



# Maidenhead Civic Society

Estd. 1960

# NEWS

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Issue 4/20

November 2020

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*Will this new government initiative be a help or a hindrance?  
See page 13 for our views*

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

# The Chairman's Page

**MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY** was inaugurated at a public meeting held on 18th May 1960. At the time, plans were being laid for the redevelopment of Maidenhead town centre and the Borough Council saw the need for the people of Maidenhead to participate in this process.

Scroll forward to 2020 and we've spent much of the current year considering the implications of the Borough's emerging Local Plan, a Vision & Charter for the town centre, and latterly the government's White Paper all of which would benefit from a commitment to ongoing community involvement in the planning process.

In September 1960 the Society formally adopted its constitution, with the first two principal objects being: 1) To stimulate public consciousness and appreciation of the beauty, history and character of the neighbourhood and its surroundings; and 2) To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of the features which go to make pleasant and convenient conditions in which to live and work.

With few amendments these sentiments still form the core of the Society's purpose and have been the guide for our activities during the past 60 years.

That we reached our sixtieth anniversary year facing a similar series of challenges to those we faced at our foundation is testament to the continuing need for a Civic Society and the checks, balances, help and guidance it provides.

I trust you agree.

*Bob Dulson*

## A Note about the AGM

The Society is obliged to hold an Annual General Meeting "in or about November each year". For obvious reasons, for this year it will not be possible to do this in a face-to-face meeting. Instead, as has been the case with most other organisations, we will hold our meeting online, via Zoom, but still on the planned date of Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November. About two weeks prior to the meeting, all those members for whom we have an email address will receive a "Keeping in Touch" email with details of how to join the meeting, the agenda and supporting papers. It is regrettable that some members will not be able to participate but we see no way around this. Please keep an eye out for the invitation, and then join us on the day.

# **60<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY**

**To be held on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**at 8.00pm, via Zoom**

## **AGENDA**

1. Introduction by the Chairman of the Committee
2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting
3. Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 (see page 7)
4. Chairman's Report for 2019/2020
5. To approve the election of Members of the Committee. *See note below.*
6. Election of the Officers  
To elect from the Committee Members a Chairman, an Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer
7. Any other business.

### ***Election of Committee Members***

There currently are twelve Committee Members: Bob Dulson, Eileen Goford, Peter Child, Martin McNamee, Ann Darracott, Brian Darracott, Joyce Delasalle, Roger Panton, Ian Rose, Tina Sell, Mac Kenny and Derek Wilson. Under the terms of the Society's Constitution the Committee shall consist of eight to twelve Members including the Officers. One third of the Committee Members who are not Officers must retire each year and shall be eligible for re-election. Accordingly, Joyce Delasalle, Roger Panton and Ian Rose will retire, and all offer themselves for re-election.

The Membership is invited to make nominations for the position of Committee Members. The nominations, in writing, should be accompanied by a seconder and the consent of the nominee, and be with the Hon. Secretary at least 14 days prior to the AGM.

