

Maidenhead Civic Society **NEWS**

Issue 1/10

February 2010



Making Maidenhead a Better Place

Inside: The Society's updated Strategic Review of Amenity

Visit our website! : www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Well here we are at the start of 2010 with a suitably “bumper” edition to kick off the 50th Anniversary Year of the Civic Society.

There's plenty to whet our appetite and get our teeth into (literally as well as figuratively!). We shall be marking our birthday celebration with various events and happenings during the year and we'd love to hear from members, particularly founder-members, of any particular recollections you have of the Society – or indeed Maidenhead – over the years.

The thinking behind the formation of the Society in 1960 was as an “opportunity for citizenship participation in redeveloping Maidenhead”. It's good to know some things remain the same. We begin our jubilee year in similar vein. Contained in these pages as a separate pull-out item is ***Making Maidenhead a Better Place***, a revision of the strategic review we undertook in 2004. We hope it will serve as a touchstone for responses to the draft Masterplan for the town centre, recently published for consultation, and also as a checklist for the Borough's revised Core Strategy which is due for public consultation in the Spring (general elections permitting!)

Then to show we've just as much enthusiasm 50 years on, we're launching a membership drive. Our numbers remain pretty healthy, we have a headcount approaching 400, but there is a real need for more people to get actively involved, on committees, with activities and campaigns, or even to bring their own causes into the limelight. We designed the new membership forms with a 21st century audience in mind, unaware that the “like minds” slogan precisely echoed the ethos of our founders. Back in 1967, writing about the Civic Society, secretary John Haydon wrote: “It was widely recognised that, alone, an individual was ineffective but when organised with others of like mind into a body of informed opinion, representations can be made with good effect.” Today, the Society commands tremendous respect where it matters and our voice is not only heard but heeded.

Please use the new membership forms enclosed with this newsletter to introduce two “like-minded” new members to the Society. You could tell them about the way we've influenced the plans for the town centre or the draft policy for the Skindles site, or how we stumbled across a worrying scheme to install four sets of traffic lights on the A4 round Maidenhead. All of these stories and more are in this edition.

We kick off this Spring season with a full programme of events and you'll find more details of these on page 9 onwards in the main Newsletter and on the enclosed booking forms.

Finally - Yes, we've a brimming edition and a packed programme. I hope you will read, enjoy and participate!

PLANNING MATTERS

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

We continue to review about fifteen planning applications every month, and since the last Newsletter we have commented on nine proposals. The major developments are reported on below.

SOCIETY WELCOMES “SENSITIVE” POLICY FOR MILL LANE, TAPLOW

South Bucks District Council has been consulting stakeholders about a draft policy for Mill Lane, Taplow. This would see the land formerly owned by Taplow Paper Mill, including Skindles, designated as an Opportunity Site in the council’s emerging Core Strategy.

The policy envisages the redevelopment of Skindles as a hotel/restaurant, along with offices and residential accommodation, leisure uses, a café/restaurant, a marina/boatyard and open space in “a high-quality mix of development, watercourses and parkland.” It also states there should be no increase in traffic levels or the overall footprint of development and that the visual impact, i.e. height and mass, should be reduced, although the height of the mill building could be replicated in a quality design.

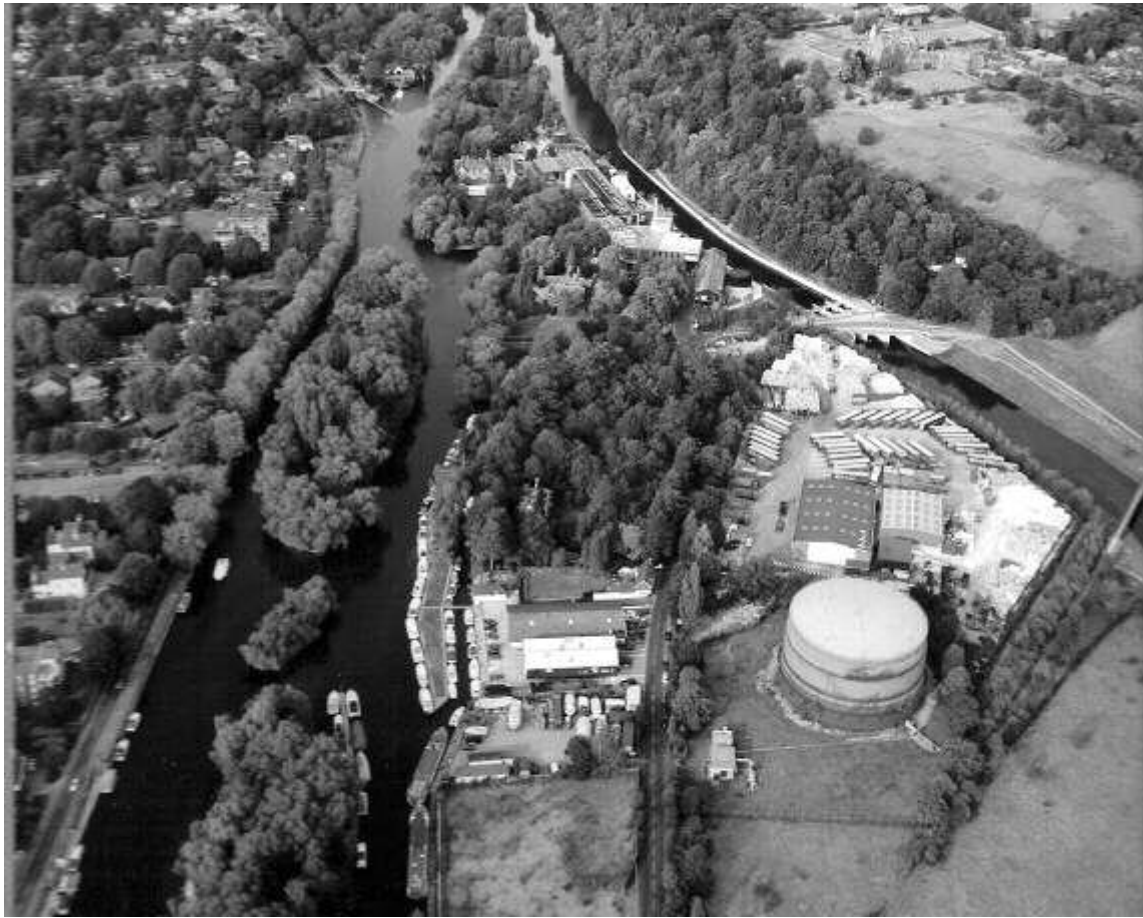
The draft policy is very welcome and ticks many of the right boxes in terms of protecting the environment while improving the site and extending public access to the river. We are especially pleased by the commitment to a riverside walk and the support for a footbridge link to Boulters Lock. We also welcome the longer-term proposal to remove the gasholder and the sheds on the Severnside site and to restore parkland in that area. Particularly encouraging too is the stipulation for retaining the three character villas, described as “gentlemen’s residences”.

