Road

Finally, a word about the **RBWM Authority Monitoring Report** (AMR) for the year ending March 2024. We normally summarise the data in this quarter of the newsletter. Usually published in May the following year, the latest AMR has yet to be published in mid-July – apparently due to "high workloads and staffing shortages" at RBWM. This much anticipated report will indicate all the available data on housing – number of completed dwellings, mix of flats and houses, number of bedrooms and delivery (or otherwise) of affordable housing. It also reports how many applications are under construction and in the pipeline. It is one of the key pieces of evidence and guidance to the Borough and interested parties such as Maidenhead Civic Society. Delayed publication makes the information less relevant and reduces the ability of Planning Policy to adjust to the trends and other data within the report.

Comments on Application 25/01099 – Nicholsons Centre

"This is a hybrid planning application for comprehensive mixed use redevelopment of the site and is a revision of the previous application (20/01251) which was permitted in 2021. It is intended to reflect modifications which have been discussed with RBWM planning department and/or elected representatives. Whilst there are some identifiable improvements these are outweighed by significant areas of concern.

This proposed scheme does not represent the hoped-for regeneration of Maidenhead Town Centre. It is primarily a very large residential development with a number of small retail units at street level, some open space and an office block. The failure to address the needs of the "wider" town centre is highlighted by the abject failure to provide adequate parking for shoppers and other visitors.

The positive aspects are:

- A major investment in the future of Maidenhead.
- A reduction in the height of the "landmark" tower block from 25 to 20 storeys
 although the Fire Statement refers to "ground floor plus 20 storeys".
- The introduction of a second staircase in the landmark block
- An increase in the public realm open space from 1.3 acres to 1.65 acres.
- The introduction of areas to dwell and linger.
- The level of streetscaping including the introduction of 102 trees (hopefully adequately mature).
- The provision of 900 cycle spaces will there be adequate routing /access for cyclists?
- The reduction of Senior Living units to 101 is more realistic.

Now for the areas of concern:

- The total number of 856 dwelling units (including 101 Senior Living) is excessive.
- The mix of 1-bed flats within the accommodation schedule should be reviewed. Maidenhead has an oversupply of 1-bed flats. More 2- and 3-bed are required.
- With the prevailing height of the blocks there will be a lack of natural light at street level and the likelihood of wind tunnel effect.
- The landmark block would be preferable with mixed use rather than solely residential.
- The town will lose any area of covered shopping and several larger retail units.
- With the introduction of 55 smaller retail units there is a risk of insufficient small retail operations being available.
- There will be over-dependence on café/restaurant/other hospitality which is already established in the Chapel Arches area and in One Maidenhead.
- There will be an ongoing reduction in "Working from Home" in the years to come. A thriving town centre requires a mix of economic activity. It is concerning that the office element has been reduced to one block of 128,600 sqft.
- There is no evidence of public toilets within the scheme. Currently these are provided within the existing Nicholsons Centre.

- There will be a need for a town centre Post Office to be maintained during and on completion of the project.
- More community activity should be provided as a focal point in the public realm especially within Nicholas Winton Square.
- The town centre will endure severe disruption during the 5-year build. A detailed Construction Management Plan is essential to mitigate the impact of the building activity on the functioning of the town during this extended period.
- There will be a need for contractual agreement between RBWM and the developer regarding the long-term/ongoing maintenance and security of the public realm.
- PARKING: The previous scheme permitted in 2021 included the provision of 885 spaces within a new MSCP to service the town centre. This was primarily a replacement for the (now demolished) Broadway Car Park. It would serve the wider town centre as well as the newly developed Nicholsons Quarter. This current application has reduced the number of spaces to 452. Only 100 spaces are intended for public use, of which 21 are for Blue Badge holders. Thus only 79 are park-and-pay of which a number are electric-charging bays. The proposed MSCP has a significantly reduced footprint with an average of 23 spaces per level over 20 levels. Levels 7 to 20 are restricted to residents/offices. The ground level does provide a much-needed ShopMobility Hub, but public parking ceases at Level 6.
- The developers have supported the reduction in parking provision by reference to anticipated declining car usage in the future. It will surely not be on this scale. There is a grave danger that with five years of major building disruption and ongoing inadequate parking the town will suffer and not recover when the redevelopment is complete. When The Landing (now One Maidenhead) was granted permission, it was identified that the underprovision of parking spaces within that development would be alleviated by taking 60+ spaces of contract parking in the MSCP. What has happened to that arrangement?
- The design of the new MSCP is also of concern. The proposed coloured brick lower elevations are combined with metallic pineapple effect above, which is very intrusive, considering the proximity to the Queen Street Conservation Area. A tenuous link with the long defunct Pineapple Brewery at Dorney is a distraction. The whole MSCP element of this application requires a rethink. More land area is required for a larger footprint to create a substantial increase in shopper/visitor parking capacity.