# MINUTES OF THE 59<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY

**Held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at the Methodist High Street Church**

31 persons in attendance.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Tony Hardy, Mac Kenny, Georgina Madge, Judith McConachie, Ian Rose, Sue Ross.
2. **Approval of Minutes of 58<sup>th</sup> AGM:** The minutes were approved as read. Proposed by Ann Darracott, seconded by Martin McNamee.
3. **Accounts for the Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019:** Overall there was a small deficit under 300 pounds for the year. Subscriptions were down. Our membership is dwindling. We do have the initiative to recruit new members. Donations increased by over 500 pounds, thanks principally to a generous grant from Shell UK Limited. We made savings of 241 pounds on the production of the newsletter. 421 pounds more was spent on social events, mainly the annual dinner. Accounts were accepted. Proposed by Brian Darracott and seconded by Derek Wilson.
4. **Chairman's Report:** After drawing our attention to his report in the Newsletter, Bob reiterated our ambition to proceed with the Heritage Listing, an ambition shared by Maidenhead Neighbourhood Forum. He deplored: the fact that 80% of planning applications are for flats; the reduction in living space with an increasing number of undersized dwellings especially in office conversions; and the under-provision of affordable housing with only 4.5% of completions in 2018- against a target of 30%. He commended Ann Darracott on her tireless commitment to, and work for our many projects and looked forward to her publication of a comprehensive book on Ockwells Manor. The themed teas have proved to be popular and informative. The *Maidenhead and Me* event will return in 2020 without a Children's category. Consultation and Community Engagement should be compulsory. We remain the voice of considered opinion not knee-jerk reaction. We used to be considered a stakeholder but now are consultees. We wish to be more involved with RBWM and will attempt to raise our profile through the Maidenhead Advertiser and a potent social media presence. We are still looking for a Chairman-elect and would welcome ideas of how to recruit members in the 40-50 year old bracket while retaining the wisdom we have acquired over our sixty years.
5. **Election to Committee:** Martin McNamee, Jodie Humphries and Bob Dulson stand down. Bob and Martin offer themselves for re-election. Mac Kenny and Derek Wilson were nominated to stand for election to fill the empty spaces. All were elected. Proposed by Brian Darracott and seconded by Peter Child.
6. **Election of Officers:** Bob Dulson-chairman: Peter Child-Honorary Treasurer and Eileen Goford-Honorary Secretary were elected. Proposed by Derek Wilson and seconded by Brian Ball.
7. **Any Other Business:** 1. Spencers Farm: Proposal for 300 houses and 3-form entry primary school is open for consultation. Civic Society will comment but individual comments as well are solicited. 1/3 is floodplain. 2. Own response to BLP. 3. Members recognize and acknowledge our contribution to Battlemead Common and the themed teas.

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT OF THE YEAR

The office of Chairman of the Society has still found no takers so I have continued to fill the role during the past year. Despite this uncertainty the Society has functioned well thanks to the unremitting efforts of members of the Executive Committee. However, I reiterate what I said in last year's report: the Society faces challenges that would be better met with new energy, ideas and enthusiasm. It is essential that the Society fulfils its role with vigour. That goes for the chairmanship also. If you know of anyone who would be a good candidate for our executive committee or appropriate as chair-elect, please get in touch.

Over the last twelve months much of the Society's time has been dominated by Battlemead Common and 'big picture' planning while Covid played havoc with our events programme. Our 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations were postponed and several other initiatives, like the Heritage Listing project and a revival of our art competition, were forced into the pending tray; but otherwise it's been business as usual, or as near "usual" as possible under the constraints.

### Projects

**Battlemead Common:** Former farmland of White Place farm was purchased by the Royal Borough in 2018 as **public open space** and to provide a missing link in the Millennium Walk from Lower Cookham Road to the Thames towpath. This Walk follows the 1934 northern boundary of Maidenhead across the site, as does the Boundary Walk. As members of the Friends of Battlemead Common (FOBC), the Society and the Royal Borough have been attempting to reach a compromise solution to the demands of public access, wildlife, and dog owners in an ongoing process which includes our monitoring of the aquatic fauna and groundwater on Battlemead until December 2020. In September, following advice from Sport England, we were able to use the route for our anniversary walk (see Events) and we are now hopeful that in future the missing link will be open for public use from April to September at least.

**Green Way** Although meetings of the Green Way Working group (GWWG) were suspended, monitoring of both the path itself and North Town Moor pond continued and reports have been submitted. Happily, the faunal diversity of the pond improved once we removed a tree stump that badgers had been demolishing causing woody debris to enter the pond.

In addition, at the request of Maidenhead Waterways, Ann helped to monitor the effect of a 5-week trial (in June/July) of the blue dye Dyofix to control blanket weed in the Chapel Arches basin. Her report concluded not only that the dye worked, without any effect on the other main flora, but that the decomposed blanket weed provided food for small fish and wild fowl including resident swans, mallards, and moor hens.





*Ann monitoring the aquatic fauna – with some help from the swans!*

**Ockwells Manor:** Work on this heritage project continues with a view to publication. This year we were fortunate to secure an archive of material, left in the house by former owners of Ockwells. This material was given by owner Sidney Harold Barnett to his estate manager, Mr Peter William Cannon, as he was leaving. Mr Cannon was also manager for Patrick Wilkinson Chung, the next owner. Ockwells, as far as we know, is still on the market.

