

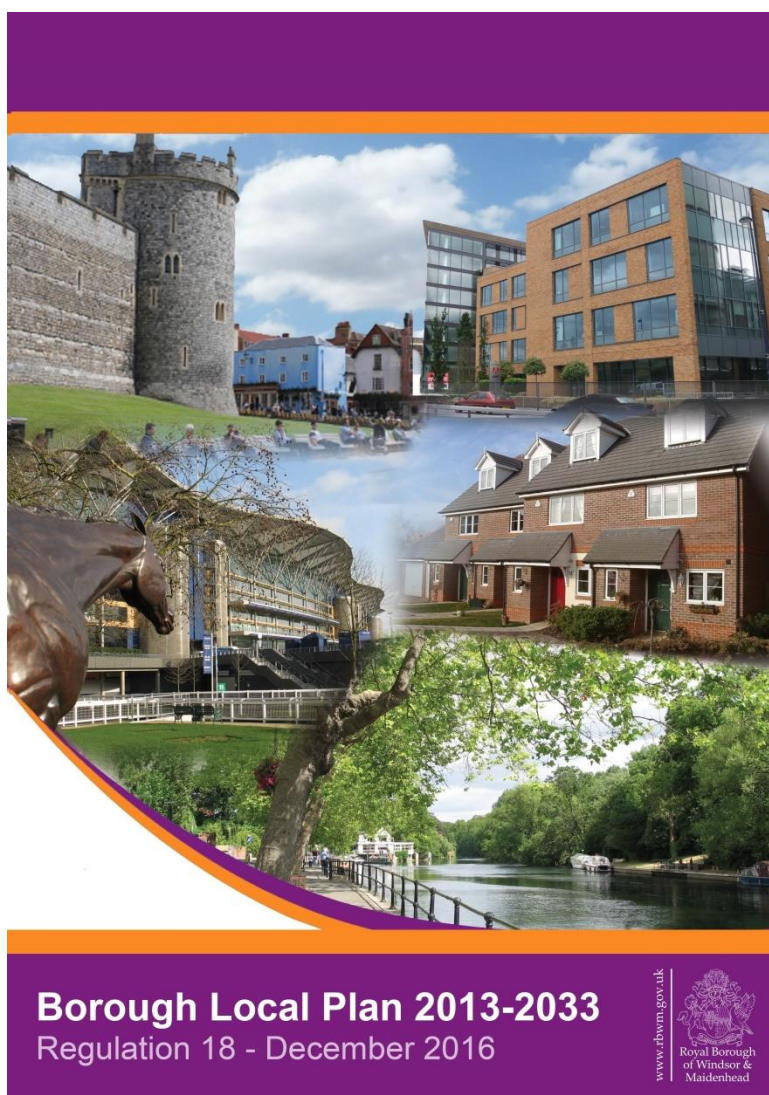


Maidenhead Civic Society NEWS



Issue 1/17

February 2017



Borough Local Plan 2013-2033
Regulation 18 - December 2016



See page 3 for the Society's comments on the draft Borough Local Plan

Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

The Chairman's Page

In the run up to the last attempt at a Borough Local Plan ten years ago, the Society sought to stimulate public interest in the process and organised the “Great Debate on the future of Maidenhead”. This ran for six weeks in the *Advertiser* and concluded, in February 2006, with a reader’s survey.

The debate had thrown up dozens of ideas, comments and suggestions, and a questionnaire based on a selection of these sought people’s views about the town’s character, facilities, housing, transport, etc.

Memorably, in answer to a question about where high-rise flats should be located if we had to have them, one respondent just crossed out all the options and wrote “in Slough”!

But the statement drawing the highest positive response, with 95% in agreement was “Town Planning should be above politics”.

In our otherwise exemplary democratic process, the 4-year political cycle is not conducive to long-term planning. Politicians want quick wins. After a couple of successive election victories, they can also become a tad cocky. Then, under pressure to deliver government targets and faced with finding alternatives to dwindling government grants, their focus changes. Sadly, the effects are there to see in the draft Local Plan.

The priority is the numbers rather than the community.

If our politicians want to run the council like a business, they have to listen to their customers.

Footnote: I was intrigued to see that the councillor who initially promoted the dramatic rise in the number and density of housing in Maidenhead town centre is heading a campaign to resist ANY housebuilding in his own village!!