We are surprised if such a reduction in parking provision has been agreed in discussion with RBWM. With the failure to provide an adequate parking element to this application we have no option but to object to the scheme".

Martin McNamee

PARKING - PLANNING A DECLINE FOR MAIDENHEAD

If the Nicholsons Quarter development is the infamous "final piece of the jigsaw" for Maidenhead Town Centre, then the resultant outcome in 2031 (or thereabouts) is how things are going to be going forward for decades. The balance between retail, residential, employment, hospitality and other town centre activity will determine the success and vibrancy of future Maidenhead. Utilities such as water, electricity, telecoms and data support are taken for granted. Traffic flow, access arrangements for cars/deliveries and pedestrianisation will be finessed – but what is the status of parking?

There are many uncertainties regarding car use in Maidenhead in the future. Will the number of vehicle journeys be reduced, will travel by bike become more commonplace, will the explosion of residents living in the town centre result in reduced car ownership per capita, will in-bound commuting be by train or car?

Bracknell has a relatively successful town centre primarily focussed on the recently refurbished Lexicon Shopping Centre. The total number of parking spaces is more than 2,750 – with the majority in three Multi Storey Car Parks (MSCPs). The Lexicon MSCP itself has 1,224 spaces.

Bracknell Forest has a population 124,000 while RBWM has 156,000 in total. Of course, there are two town centres in the RBWM area and Maidenhead itself has only 67,000. The Maidenhead retail offer will never have the pull of the Lexicon, but Maidenhead will have many more residents living in the town centre and a much higher level of hospitality activity – especially an upcoming nighttime economy. So how does Maidenhead compare for parking?

If you exclude Waitrose, then Maidenhead's prime car parking asset is Hines Meadow MSCP. RBWM maintain that this is underutilised. According to the RBWM website, the total capacity of Hines Meadow is 1,280 spaces. In any case, the top floor is given over to contract (season ticket) parking and much of the lower ground floor is reserved for those with specific permits. The contract parking element of the Bracknell figures is not known. Hines Meadow requires an upgrade with improved lighting, lifts that work, public toilets, better signage and improved pedestrian access.

To date previous residential development in the town centre has seen the loss of three surface car parks: the Town Hall, St Ives Road and most significantly Magnet Leisure Centre. The development of the Magnet site has removed the car parking provision previously enjoyed by the thousands of patients of the two GP practices and the pharmacy at The Wilderness Centre. This was immediately identified as an issue at the planning stage but unfortunately not addressed. An action group is still trying to resolve the difficulties being experienced by staff and patients alike.

The ongoing development of the town will see four more surface car parks disappear. West Street and Grove Road are both scheduled for removal. Sorbon Estates operate a contract parking facility on the site of the old Bowling Club on York Road. When the site is ultimately developed all these vehicles will be displaced. Finally, the temporary car park on the site of the now demolished Broadway MSCP will become part of the Nicholsons Quarter scheme.

Ultimately, we will be left with Hines Meadow and whatever MSCP is delivered within the Nicholsons scheme. Areli maintain that the reduced parking element has been agreed with RBWM. The original proposal was for 885 spaces in the application permitted in 2021. The latest application is for 452 spaces of which only around 100 are for shoppers/visitors. Of these 21 are for Blue Badge holders, intended to service a significantly upgraded Shopmobility Hub. The new MSCP rises to 20 floors, largely because the footprint of the site is too small. The much larger car park in the 2021 approved scheme also included the demolition of Siena Court – an office block on Broadway. Under the current application Siena Court remains untouched.

On the other hand, the *Maidenhead Advertiser* of 18th July reports that at the Maidenhead Town Forum meeting of 11th July, Cllr Geoff Hill, cabinet member for transport, has questioned the amount of parking that will be on offer, and that he was hoping to see 500-1,000 spaces available in the new scheme which replaces the now-demolished Broadway carpark. Clearly this doesn't accord with Areli's view! Furthermore, at the same meeting, Will Robinson of Areli went on to assert that, notwithstanding the issue of new spaces, Hines Meadow car park was only a three-minute walk away from the new centre. This has led to some derision on social media, and Andrew Ingram – a Society member – has actually uploaded to YouTube a short video in which he as filmed himself attempting this feat. He struggled! Will went on to say "The Nicholsons Quarter is part of a wider town centre offer, and if [people] meander their way from Hines Meadow, through the Waterside Quarter or through the High Street, that actually offers everybody an opportunity to benefit from the footfall in the town." There is an air of unreality here.

All these deliberations about future demand sit alongside the environmental pressures with the move towards EVs and the additional issues that will arise as the switch to electric accelerates. Of course, more people will be cycling so 900 cycle spaces are provided across the Nicholsons site. Let's hope that they are not all on the road together!