However, in spite of the stated strategic objectives, we would continue to be concerned about:

- The size of a replacement hotel, esp. height and number of rooms,
- The height and mass of any apartment blocks
- Any potential increase in footprint
- Any potential loss of Green Belt
- Traffic levels and the impact on the A4

We hope that the SBDC and RBWM will work together where necessary to recognise the River, not merely as a boundary, but as an important and cherished area of mutual amenity. Whilst we are keen to see this problem area (esp. Skindles) addressed, we

are conscious that the upcoming planning decisions will make their mark on this beautiful location for generations.



The Taplow Mill site looking north

Since the Mill closed in 2006, the Civic Society has been liaising with residents' representatives and interest groups on both sides of the river to try and ensure the site is dealt with sensitively. We have always believed that the Mill's closure offered an opportunity to establish planning principles for the restoration of the land. The financial uncertainty surrounding the site has made that more imperative. This policy establishes ground rules that any potential developer must take on board in future proposals for the site and although it may be many months before it is formally adopted, it should carry weight in planning terms in the meantime.

CIVIC SOCIETY URGES SAFETY FIRST OVER BADNELLS LORRIES

In December 2009 Maidenhead Civic Society said that the Council must put safety first when considering an application to increase the number of lorry movements involved in the decontamination of the former Badnells Pit.

Permission has already been granted for 200 vehicle movements a day to remove contaminated waste from the site. But now the developers want to raise that to 300 a day to speed up the process. The Civic Society says that more lorries mean greater

risk. In our formal written response to the application we stated that we can see little need to accelerate the rate of decontamination work, and believe there is little enthusiasm amongst residents for an increase in the number of daily vehicle movements. There are many uncertainties with this project – congestion on the site, access to and from it, the inadequate width of the temporary haul route over Town Moor, and the increased risk of accident and pollution associated with an increased level of activity. It appears that a fully laden lorry is required to leave the site every three minutes and the achievability of this rate will be driven by the number of loading points and the time required to fill each lorry. Many lorries may be standing idle, adding to pollution and the objective of speeding up the process may not be achieved.

Presumably the original proposal represented the optimum operating schedule, so we saw no reason for a change that will have only a dubious benefit of accelerating the completion of the work by approximately three months. Thankfully, at the Council's Planning & Development Panel meeting held on 18th January this year the application to increase the number of lorry movements was unanimously refused. It was felt that the case had not been made, and in view of the number of uncertainties the potential negative impact on residents was the prime factor in determining refusal.

FORMER STIEFEL LABORATORIES SITE

Late in December last year, we commented on an appeal in respect of an earlier application for development at the former Stiefel Laboratories site in Whitebrook Park:

“Most of our original concerns still apply to this subsequent application, although we concede that the new proposals will reduce the problem of overlooking neighbours in Islet Park Drive. This has been achieved by setting back the angle of the third storey of the southeast elevation. When this is combined with a reduction of the central core area there is a resultant 10% decrease in floor space.

Nevertheless, there remains a significant increase in footprint - although Flood Policy F1 was not quoted as a reason for refusal of the original application. In addition, the site is overlooked by Green Belt from both the north and the east. The proposed tree planting / screening from Widbrook in the north is not evident on the submitted plans. The view from Cliveden Woods in the east is a concern and the scale of the development is illustrated by the computer-generated image included in the proposal.

The refusal reason relating to increased vehicular traffic has been marginally addressed, and there is only a 10% reduction in parking spaces from the original proposal. The development of Whitebrook Park has significantly increased traffic levels on Lower Cookham Road, and this will be exacerbated by any further development. Furthermore, we are not convinced that traffic lights at the Ray Mead Road / Bath Road junction is a positive solution.

We remain concerned that the proposals still represent overdevelopment of the site, with a potential risk of future expansion of the Hitachi building. Any Business Park

within the Green Belt should be constrained from continuing development if the surrounding area is to be protected.

However, despite the above reservations, if the Council is minded to grant this application then we would like to point out that the funding and access offered by the developer will assist in the creation of a footpath from the Lower Cookham Road to the Thames Path. This has been sought by the local community for more than thirty years. A link from Widbrook Park to the Thames is an objective in the RBWM Local Plan (1999) and the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2005-2015). It is also a missing link in the Civic Society's Millennium Walk, a joint project with East Berks Ramblers to create a cross country walk from Hurley to Maidenhead Riverside."

At the Planning & Development Panel meeting recently held on 18th January, the above revised proposal was passed on a vote (seven for, none against, two abstentions). It was a fairly balanced proposal – but it was felt that the applicant had taken on board most aspects of the previous refusal. It was agreed that £50,000 of developer's contributions should be designated for the completion of the Millennium Walk project. In the event of this project not being completed, the monies should be re-directed to the Thames Path. It is believed that the appeal against the original refusal will now be dropped

It should be noted that as a matter of principle the Civic Society is uneasy with the concept of a "trade-off" – where overdevelopment concerns are set against funding for designated projects.