Bob Dulson

Planning Matters

The main feature in planning circles over the past few months has been the publication of the RBWM Borough Local Plan. Consultations concluded in mid-January, and Bob Dulson submitted comments on behalf of the Civic Society, which are covered elsewhere in this newsletter. Alongside the BLP work continues on the Maidenhead and Cox Green Neighbourhood Plan. There are five working groups under the chairmanship of Councillor Philip Love: Town Centre, Development, Design, Green and Blue, and Infrastructure. The chairs of each group are all associated with the Civic Society - Richard Davenport (also of Waterways), Martin McNamee, Roger Panton, Ian Rose (also Waterways) and Mike Copeland. From our Involvement with the Development Group it has become increasingly clear that the mix of housing type is being driven by developers, who are delivering a potential oversupply of flats. Furthermore, many of these flats are substandard in size, falling below the Nationally Described Standards for different sizes/types of dwelling. Family homes – maisonettes, terraced, semis and detached houses and bungalows – are being underprovided by developers who are seeking to maximise returns. At the same time the RBWM are welcoming flatted developments because they deliver more units to help achieve house building targets. The Borough should insist on minimum size apartments being delivered to protect the standard of our housing stock and they should positively encourage the construction of family homes, with garden amenity space. If the current trend continues Maidenhead will be unable to offer homes to families who are no longer suited by flat dwelling. Families will have to move away from the area because of the lack of suitable family homes.

10,000 more homes – and more to come

This seems to be the message for Maidenhead in the wake of the recent public consultation of the draft Borough Local Plan (BLP).

In addition to 10,000 proposed for Maidenhead in the BLP, the Council is bracing itself for a higher demand in a government White Paper expected anytime now; and if the third runway at Heathrow goes ahead, neighbouring boroughs have been told they could need to provide another 5,000 each.

It was against this background that the Civic Society sent in its response to the BLP consultation. By the closing date, the town hall had received 7,000 submissions, well up on previous plan consultations. These will be considered and a final version produced for another consultation in April.

In summary, our primary concern was the practical impact of so many dwellings, an estimated increase of 45%, on Maidenhead and the lifestyle of its residents both now and in the future.

We recognised that some growth was inevitable and necessary but we believe that

- a) the numbers of homes proposed on many of the sites are unsustainable and inappropriate, and

- b) much greater effort is needed, including an uncomfortable public debate on green field sites, to reach an acceptable compromise solution involving town and country.

Our comments were less constructive than we would have wished because many of the supplementary documents on which the Plan will rely are not yet available and we were not able to assess much of the supporting evidence in the time available.

Headline Comments

- Clearly there is a need for more housing, including affordable homes to meet existing demand, for future growth and, in particular, for the elderly and young families.
- The assessed need of 14,298 new homes across the Borough over the Plan period equates to an increase of 24%. To share the load, we would have preferred to see a simple strategy of adding 24% to each existing settlement, or the creation of new settlements, like the 14 recently announced by the government in other parts of the country, but this was not considered.
- Maidenhead seems destined to take 70% of the total, i.e. 9,968 new homes, which equates to a 45% increase in population and cars. We believe this undermines the aspirations of a safe, healthy, sustainable environment with adverse impacts on public space, flood plain, traffic and infrastructure.
- With its Thames Valley location, unrivalled accessibility and leafy suburbs, Maidenhead is a desirable place to live, offering quality homes in a high quality environment. Adding 10,000 mainly flatted new dwellings (we could see no stipulation for variety), with relaxed rules on heights and infill development threatens both its appeal and its character.
- A particular worry is the apparent removal of restrictions on the height and location of tall buildings in the town centre. The Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan represented a community consensus on town centre rejuvenation. Its policies were firm but flexible and encouraged growth. We believe the AAP policies on tall buildings and the need for a sustainable mix and choice of housing in the town centre should be retained.
- Notable omissions are anything constructive on Arts, Culture and Tourism in Maidenhead.

Overall, we felt we were being asked to agree a Plan which doesn't yet paint a full picture, overturns much of the community-approved Town Centre AAP, and came without vital supporting documents like the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, a Transport or Parking strategy, or a Design Guide.

In our comments on detailed aspects of the Plan we questioned the oversupply of flats. Certainly there will be a market for young commuters but we must not assume

that flatted accommodation is an answer to the increasing ageing population. When downsizing, people often prefer houses with gardens. And we insisted that all new housing developments should comply with the Nationally Described Standards for minimum sizes and include adequate parking.