If the new Maidenhead is to thrive in the 'thirties when all the regeneration is completed then this is our last opportunity to future-proof the likely demand for parking. The long term prosperity of our town will be endangered unless we get the sums right – now!

Martin McName

.....MORE ON PARKING

All of us want to see Maidenhead become and remain a vibrant town again. And as everyone "in the know" keeps reminding us, footfall in the town centre is a key factor in this achieving this. Whatever the "green lobby" might wish for, for many, if not most of us, access to the town centre will mean a trip in the car. We don't all live a few minutes walk from the centre, or can cycle, and our weekly shopping is usually more that just a single carrier bag's worth.

Business in Maidenhead is fast becoming reliant on the leisure and hospitality sector – especially in the evenings. Leaving aside the actual parking charges in our carparks – which are certainly much higher than our neighbouring towns – our city fathers seem to have done everything possible to discourage us from venturing in for an evening out. Most of the town's car parks now charge up to 9pm, except on Sundays, which is free all day. This doesn't apply to the temporary Broadway carpark which charges a lot for any time. Anyone wishing to spend some early evening leisure time in town will be have to keep a wary eye on the clock lest they incur a penalty for overstaying. Our neighbouring towns, such as Marlow have a 7pm cut-off. How their restaurants and cafés must be rejoicing!

On top of this, RBWM have recently reduced the time limit that a Blue Badge holder may spend in a marked street bay to 3hrs (though not, thankfully, in its carparks). The nearby Broadway carpark has a 3hr limit for all users. This might seem more than enough for most daytime purposes, but, as Society member Diana Le Clercq has pointed out, any badge holder wishing to visit the cinema and have a meal before or after will now find this almost impossible – especially given the length of films these days. Surely this was a totally unnecessary move.

Linked to the matter of inadequate parking facilities is the issue of pavement parking. Long a problem in residential areas, this is rearing its head in the town centre. At the recent Town



Forum meeting, Neil Walter, parking and enforcement manager at the Royal Borough, told us that the council is effectively powerless to stop pavement parking happening on roads without parking restrictions, and has no powers to remove vehicles that completely block pavements or footways.

It really is time for a proper, thought-through parking strategy for the town and one for the benefit of its denizens – not just the council's coffers.

Projects

A TALE OF TWO BOUNDARY STONES

You may remember an article by member Neil Savin in the February 2023 Newsletter about these two boundary stones: one damaged stone on the road opposite Butlers Gate cottage on Winter Hill Road, near the junction with Choke Lane, and the other built into a step in a garden at Maidenhead Road.



The forlorn boundary stone 13!



The yellow arrow points to stone 18 – used as a step

Since then, Neil had extracted the stone from the step and placed the damaged stone in a safe place away from the road.

On Saturday 12^{th} July the "Boundary Stone Seekers & Movers" were re-formed and this is what they did:

The undamaged stone retrieved from the step in a garden at Maidenhead Road was carefully moved to Butlers Gate for temporary safe keeping.





Moving the undamaged boundary stone from Maidenhead Road......





....to Butlers Gate by car



The Boundary Stone Seekers & Movers with both stones at Butlers Gate l-r: Eddie Piekut, Ben Darracott, Neil Savin, Simon Thornton and Chris Bristow

The damaged stone was then moved from its roadside position opposite Butlers Gate to Maidenhead Heritage Centre where it is now on display (see below).







The team at the Heritage Centre, with Alan Mellins (chairman) and Saneela Hanif (manager)

So look out for the exhibition at the Heritage Centre about the Boundary Walk that Eddie Piekut (a member of both MCS and Rotary Bridge) is putting together.

Once we have permission from the National Trust, the undamaged boundary stone will be re-installed opposite Butlers Gate, though in a safer position. It is not on the route of the charity Boundary Walk but it will be visible to walkers on the Marlow Link of the Millennium Walk.



This is where it will go!!!

UPDATE ON THE FLOODED GREEN WAY PATH

As noted in the *Maidenhead Advertiser* of 18th July, work has recently been undertaken to solve the problem of water leaks onto the Green Way path as it passes under the A4 bridge. To recap events over the past year or so: the electricity supply to the pump that took away water leaking onto the path through the brick wall and gaps in the path was switched off and the path flooded. A new electricity supply was obtained and the path dried before flooding again due to the pump stopping working, apparently because of a damaged hose. A new hose was connected and a new pump installed.



Attempt to reduce water leaking through the brick wall prior to the works





Left: Digging through the path to remove wet soil underneath due to a damaged hose Right: Green Way on 16th July, when still closed off but dry(ish)

At the time of writing, the footway is dry except for the dampness at the north end due to leakage through the brick wall etc. The leaky brick wall is there because it was not possible at the time of the Waterways construction to properly complete the concrete wall due to the presence of a cable which was buried in the stream bed in 1992. At the request of the Maidenhead Waterways Partnership Group, the Civic Society contacted VirginMediaO2, who now own the cable, to find out whether it is still live. They plan to investigate once the path is dry. Depending on the result, a plan of action will be developed to solve this longstanding problem. Fingers crossed!