JUMPING THE LIGHTS

It came to our attention during the Stiefel Laboratories application that there is a proposal to install traffic lights at the Texaco roundabout, at the junction of the A4 Bridge Road with Ray Mead Road. These will be one of a series of five sets of lights on the A4 between Maidenhead Bridge and Marlow Road roundabout. Congestion on the A4 is largely caused by the single lane constraint of Maidenhead Bridge. The mini roundabout works satisfactorily, although it could be improved if two lanes were introduced exiting Ray Mead Road. The traffic lights will surely increase congestion especially from Ray Mead Road, as it must be presumed that the A4 weight of traffic will have priority.

The lights are being funded by developer's contributions from the Badnells Pit project, presumably to accommodate the additional traffic movements which will be generated by the 600 dwellings on the completed development. The proposed lights will be situated in the Maidenhead Bridge conservation area, and at a key gateway to Maidenhead. On seeking clarification from Planning /Highways it was discovered that these lights are only one of five being proposed. Travelling westwards there will also be lights at the Oldfield Road/Lassell Gardens junction, then again at Ray Street. A further set of lights is also to be installed at the Castle Hill/Marlow Road roundabout. As lights have already been installed at the Sainsburys/Hine Meadow

junction, there will be five sets of lights between Maidenhead Bridge and Castle Hill. The Highways Department reports “there is a duty of care to improve traffic flow”. This is obviously not the case with the interruption caused to Westward traffic on the A4 by the introduction of Sainsburys lights. To complete the “traffic light project” the remaining set of lights will be on Cookham Road, at the junction with Ray Mill Road West.

The chances of the A4 array of lights improving traffic flow is remote. The Borough (without any consultation) is in danger of spending tens of thousands of pounds on a fiasco similar to the previous lights on Sainsburys roundabout – which were withdrawn within months.

The day after our concerns were picked up by the Advertiser it was fortuitous that the Leader of RBWM Council was our guest at our annual dinner. Cllr. David Burbage stated that the scheme would not be happening in the foreseeable future.

RIVERSIDE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Plans to create a Riverside Conservation Area by extending and merging two existing Conservation Areas into one (Boulters Lock and Maidenhead Bridge & Guards Club) have been broadly welcomed by the Civic Society.

It would include virtually all properties facing the river between the Bridge and Boulters Lock and many south of the Brunel Bridge, as well as riverside gardens.

The proposals came in a Conservation Area Appraisal document which also warns of the negative impact on the character of the area from the insertion of more large-scale flatted development and lists various opportunities for improving the Area, including the sensitive development of the Skindles site, replacement paving on Maidenhead Bridge and the “greening” of the nearby filling station with enhance planting.

The Society, which has campaigned for regular Conservation Area Appraisals with a view to extending them and increasing their number, has welcomed the report as a potentially positive influence on future development and improvements. However, we have suggested that the area could be extended still further – to the south to abut the Bray Village Conservation Area, including all riverfront houses and some character properties to the west of Fisheries Road, and to the north and west, to include Islet Park House and more properties on the towpath as well as some in Lock Avenue.

The report notes that the recent turfing along Ray Mead Road promenade, which was done primarily to help the plane trees survive, has had the additional benefit of enhancing the green appearance of the area. The Society agrees but said there could be even greater emphasis on importance of the river itself as a valuable amenity to residents and visitors.



The proposed enlarged conservation area is the grey shaded zone parallel to the west bank of the river

Overall the Appraisal is a comprehensive piece of work which admirably captures the history, character and appeal of Maidenhead's riverside. And as a footnote, we were pleased to see a number of references to the Society in the report, recognising members' past efforts in respect of Guards Club Park and commemorative plaques.

Martin McNamee



Maidenhead Civic Society

Making Maidenhead A Better Place

A strategic review of amenity



The aims of the Society are to improve the environment and facilities in Maidenhead and to stimulate public interest in its future. Maidenhead should be a place people want to come to, to live, to work or simply to visit. To this end the Society liaises with other local bodies and other Civic Societies both in the UK and abroad.

Introduction

Maidenhead's history is long and successful. That is due largely to its unique accessibility. Since the first settlement in the 13th Century, its history has been determined by its location. It was the first Thames crossing point on the Great West Road. Each transport era, from the pack mule to the motorway, the stagecoach to the streamlined jet, with certain inevitability has brought new blood, new building – and growth.

Consequently, the town has been exposed to continuous and often rapid change. Each age made its mark. Victorian builders and philanthropists in the railway age perhaps demonstrated the most coherence in their development of the town and its suburbs. Otherwise, new building over the years seems to have been a series of short-term responses to immediate needs, forming a patchwork quilt of styles and uses. Similarly, its facilities, services and amenities have grown consequentially, without any overall plan or coherence. In the sixties, in common with many other towns, the motivation for the last of these “makeovers” seemed to be change for change's sake. Since then, piecemeal development has chipped away at the remnants of earlier periods, to the extent that there are few remaining features, man-made or other, which make a town visually attractive.

We are encouraged, therefore, that after several unsuccessful attempts at a plan for reviving the town centre, there is a process in place for its rejuvenation which hopefully will be protected from the vagaries of political change. The Society, along with other amenity groups, is playing a significant role in this process and we are pleased that several of the ideas conceived in the first edition of our Strategic Review are coming through in the emerging plan. Nevertheless, we are eager that the town plan and other policy documents forming the Local Development Framework, while robust and sound, are not confined to the “safe options” but open the door to ideas that will help revitalise Maidenhead and its surroundings as an attractive and exciting place to be. We make no apology, therefore, for focusing on aesthetics. Artistic or architectural style is the fingerprint of character. Maidenhead's physical appearance should more properly reflect its achievements and those of its residents, and the character of its Thames Valley setting.

The Strategic Review by the Society aims to stimulate debate and encourage a coherent approach to what is needed – to identify long and short-term objectives for the continuous upgrading of those features which we believe will make Maidenhead a better place.