We were unconvinced too by the merits of the proposal to build 2,000 homes on the golf course. Was this just another political expediency? When in future the town has to expand still further, as it surely will, and we've already scraped the sky, this may well be seen as a missed opportunity to preserve a useful area of parkland, close to the town centre – a town centre which currently has below the national average of public green space. There are far less attractive areas of Green Belt, which could have been considered in the debate that was never held – but may have to be...

Houses to flats

The tendency to demolish large family homes and replace with blocks of flats continues. Last time we reported that a proposal at **Green Trees** in Widbrook Road had been refused permission. This large detached “arts and crafts” style house was to make way for a development of 12 flats (10 x 2-bed and 2 x 1-bed). It was refused for being un-neighbourly, out of character and with too much height, mass and bulk - quite rightly in our opinion. Regretfully, the developers have submitted a second application and are trying again. It is claimed that the new application addresses some of the reasons for previous refusal. In fact the most significant change is that the total number of bedrooms has been increased - with 12 x 2-bed flats now proposed. Such a “Shoppenhangers” style development would be a real retrograde step for the Riverside and it is hoped that the previous reasons for refusal will apply.

A similar proposal has been submitted for two large houses on Church Road, Bray. **Zaman House** and **Awan House** have been significantly extended and modified in recent years. They are situated on the Fishery Estate, but outside the relevant Conservation Area. 16 flats are proposed in two blocks. Such a dense flatted development would be completely out of character with the neighbourhood. In addition, a major fault with the application is the proposal to create a new vehicular entrance/exit direct on to Bray Road - rather than the current exit arrangements via Church Road. Yet again we have an example of the demolition of perfectly sound large houses to provide a high number of “sustainable” apartments. Existing houses have an established green footprint and considerable energy and materials have been expended in their construction and subsequent demolition.

Three adjacent sites on Oldfield Road have been identified for residential development. Working southwards, **Unit 5, The Amber Centre and Thames Auto Sales** have all featured in previous newsletters. Previously identified as suitable for thirty dwellings on the total site, an application has now been submitted for 67 flats. Many of these flats are below the minimum Nationally Described Standard which should not be acceptable. The height of the blocks rises from two storeys next to the railway to four storeys along Oldacres - opposite existing two storey properties. This illustrates exactly the current issue discussed previously: squeezing in too many rabbit hutches to generate as much profit as possible and achieve numerical targets.

Whilst others argue that there is a market for such developments, an oversupply of flats will see a lack of demand drive down prices, whilst family homes will be in short supply and increasingly unaffordable. Meanwhile, more and more people will be living in homes which are unsuited to their needs.

However, some applications are for the demolition of existing properties to make way for the construction of ...houses! There are currently two examples in the pipeline. It is proposed to develop 8 houses on the site of 22 to 24 Braywick Road - two detached houses which would be demolished. We are pleased that the proposal is for houses, rather than flats. However, the number of dwellings is too high, and realistically the site would support only 4 or 5 houses. The current proposal is too crowded and un-neighbourly and adversely impacts the street scene. Likewise, a pair of semis is proposed for demolition at **34 to 36 Laggan Road**, to be replaced by 6 houses, and the attempt to construct a terrace of 4 x 3-bed dwellings to the rear in the large back garden is too cramped with very small gardens and a resultant loss of privacy for adjacent neighbours. Two new dwellings replace the demolished semis at the front and are repositioned to allow for parking and access to the houses to the rear. Such a development is symptomatic of the risks and opportunities associated with attempts at back garden grabbing. It is important that in attempting to deliver more houses to replace existing properties on large plots developers are sympathetic in their proposals. Maximising the number of dwelling units can destroy the character of the surrounding area and contribute to loss of privacy or amenity for neighbours.

Thames Riviera Hotel

Our monthly Planning Group meetings have continued, and approximately 50 applications were reviewed in the past three months. Comments on 18 proposals were submitted to the Borough. December was a record month with 8 applications requiring comment. In particular, we were very concerned at the proposed redevelopment and change of use of the **Thames Riviera Hotel** to create 29 flats. This was anticipated in our last newsletter. Our letter of objection (which is summarised below and can be seen in full on our website) criticised the use of a rectangular modern style in a predominantly Victorian setting but, in particular, objected to the loss of important visitor facilities in Maidenhead's main tourist area, another example of the ongoing privatisation of Maidenhead Riverside. This proposal raises a fundamental strategic planning issue regarding the ongoing privatisation of Maidenhead Riverside. The banks of the River Thames are a magnet for visitors to our town and it is essential that there are dining, drinking, hotel or other leisure facilities to appeal to visitors and residents alike. This appeal has applied since late Victorian times, and the emphasis has generally been on day visitors rather than overnighters. However, as the riverbank becomes privatised with residential buildings, there is an increasing risk that we are losing amenities for day and evening visitors. We suggested that if permission were granted to convert the hotel into residential accommodation, the development should be required to include a public-use facility at ground floor level, e.g. a café, bar, restaurant or other leisure amenity.