OCKWELLS RESTORATION

Work at the house continues – and probably will do so for another year. You may also have noticed the major earthworks taking place on the field to the west of the house, where there was previously a sort of circular training track. We are told that the field is now being converted into a proper polo field; the earthworks are to improve the drainage of the site and levelling of the surface.



Above: the field in 2010 east of Thrift Lane; below: the same view in July 2025



Ann Darracott

Events

FLOOD-RISK MANAGEMENT IN A TIME OF RAPID CLIMATE CHANGE Talk by Professor Robert Van de Noort

Thursday 11th September at the Parish Centre, next to Holy Trinity Church in Cookham, SL6 9SP; 2-5pm.

Prof Van de Noort CBE is President of the River Thames Society, Vice-Chancellor of Reading University and a marine archaeologist. He also serves as the Chair of the Thames Regional Flood & Coastal Committee

In his article in the Spring 2025 *Thames Guardian*, magazine of the River Thames Society, he talked about the Thames Valley Flood Scheme designed by the Environment Agency to use natural flood management techniques (creating flood storage areas in the Thames tributaries) to improve climate resilience for communities at risk of flooding. He noted that this Scheme has now been discontinued and



suggests it is time for a rethink. As both flooding and drought impact on the waterways of Maidenhead and Cookham we think his views should be of interest to members of our Society, the Cookham Society, and Maidenhead Waterways.

The charge is £3 to Members and £5 to Non-members, which will include teas/coffee and biscuits. Numbers are limited and because of the topic's wider interest, we urge you to secure your place soon. Please let Joyce Delasalle know of your intention to attend, either by phone on 07917 876145 or by email to joyce.delasalle@btinternet.com.

Payment should be made by bank transfer to the account: *Maidenhead Civic Society*, sort code: 30-95-36; a/c: 00277876, quoting ref "Flood Talk".

The talk is particularly timely as the Met Office has recently declared that extreme weather events will happen more often, so more floods (see images below) and more droughts. It certainly looks like the latter is happening in 2025.



These arial views, taken by James Camplin of Flight Surveys, clearly show the problems we face. The picture above shows the area around Ockwells Park in April 2023. The image below highlights the flooding at Cookham during January 2024.



MAIDENHEAD AND MARLOW ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY (MMAHS)

In the past, the Civic Society has collaborated with local heritage and like-minded groups in publicising each other's events.

Talks Programme – 2025

August 27th Denise Allen - "Roman Glass: Wonderful Recent Finds and

Experiments"

September 24th Charles Bryant and Anne Samson - "Kitchener the Man not the

Myth"

October 29th Martin Bell - "Archaeology and Nature Conservation" November 26th Anne Sebba - "The Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz"

The talks are usually held at the United Reformed Church, West Street, Maidenhead (7:15 pm for 8:00 pm) and live-streamed via Zoom ("doors" open 7:50 pm). January and February are Zoom only. Ticket prices are currently: live at the URC - £3 to MMAHS members, £6 to others; Zoom - free of charge to MMAHS members, £4 to others.

The programme is subject to change. Booking for all MMAHS talks and events is via TicketSource at:

www.ticketsource.co.uk/maidenhead-and-marlow-archaeology-and-history-society

Tina Sell

It is with great sadness that we have to report that long-time Civic Society member Tina Sell passed away recently on Friday 18th July. She had not been well for some time.

For many years Tina was a member of the Executive Committee and the Planning Group, and was also part of a small MCS group that successfully lobbied for changes in the Crossrail Bill, appearing before a Parliamentary Select Committee in 2006.

In addition to this, for many years Tina was our Events organiser and was responsible for many memorable visits to local places of interest.

Our thoughts go out to her family.



Dates for your Diary

Thursday 11th September 2025 Flood-Risk Management in a time of rapid climate change

Talk by Prof Robert Van de Noort 2.00pm – 5.00pm, Parish Centre, Cookham

Wednesday 19th November 2025 Civic Society AGM

AGM and Speaker Cox Green Community Centre, 7.45 for 8pm

CIVIC SOCIETY - KEY CONTACTS

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General enquiries to the Society: info@maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2025

All meetings are now at the Cox Green Community Centre, 6.30pm until further notice.

14th January, 11th February, 11th March, 8th April, 13th May, 10th June, 8th July, (12th August), 9th September, 14th October, 11th November, 9th December

The 65th AGM will be held on Wednesday 19th November 2025, at 7.45 for 8.00 pm.

The closing date for copy for the next issue of the Newsletter is 10th October 2025

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