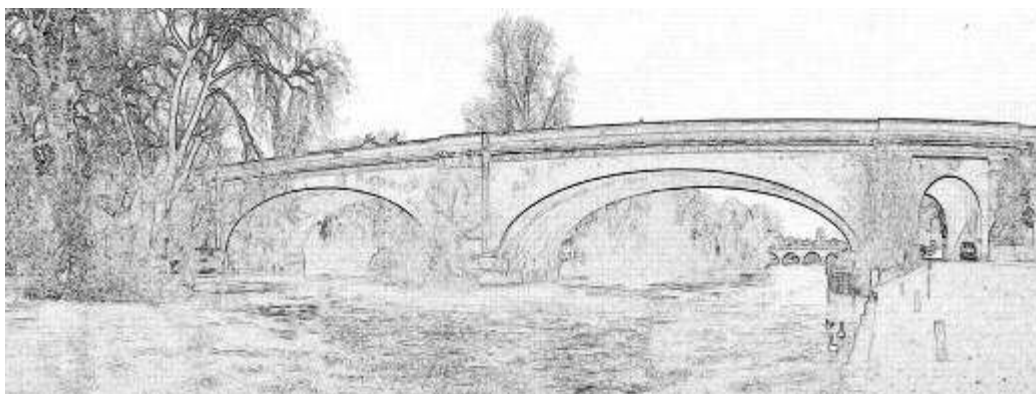
Martin McNamee – Chairman, Planning Group, Maidenhead Civic Society

Making Maidenhead a Better Place

A Strategic Review of Amenity (2009)

Main Points

- **Planning & Development** – put residents and the interests of the community first. New buildings and redevelopment must enhance an area's character. High standards of design should be insisted upon and inappropriate densities resisted.
- **The Town Centre** – should be the distinctive heart of the community. It should reflect Maidenhead's success and location, and provide an attractive and engaging mix of civic administration, business, commerce, retail and, importantly, residential housing.
- **Environment & Ambience** – The Thames Valley setting lends much to the image and perception of Maidenhead and is an asset that deserves protection and enhancement.
- **Leisure** – revive the sense of Maidenhead as “the place to go”. Find imaginative ways of improving the amenities of the riverside, provide more and better footpaths and open spaces, improve existing sports facilities, particularly for young people, and extend the “green belt” to the Thames through Maidenhead.
- **Travel & Transport** – ensure that Maidenhead is easily accessible and welcoming to people, however they arrive. Encourage the use of sustainable transport and create an integrated transport hub at the railway station.
- **Culture & Heritage** – explore opportunities for putting Maidenhead on the cultural map, reflecting local achievement and the wealth of local talent.



BACKGROUND

The Civic Society first published its Strategic Review of Amenity in July 2004. It was a distillation of more than 100 ideas and suggestions for “making Maidenhead a better place”, drawn from a survey of its members.

The Strategic Review resonated with the public and inspired the “Great Debate” in the Maidenhead Advertiser, culminating in a readers survey in early 2006. The feedback from this and the views expressed at a subsequent public meeting – which gave a platform to the inaugural ideas for the Waterways Restoration group – were to have quite an impact.

As well as influencing the preparation of the Borough’s Core Strategy (which was subsequently rejected), as part of its campaign the Society had called for a cross-party approach to the future of Maidenhead. And at the end of 2007, although there’d been a change of administration, the Council enabled the Partnership for the Rejuvenation of Maidenhead (PRoM), a cross-party group with an independent chair, to look at town centre regeneration.

The following year, PRoM published an outline vision and action plan for the town centre which contained a dozen of the suggestions from the Society’s Strategic Review.

However, our Review has wider implications. It is also a living document that should evolve as needs and circumstances change. While many of the Society’s ideas for the town centre have been fully incorporated and in some cases improved by PRoM, others have emerged. Moreover, while the town centre is a priority, our perspective extends to the residential and amenity areas which surround it.

With this first revision, therefore, the Society aims to inspire and encourage public interest in ensuring a healthy balanced environment between the built and the natural, to create a vibrant but civilised, tasteful and appealing place that we are proud to call home.



Planning & Development

In recent years, standards of architectural design have generally improved. However, there is still much that is mundane - planning rules are founded on minimum requirements. We should like to see an urban renaissance in design and style contributing to an improved quality of life. We suggest the following positive moves to improvement:

- Insist on high standards of design and development and the policies to deliver them
- Ensure that what is good is preserved and what is new adds character to the area
- Employ area planning briefs, including design codes, to ensure that new development demonstrably benefits the community
- Encourage local communities to set up residents groups as statutory consultees on new developments
- Extend the use of the 'gateway' idea to distinguish local areas and create a sense of place and purpose in local communities
- Insist on a better balance between commercial and residential development
- Balance town centre shopping with out-of-town and local shopping enclaves
- Give full weight to the preservation of the 'Green Belt'
- Focus on the use of derelict and 'brownfield' sites for redevelopment
- Demand adherence to the policy for 'green' provision in every new development
- Enforce policies for dealing effectively with buildings in a run-down state

Housing

Imposed housing targets, if pursued, could seriously affect Maidenhead's character and lifestyle. To assist in managing this impact and resist the pressure for inappropriate densities, we suggest:

- An annual review of housing requirements in terms of type, size, etc., to achieve a proper balance of future needs against existing housing
- The use of 'planning briefs' to ensure any new build or alteration is appropriate for its location

We envisage that any housing development will include a proportion that is 'affordable', with particular attention to the town centre, and underline the need for 'starter' homes. We would also like to see:

- Tighter and more proactive management of 'infill' development
- A campaign to restrict permitted development in the flood plain
- Adherence to all other aspects of government flood guidance policy, including the adoption of up-to-date flood plain maps
- All developments matched with appropriate infrastructure – services, schools, shops, road capacity and amenities
- Industrial activities in residential areas relocated to designated areas

Town Centre

Maidenhead Civic Society welcomes the Council's creation of the Partnership for the Rejuvenation of Maidenhead (PRoM) and supports its aim for a comprehensive plan for the heart of the town.