The main hotel building has many architectural features, and indeed the photograph (attributed to the 1960's, *left*) in the Design and Access Statement illustrates how attractive the building and the setting was in its heyday. It is clear that the proposed extension and other changes to the eastern

facade of the main hotel building will be detrimental to the elevations overlooking the Thames and out of character. This is the most highly visible architectural facade when approaching our town over Maidenhead Bridge. Much of this proposed development does not adequately reflect the requirements of a Conservation Area. Flat roofs have been introduced into the design and much of the late Victorian architectural style of the host building of the main hotel is obliterated.



Proposed north elevation, i.e. as seen from the A4



Proposed east elevation, i.e. as seen from across the river

We are opposed to this residential development of the Thames Riviera Hotel for the following key reasons:

- Resultant privatisation of the riverside - for future generations.
- Loss of visitor amenity facility to Maidenhead Riverside.
- Unsuitability and incongruity of architectural design for a sensitive Conservation Area.
- The high visual prominence of the site requires more sympathetic design
- Visual intrusion of modern facades to elevations facing eastwards over the River Thames.
- Rectangular modern styling, esp. south block.
- Too many flat roofs which are out of character.
- Increase in footprint – with southern bedroom block previously constructed.
- Below standard living spaces in some apartments.
- Inadequate parking provision.

We are concerned that short term opportunistic development will encourage this and similar business establishments in sensitive locations to resort to residential change of use. This proposal is unsatisfactory for a high profile, landmark site at the eastern gateway to our town. It will visually blight Maidenhead Bridge and its setting for generations to come.

Riverside Strategy

On a positive Riverside note, it is good to report that, following representations from the Civic Society, the Borough is establishing a working group to determine a Leisure Development Strategy for the Riverside. Such a policy (if effectively implemented) would protect and enhance the character, leisure facilities and other amenities offered within this landmark location.

In our last newsletter we reported in depth about the proposal to construct a community centre in a riverside location - on land to the rear of Boulters Lock Car Park. This application was “withdrawn” in early December. It is understood that paperwork required by the Environment Agency had not been submitted. It is anticipated that the application will resurface in the near future. We remain opposed to any development on this site, and believe that the land should be retained to provide additional car parking at some future stage, when it will surely be required.

Objection to Mill Lane closure falls on deaf ears

Buckinghamshire County Council has ignored The Society’s objections and those of other residents and amenity groups to the closure of Mill Lane, Taplow.

Bollards blocking off the road at the bridge over the Jubilee River were installed in January (*see opposite*). As the Berkeley Homes housing development continues apace, this means that as many as 1,000 new residents will be cut off from their host village and, along with existing residents and businesses, forced to use the busy A4.



The closure will also impede access from Taplow to the new picnic area and footbridge planned as part of the Berkeley development.

Martin McNamee and Bob Dulson

Dinner with a Royal Flavour

On a cold Friday evening at the end of January, nearly 60 Society members and guests gathered for our annual dinner at Moor Hall, Cookham. At the end of such a memorable year for the Royal family, with many of the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations on our doorstep, we were very fortunate to be able to hear from someone with such a unique perspective. Sally Osman, Director of Royal Communications gave us a fascinating insight into the relationship between the Royal Family and the media.



Forthcoming Events

Visit to Taplow Court, Cliveden Road, Taplow, Bucks SL6 0ER Wednesday 22nd March 2017

We have arranged a private guided tour of Taplow Court house and gardens to be followed by tea and cake. Please be at the venue by 2.15pm for a 2.30pm start. The cost, to include refreshments, is £5.00 per person for Society members and £6.00 for non-members. If you would like to attend, please telephone Mike Copeland on 01628 634181 and send your cheque together with your name and contact details to Mike at: 14 Laburnham Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 4DB. There is a maximum of 30 places and the closing date is 15th March 2017. Please use the entrance on the main road and we will meet in the car park.



Taplow Court is a mid-19th century mansion set high above the Thames, near Maidenhead and is now the home of SGI-UK, a lay Buddhist society. In the 18th century, it was the home of the Earls and Countesses of Orkney and in the mid-19th century was given its present Jacobean-revival/French Gothic appearance by the architect William Burn. At the turn of the 19th/20th century it became the home of William Henry Grenfell and his wife Ettie,

where they hosted gatherings of the elite, aristocratic group “the Souls”.

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

Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society (MAHS)

(Talks held at the RVS Centre, 42 York Road, Maidenhead SL6 1SH; 7.30 for 8pm; visitors £2; contact 01628 630924 for talks, and 01628 629614 for outings)

Wednesday 22nd February: Talk by Richard Poad “Dunkirk, Little Ships”

Wednesday 29th March: Talk by Tony Weston “Mushrooms and a Marathon: The Life and Times of the Albert Hall”

Wednesday 26th April: A G M and talk by the Chairman, Brian Boulter, on a local topic.

Archaeology in Marlow (AiM)

(Talks held at the Liston Hall, Marlow, SL7 1DD; £4.50 non-members; contact 01628 485961)

Thursday 23rd February, 8pm: *Joining the Dots: Recent Research on the late Iron Age and Roman landscape around Aylesbury* Talk by Eliza Alqassar

Thursday 9th March, 8pm: *My work as a Dendrochronologist* by Dr Martin Bridge – Institute of Archaeology (jointly with **Marlow Archaeological Society, MAS**)

Thursday 27th April, 8pm: *Reluctant Recruits: Conscription in Marlow in the First World War* by Andy Ford

In Memoriam

2016 saw the passing of two of the Society's long standing members, both of whom had made a tremendous contribution to Maidenhead's amenity and environment – core objectives of the Civic Society.

Margaret Bowdery, MBE (1933-2016)

Margaret, who passed away in November last year, worked tirelessly to improve access to the countryside of Maidenhead and the surrounding areas by improving the footpath network. A founder member of the East Berks Ramblers Association (EBRA) she was awarded an MBE in 2006 for her services to rambling. She had been a member of the Civic Society since 1976.

I first met Margaret after I became involved in helping put together a leaflet about a new walk, from Cookham through Maidenhead to Bray. This was an idea of Peter Nevell, EBRA chairman, who approached the Society for help. Originally called the linear park it was renamed by Peter to the “Green Way”, and in 1985 the Society published “*An introduction to the Green Way*”.



*Walk of Green Way in 1985 led by Cllr Frank Robinson and Peter Nevell.
Margaret is towards the back of the group.*

Given that the Green Way was to be a streamside path it was somewhat disconcerting that, a few years later in 1988, the stream dried out. Margaret and I then became founding members of the Green Way Working Group (GWWG) that aimed to get it flowing again. This group still meets twice a year and the Green Way leaflet, now published by the Royal Borough, is in its 4th edition.

Thus began many years of collaboration, initially making sure that missing links in the Green Way were achieved and attempting to solve problems relating to low flow by initiating the spraying of obstructing reeds (the Windows project), then as the

Millennium approached, collaborating to create the Millennium Walk, a walking route from Hurley across country to Maidenhead.

Margaret featured many times in our newsletters. The following photos indicate the contribution she made to the work of the Society.



2000 - Inaugural walk of the Millennium Walk, led by the future Prime Minister!

2005 - Margaret campaigned for a new path under the A404 which, courtesy of three questions in parliament by our MP and a public enquiry, was finally created. Our MP cut the ribbon to let walkers through the Bowdery arch. The path links the Thames Path at Marlow with the Millennium Walk at Malders Lane.



2011 - Margaret helping to waymark the new permitted path agreed across BCA land, from the top of Prospect Hill to opposite Temple Golf Club, a missing link in the Millennium Walk.



2011 - Margaret spring cleaning the bridge across the White Brook in preparation for the Boundary Walk. From 2006 to 2012 boundary walkers were given permission to use another missing link in the Millennium Walk, from the Lower Cookham Road to the Thames Path that crossed the bridge.

2012 - Margaret with the Millennium Walk leaflet that describes this route, published jointly by East Berks Ramblers and the Civic Society.



2012 - Margaret among those involved in creating the newly achieved missing link from the top of Prospect Hill to Temple Golf Club.

If Margaret was still with us she would be preparing to help get another missing link in the Millennium Walk created, that from the Lower Cookham Road to the Thames Path – a path that EBRA hoped to get in 1977 as a Silver Jubilee project.

Hopefully, forty years later, the path may finally materialise due to development planned nearby. This path would be a worthy memorial to Margaret who worked tirelessly to improve access to the countryside and to create urban paths for commuters.