Taking an holistic and coordinated view of the town centre, the Masterplan should provide for:

- A distinctive identity reflecting its success and Thames Valley setting
- A wide range of shops and services, business and administration
- A sensible balance of uses in predominantly mixed-use developments
- A much higher proportion of attractive residential accommodation, including houses
- Improvements to travel and transport arrangements, including:
 - An integrated public transport centre
 - Welcoming "gateways"
 - Easy and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access
- Attractive spaces, e.g. a town square, and links between places of interest, including the station, the river and civic, leisure, sporting & retail centres
- A major communal building – arts or conference centre and hotel
- A restored waterway between the town centre and The Thames
- Aesthetic as well as practical considerations of design

Key to the success of regeneration will be an adequate infrastructure. Dramatic improvements to traffic and transport facilities and the provision of fibre optic cabling are two top requisites.



Travel & Transport

Recognising that accessibility is Maidenhead's raison d'être, dramatic improvements in its travel and transport arrangements are required. The decision to undertake a comprehensive transport study as part of the Masterplanning process for the town centre is welcome. However, the effects of growth and increased housing across the whole of Maidenhead need to be considered as part of an overall plan for the necessary coexistence of motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, bus and train travellers, commuters, visitors and tourists.

In particular, ways need to be found of breaking down the barrier imposed by the ring-road and railway line to enable easy access to the town centre.

Make the station area Maidenhead's transport hub

- Combine a renovated train station with a bus terminal, adequate and attractive parking, easy access pick-up and drop-off points and a taxi rank
- Make bus travel a viable alternative for in-town travel and give a concerted effort to make cycling in and around town safe and convenient



We would also like to see:

- Serious attempts to switch commuting from private to public transport
- Provision for alternative forms of propulsion for public/private transport
- Consideration of the impact of Crossrail and other Thames Valley link proposals
- The re-introduction of a rail service from High Wycombe, perhaps a monorail, which could continue via Dorney Lake to Windsor
- The provision of adequate car-parking, where possible underground,
- Better signage to car parks with space availability information
- Priority parking for residents
- Visitor incentives, e.g. Free parking at lunch times, and short term, low cost parking meters
- The abolition of Pay & Display and machines that don't give change
- Standardised speed limits of 30mph, except on dual carriageways

Environment

Maidenhead's association with The Thames and its proximity to acres of Green Belt land are not only cherished assets, they help to determine its character. The Society was instrumental in helping to devise a policy for The Thames through Maidenhead and supports the local authority in its stated intention of preserving the Green Belt. Both areas need continuous scrutiny.

The Thames Valley setting lends much to the image and perception of Maidenhead and is an asset that deserves protection and enhancement. More should be done in the built environment to reflect that setting, to add to the sense of place and wellbeing.

Conservation Areas play their part in this respect and these should be regularly reviewed with a view to extending them and their number. Owners of business and retail premises, particularly absentee landlords, should be aware of their obligation to the community for ensuring their properties present the best possible face to the street.

Much of urban Maidenhead is well-foliaged but an effort needs to be made for the "greening" of those areas which are not. We advocate a tree-planting campaign with the aim of making all roads in Maidenhead tree-lined, where practicable.

The Society applauds the local authority for its recycling initiatives and street cleanliness and supports its campaign to improve the understanding that every one of us contributes to these issues. However, we believe Maidenhead could do more to take advantage of Renewable Energy sources. We should be aiming for a zero or even negative CO₂ footprint by exploring the use of:

- Combined Heat & Power units and district heating systems
- Hydro, solar & wind power sources

Leisure

Maidenhead's natural amenities are well used and appreciated by residents and visitors. Much has been done to improve amenities in the town centre, particularly in terms of events. But more imagination and effort is required to revive its reputation as a destination. In particular we should:

- Improve access to and use of existing open spaces (Kidwells and Grenfell Parks) and improve facilities for teenagers
- Find imaginative ways of linking riverside and town centre
- Encourage the sympathetic redevelopment of Skindles and the former paper mill site on the South Bucks bank
- Adopt a landscape strategy to ensure the conservation of the River Thames environment

There is huge potential to exploit the opportunities afforded by the Thames riverside to enhance and extend facilities for residents and visitors.



Make more use of Riverside area and explore possibilities for realising riverside's full potential, including:

- Completion of the Thames Path missing link at Bridge Gardens
- Occasional pedestrianisation
- A footbridge to Boulton from the South Bucks bank
- Summer events
- Public moorings and boating facilities
- Pedestrian crossings

- Re-instate the Bridge Gardens bandstand or create a new one on Ray Mill Island

Continue to enhance the town's parks, gardens and open spaces already available and find new opportunities to add to their number:

- Build on the success of events in parks / spaces at weekends

Similarly, devise a programme for bridleways and public footpaths in the area, to:

- Create and maintain a proper network of local paths & cycleways to uniform standard, promoting their use with easily read maps

Deal once and for all with the quality of the York Stream environment, to ensure the restoration of clean, substantial flows of water throughout the Stream's length:

- The Environment Agency to manage all flows in local stream systems in a way consonant with appearance and the environment
- Protect and enhance the Green Way and the provision of pathways in association with the Waterways enhancement

Make provision for new, and improve existing, sports facilities to encourage:

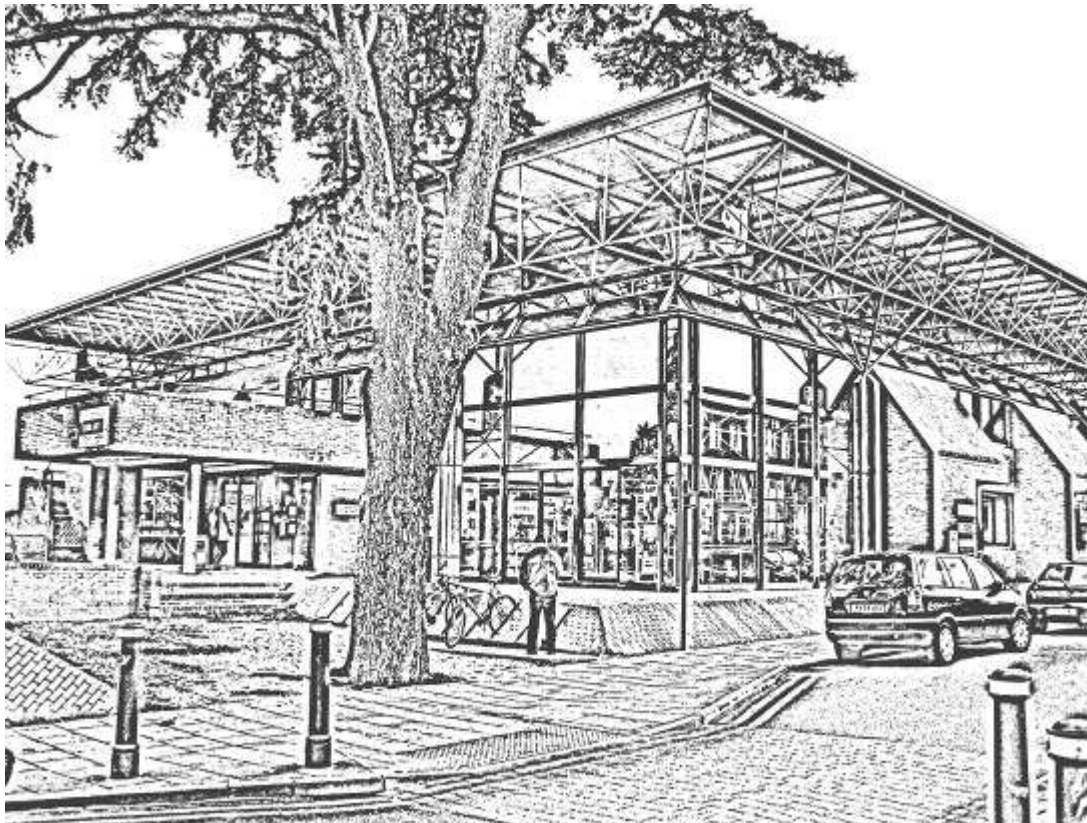
- Sports / pastimes such as football, walking, cycling, cricket, tennis, swimming, rugby, athletics, etc., particularly by the young



Culture and Heritage

Explore ways of capitalising on the town's accessibility and unique heritage to make it a cultural destination:

- Build on the successes of Norden Farm, Desborough Hall and the Library to extend arts and cultural facilities
- Support the provision of musical events in the town and consider the merits of staging a Maidenhead Arts Festival
- Create a concert hall or similar public arts amenity
- Provide an adequate space in the town centre for exhibitions and expand the area available in the Library



The Civic Society gives specific support to the Heritage Trust in its provision of a town centre Heritage Centre. Additionally, we would endorse:

- A depiction of its history and people in public art
- Recognition for its areas of archaeological interest
- An extension of its listed buildings and conservation areas

The Society's Strategic Review of Amenity is a living vision. By its nature, it will go on being modified as new needs are seen and as present ones become less important.



SPRING EVENTS

FORTHCOMING TALKS

The talks take place in the Methodist Church Hall, King Street, Maidenhead and commence at 8.00pm, with a break for light refreshments.

Maidenhead Waterways Restoration Group - progress of the scheme Wednesday 17th February 2010

By Richard Davenport, Chairman of Trustees

With a number of recent initiatives concerning the development of the town centre it would seem a good time to ask Richard to come and update us on the present state of play and their plans for the future.

One of the important developments is that the waterways have now been incorporated into the town's regeneration plans. This protects the route from conflicting developments and ensures that new buildings along the route contribute towards turning the project into reality. A fully supported planning application is expected to be submitted by mid 2010. If you would like to know more, please come along to the talk on 17th February 2010.

On the same evening Richard Poad will also give us a short presentation on Bad Godesberg as a taster for the planned visit in May (see below). All are welcome. There will be a small charge to members of £3.00, and for non-members, £4.00; refreshments are included.

3rd Society Luncheon

Our next Civic Society luncheon brings together two of Maidenhead's favourite icons, Boulders Restaurant and the *Maidenhead Advertiser*.

We are delighted that our local newspaper editor Martin Trepte has agreed to be our guest speaker at the lunch on Friday 19th March and that Boulders has agreed to let us use their fine-dining restaurant for the occasion, overlooking the river.

Since its first edition in July 1869, the *Advertiser* has been a regular fixture for Maidenheadians, informing,



entertaining and occasionally frustrating us. Martin will share with us some of the stories behind the headlines and what it takes to run a successful local newspaper in a mass media age. Boulters has been there a little longer – 500 years longer to be precise. It served for centuries as a mill, becoming an inn in the 1950s. The new owners have spared no expense in transforming the building into a venue which befits its superb location. Boulters was recently given a five-star rating by the Daily Telegraph for its lunchtime “Menu du Jour” which we shall be enjoying.

This is an opportunity not to be missed. Book your place using the enclosed form. Come along and bring a friend.

Tina Sell

OUTINGS AND VISITS

After our Winter break we will resume our outings with another chance to visit White Waltham Airfield on Thursday 22nd April. This event was heavily oversubscribed in October and we have been fortunate to arrange a return for those who missed out; those lucky ones who came in October were very impressed.



White Waltham Airfield, is one of the oldest and best known airfields in the country. Set in 200 acres on the edge of a picturesque estate in the beautiful Berkshire countryside, it is one of the largest grass airfields in Britain. In 1928, the de Havilland family acquired the land and formed the de Havilland School of Flying which opened in 1935. The MOD requisitioned it for use during World War II and in 1940 it became the HQ for the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) whose members were responsible for the delivery of all aircraft to and from RAF stations. During the war years the ATA achieved a remarkable 309,000 aircraft movements enabling the RAF to concentrate exclusively on operations. White Waltham has also been home to Fairey Aviation, manufacturers of aircraft such as the Gannet and Rotodyne. It has been a civilian airfield and the home of the West London Aero Club since the early post-war years.

Park in the car park at White Waltham Airfield, Waltham Road, Woodlands Park and meet in the Snug at 10.00 am for coffee and biscuits. The visit will commence with a slideshow and talk on the history of the airfield, followed by a visit to the hangars to

see some of the aircraft. The visit will last about two hours. There is no charge for the visit, but a donation on the day to either the Air Ambulance or the RAF Benevolent Fund would be appreciated.

However, numbers are limited to 30, on a first-come first-served basis, so please reserve your place(s) by contacting Mike Copeland on 01628 634181 or mobile 07770 421221 by 29th October at the latest.

If you have any problems, or for last minute cancellations, please also contact Mike on the above numbers.

This will be followed by a trip to the newly refurbished Ashmolean Museum in Oxford on Saturday 24th April 2010. In December 2009 the Queen opened the new Ashmolean Museum in the centre of the city. The original Museum was opened in 1683 and was the first Public Museum in the world. The new museum is spread over 4 floors and represents East and West from Neolithic times to the current day. It contains the world's greatest collection of Raphael drawings and an important collection of Egyptian material. The museum is based on the approach of Crossing Cultures Crossing Time.



Each floor has an orientation gallery to help you plan your visit. We will be given a private guided tour and then you will be free to explore for yourself the many exhibits. There is a restaurant on site and as the museum is in the centre of Oxford you will have the opportunity to wander around the colleges and shops.

Mike Copeland

VISIT TO BAD GODESBERG, 22-24 MAY 2010

As well as the Society's jubilee, 2010 also marks the 50th anniversary of the twinning relationship between Maidenhead and Bad Godesberg in Germany. And our colleagues in the pithily named Verein fur Heimatpflege und Heimatgeschichte Bad Godesberg (Preservation & History Society) have invited us over for three days in May. We plan to put together a party of around 16 for this exchange visit, so if you are interested, please read on.

The trip is warmly recommended by members who have made such exchange visits in the past. Our exchanges began in the mid 1980's, after the Society approached similar societies in Bad Godesberg, Saint Cloud and Frascati during 'European Year of the Environment' in 1984. The Bad Godesberg Society were the only society which replied, and since that first exchange have become good friends. They are wonderfully hospitable; and don't worry, knowledge of German grammar is not essential!

The town stands just south of Bonn, the birthplace of Beethoven, on the left bank of the Rhine opposite the famous Seven Hills and the volcanic peak Drachenfels. The romantic Rhine gorge ends here, while to the west lies the lovely countryside of the Eifel, with picturesque villages full of half timbered houses tucked into the hills.



The Godesberg castle ruins

Bad Godesberg is an elegant spa town, with avenues of handsome villas running down to the Rhine. Until recently, many of these houses were embassies, as this was the diplomatic quarter of Bonn. A hugely expensive tunnel now carries through traffic under the town centre, which is dominated by the ruins of the Godesberg castle, which is celebrating its 800th birthday this year.

Flight timings will allow almost three full days in Germany. Sightseeing will include a visit to the compact but handsome city of Bonn, with its University, Minster and Baroque town hall. On the Sunday there will be a joint excursion, possibly including a mini-cruise on the Rhine, with members of the Bad Godesberg Heritage Society. Monday is May Day, celebrated in traditional style (maypoles, etc), and our evening flight home will allow us all plenty of time in Bad Godesberg itself. Perhaps we will also cross the river to take the funicular railway to the summit of Drachenfels, from where the views are breathtaking.

The exact cost of the weekend has yet to be finalised, but is estimated in the order of £270 per person, including flights, bed and breakfast for two nights in a comfortable hotel. One dinner will probably be with German families and the other as guests of the Bad Godesberg Society. So the only extra spending money required will be for two lunches and whatever shopping you might wish to do.

If you are interested in this visit, please contact Mike Copeland (01628 634181) by **15th February at the latest** in order to secure the above quoted group rate.

MEMBERSHIP

It seems appropriate as we approach our half-centenary of the establishment of Maidenhead Civic Society this year, to take a look at our 'Membership'. In particular, we are trying to address ways of encouraging new active members, with the help of the ongoing support of the current membership. There is no better way than 'word of mouth' to promote the Society! You will no doubt agree that increased membership would be more representative of the Community that we are seeking to serve and would increase the Society's influence.

Enclosed with this Newsletter are two copies of our brand new membership form, which we believe reflects the Society's activities in a more modern and attractive style. The current "green" form has been in circulation for many years, and what better opportunity than to launch the new style in our birthday year. A lot of thought has gone into the content and design in order to appeal to the modern day person and we hope that you will find them more useful when talking about the Maidenhead Civic Society to your friends and family. We've deliberately included the two leaflets to encourage you personally to introduce new members to the Society this year. We hope you will require additional membership leaflets, in which case please call me on 01628 629976.

As of now, the green membership leaflet is obsolete. New members joining should use the blue form. You will also note on the form that the membership fee will increase slightly this year. New members will pay the new fee immediately, but it will apply to current members only from 1st June 2010. May I remind current members who have set up Standing Orders for payments to instruct their banks about the new equivalent value for payment.

I will be sending out a reminder for next year's payment of membership fees in the May 2010 edition.

Shashi Dare - Membership Secretary

Feel strongly about
Maidenhead?

You'll find like minds
in the Maidenhead
Civic Society

Join us today!

www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

PROJECTS

SAVE JESUS HOSPITAL

The Civic Society helped the campaign to save Jesus Hospital in Bray to retain it as a place where senior citizens can live. The campaign has been successful and with the help of the Donnington Hospital Trust, the Bray almshouse should now continue in the role laid down by its founder, William Goddard, in the 17th century.