Ann Darracott

Miss Rosa Lee, MBE (1924-2016)

Tributes have been paid to a wildlife trust founder, described as a ‘passionate conservationist with a zest for life’ who passed away in September. The Woolley Firs Conservation Trust, now managed by the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, will stand as a permanent memorial to Rosa Lee, 91, who was born on Christmas Eve in 1924. Rosa had been a member of the Civic Society since 1969.



A keen traveller with a love of nature, Rosa first served in the Women’s Royal Naval Service during the latter part of the Second World War, but at some stage contracted TB, which prompted a return to the Isle of Wight, to recuperate at the Ventnor Sanatorium, now, somewhat fittingly, a botanic garden and also the site of many pre-war family holidays. Despite being advised to rest from the TB, in the 1950s Rosa began to travel. Beginning in Borneo, where she climbed Mount Kinabalu, she also went to Hong Kong, Cambodia, and Italy, where she had distant relatives.

Rosa was fortunate enough to benefit from a family inheritance, acquiring Woolley Firs estate in the late ‘50s. But it wasn’t until the early ‘60s that she returned to Berkshire to manage and rebuild the small run-down estate in Littlewick Green. Asked to provide an occupation for Rosa on her death certificate we opted for “conservationist”. Her interests, reflected in membership of Societies like the RFS, Fauna and Flora International and the CPRE, go back a very long way. She was well ahead of contemporary opinion in her love of gardens, trees and the countryside. And she put her money where her mouth was: the Woolley Firs Conservation Trust and the good use BBOWT now make of it, stands as a permanent memorial to Rosa’s vision and tenacity, and for which she was deservedly awarded the MBE. Today, visitors are able to enjoy the 300-year-old-farm and varied woodland, which is managed to provide a haven for wildlife.

*Woolley Firs Nature Centre,
Cherry Garden Lane,
Littlewick Green*



From information supplied by Richard Malins (Rosa’s godson)

News from the Heritage Centre

EXHIBITIONS

Flood!

This exhibition marks the 70th anniversary of the great flood of March 1947, which is the benchmark for flood protection policies and modern building regulations. Our exhibition includes dozens of photographs of floods from 1947 to 2014, as well as historic newsreel footage. If you experienced any of the floods which affected Maidenhead and would like to share your memories please contact curator@maidenheadheritage.org.uk.

1st February to 29 April 2017. Cost: Free

Maidenhead in the 1950s

This new exhibition will include sections on the Vanwall racing car and the Fairey Rotodyne, both projects closely associated with Maidenhead. 60 years ago Stirling Moss drove the Vanwall to victory in the British Grand Prix at Aintree – the first time a British driver won the British GP driving a British car. Later the same year, the revolutionary Fairey Rotodyne (the world's first vertical take-off airliner) made its maiden flight from White Waltham airfield. If you worked for either Vanwall or Fairey and would like to share your memories, please contact curator@maidenheadheritage.org.uk.

3rd May to 30th September 2017. Cost: Free

Maidenhead in 100 objects

Description: This new exhibition will trace the fascinating history of Maidenhead through objects in our own collection. From the Stone Age to racing cars, aeroplanes and computers Maidenhead's history is well worth delving into! And if you have any special items which you would be willing to loan to help illustrate this history, please contact curator@maidenheadheritage.org.uk.

4th October to 21st December 2017. Cost: Free

PERMANENT EXHIBITIONS

Story of Maidenhead

Display of artefacts related to Maidenhead and surroundings, from 100AD to the current time. Don't miss the roman skeleton found near Bray about 1600 years ago!

Cost: Free

Grandma flew Spitfires

Exhibition and archive dedicated to the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA).

Cost: £3.50 adults, £2 children aged 11-16 (10 and under free). Tickets valid for multiple return visits within 12 months. Simulator £15 per 30 minutes (£10 for Advantage card holders).

As always, full news and information about the Heritage Centre is available on our website www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 22nd March 2017

Visit and Afternoon Tea

Taplow Court house, near Cliveden, Taplow

2.15 for 2.30 pm

Saturday 22nd - Sunday 23rd July 2016

Maidenhead Festival

CIVIC SOCIETY – KEY CONTACTS

Executive Chairman	Bob Dulson, Bryher, Islet Road, SL6 8HT	627130
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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2017

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

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

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 22nd November 2017 at 8.00 pm, venue to be announced

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
of the Newsletter is 21st April 2017**

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