Goddard founded it to house almspeople from the Fishmongers Guild of London of which he was a member and to help local parishioners. In those days the charity even gave allowances to the almspeople, with those from the guild receiving more than the parishioners! All now have to pay for the privilege of living in the almshouses and, if you read the property section of Maidenhead Advertiser of 14th January, you would have seen that the Clerk of the Fishmongers Hall is advertising for new residents, saying: *“Charming, unfurnished homes available soon for older people of limited means who have lived in the Bray area for 5+ years”*. So if you think you qualify and are interested, contact the Clerk by snail-mail (EC4R 9EL) or clerk@fishall.co.uk.

GERRY AYRE – Maidenhead Rotary Club

I am sad to have to report the death recently of Gerry Ayre. Gerry was, among his many other activities, an active member of Maidenhead Rotary Club. In 2006, the 25th Anniversary of the Rotary Club's Boundary Walk, I liaised with him and John Walker, also from Rotary, and John Edwards of White Place farm to allow walkers, for the first time, to cross the farm close to a part of Maidenhead's 1930 boundary that is usually inaccessible. Every year since then, with Gerry's help, the route has been cleared and then walked during the annual Boundary Walk.

The possibility of this path becoming a permanent amenity as part of the Society's Millennium Walk came a step closer on 18th January when the Maidenhead Development Panel decided to approve the re-development of Whitebrook Park. The developer has offered s106 money to help create the path and to create a viewpoint next to the White Brook that will offer a vista across to Cliveden. We will continue to liaise with Maidenhead Rotary Club and others to ensure that this path happens. It will be a worthy memorial to Gerry.



Gerry Ayre - 2006

Ann Darracott

HERITAGE CENTRE NEWS

2010 will be a busy year at the Heritage Centre in Park Street, with several new exhibitions and lots of events and talks to attract visitors. The final phase of development will also be completed this year, subject to a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other fund-raising efforts. This final phase will include a new lobby on the present forecourt, a permanent display introducing the history of Maidenhead to those who know nothing about it, and on the first floor an Air Transport Auxiliary Exhibition and Research Centre, which will show off the Centre's huge collection of ATA memorabilia and photographs.

The exhibition and events programme for the first part of the year is as follows:

THE MAGPIES STORY - the story of Maidenhead United Football Club and their historic York Road ground. Visit the exhibition to find out exactly why the ground is historic and to play tabletop football - the latter for children of all ages. This exhibition runs until March 14th.

SPORTS MEMORABILIA VALUATION DAY - for details of this event, watch the Advertiser or go to www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk

STAMP VALUATION DAY

Sunday March 7th at the Heritage Centre. Visit our website for details.

RIVER, ROAD AND RAILWAY - exhibition by Maidenhead Painting Club, March 19th to April 11th.

MAIDENHEAD AT THE MILLENNIUM - 10 YEARS ON 16th April to 15th May. Exhibition of photographs taken in May 2000. Come and see how much or how little our town has changed.

LUNCHTIME TALKS

On the second Thursday of every month at 1245pm there is a 30-minute lunchtime lecture at the Heritage Centre on a wide variety of local subjects. On March 11th, Brian Boulter will talk about "The Potter of Bray", a forgotten artist whose work was very distinctive, and on April 8th Richard Poad will talk about "Maidenhead in Fine Art".

OTHER EVENTS

TOYS OF YESTERYEAR - we hope that this exhibition to be held during the summer holidays will be attractive to families. If you have any interesting toys of 'yesteryear' which you would be willing to lend for this exhibition please contact the Heritage Centre on 01628 780555. The security of any items you lend is guaranteed and they will be insured by the Heritage Centre.

ADVANCE NOTICE : RIVER THAMES HISTORICAL CRUISES

These ever popular cruises will operate on Thursday 2nd and Tuesday 7th September, departing from Maidenhead at 10.15am and returning at 3pm, travelling upstream as far as Temple Lock with a live commentary describing the history, wildlife, houses, people and gossip of this most beautiful stretch of the Thames. For details contact the Heritage Centre on 780555 or visit our website.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 17th February 2010
Talk by Richard Davenport

“The Maidenhead Waterways Group”
 Methodist Church Hall, King Street, 8.00 pm

Friday 19th March 2010
Event & Talk by Martin Trepte

The Civic Society Luncheon.
 12.00 noon, Boulters Restaurant.

Thursday 22nd April 2010
Visit and Talk

White Waltham Airfield
 10.00 am

Saturday 24th April 2010
Visit

The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

President of the Trustees	John McIntosh, 26 Harvest Hill Road, SL6 2QQ	633259
Hon. Secretary	Vacancy	
Hon. Treasurer	Trevor Farnfield, Ditton Meads, Winter Hill Road, SL6 6NS	638142
Executive Chairman	Bob Dulson, Bryher, Islet Road, SL6 8HT	627130
Planning Group	Martin McNamee, 14 Lower Cookham Road, SL6 8JT	623203
Projects Group	Ann Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
Communications Group	Brian Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
Events Group	Tina Sell, Marlborough, River Road, Taplow, SL6 0BB	628675
Outings Sec.	Mike Copeland, 14 Laburnham Road, SL6 4DB	634181
Membership Sec.	Shashi Dare, Silvretta, Islet Road, SL6 8LD	629976
Newsletter Distribution	Carol Innes, Contour, Briar Glen, Cookham Rise, SL6 9JP	532418

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2010

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

12th January, 9th February, 9th March, 11th May, 8th June, 13th July, 14th September, 9th November, 14th December

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS FOR 2010

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

13th April, 12th October

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 17th November 2010 in the Wesley Hall at the Methodist Church at 7.45 pm.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
 of the Newsletter is 9th April 2010.**

News Editor **Brian Darracott**
 6 Medallion Place, Maidenhead, SL6 1TF (01628 620280)