## **Planning**

The importance of community involvement in the planning process is something the Society values highly and consistently advocates. It's a principle which latterly our umbrella body Civic Voice has also begun to campaign for vigorously in the context of the government White Paper on planning reforms, *Planning for the Future*. As part of that there is an attempt to classify civic societies as 'statutory consultees' in the planning process, alongside the likes of Parish Councils and the Environment Agency.

The need for comprehensive community involvement, which would see active public participation throughout the planning process, underpinned the main thrust of the Society's arguments in response to both the emerging Borough Local Plan and the government's White Paper as well as our support for Maidenhead Neighbourhood Forum to be designated authors of a Neighbourhood Plan. It was also used to good effect in encouraging the council to undertake a visioning exercise for the town centre, an ongoing process in which the Society is directly involved.

On average our Planning Group usually considers around 180 planning applications a year and is drawn to comment on perhaps 50 of them. This year the number of submitted applications has been depressed by the pandemic, though they included

some major schemes. Undoubtedly the most significant has been the proposal to demolish Nicholsons to recreate the heart of Maidenhead with a new layout of shops, offices and apartments, incorporating an “eye-catching” 25-storey tower block. We expressed our reservations. The oversupply of flats in and around the town centre is a key concern which we continue to highlight at every opportunity. It was part of our objection to the proposal to convert the Thames Riviera Hotel to residential use which we fought and won.

During the year the Planning Group was pleased to welcome Judith Littlewood as a member and we are indebted to her and her colleagues for their continued vigilance on planning matters under the perceptive guidance of group chairman Martin McNamee.

## Membership

Although we were unable to promote the Society at the usual fayres and festivals, during the year we were delighted to welcome 6 new members: Mr Matthew Shaw, Mr Duncan Johnston, Mr Ian Patterson & Mr Philip Eaton and Mr & Mrs J Norman. However, unfortunately we also lost several members for various reasons, many moving away to be closer to relatives.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Memberships (Family, Honorary, Life, etc.)	236	233	232	227	223	219
Total Members (Excl Corp)	345	344	340	329	322	306
Life members	99	94	91	86	82	78
Honorary Members	18	19	18	17	14	18
Corporate	1	1	1	1	2	2

In the current year to date (2020-2021) we have one new member. We are extremely grateful to Joyce Delasalle who manages our membership, and much more. If you know of anyone who may be interested in joining the Society please let us know.

## Events

The AGM in November 2019 was very well attended and our guest speaker, Charles Campion from JTP Architects, who led to the work on the town centre Vision & Charter, spoke convincingly about the benefits of Collaborative Planning. As JTP are also involved with the regeneration of the shopping centre it was interesting to learn about the processes involved.

Sadly, the coronavirus restrictions took their toll on many of our plans in 2020 and consequently most events are on hold. One exception was the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Millennium Walk, originally planned for May, which took place in September over part of the route from Pinkneys Green to the Thames Path. Organised by Ann Darracott together with the East Berkshire Ramblers, we had two

groups walking in smaller ‘bubbles’, led by our Patron Theresa May MP and her husband Sir Philip May.

Our thanks are due to Tina Sell and her Events Team who plan to resume other activities, including our *Theme Tea* programme, as soon as they are able. As things stand, we will not be having an Annual Dinner in 2020 but we have provisional arrangements to hold one at Moor Hall in Cookham in May 2021. Watch this space!!

In conclusion it remains for me to thank a few others who make the Society function. First, those who organise and run the Newsletter and its distribution, Sue Ross and all the distributors of the Newsletter. Then Brian Darracott for editing the Newsletter to a consistently attractive standard and for maintaining our website. And of course to our esteemed Hon Treasurer, Peter Child, our dedicated Secretary, Eileen Goford, and other members of the committee. We are fortunate in having their continued support. Our thanks to all of them.

*Bob Dulson*

## **TREASURER’S REPORT**

The annual accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 are included in this Newsletter. The main points are as follows:

Overall, there was a surplus for the year of income over expenditure of £803. Last year there was a deficit of £284. The main reasons for the improvement are the increase in subscription rates and the income generating social events, particularly the jazz evening.

### Income

Total income has increased by £1394. Subscription income (which includes top up donations) and gift aid increased by £680. Member numbers declined by 5 but this was compensated by the increase in annual subscription rates. Sadly, there has been no annual dinner this year. Last year there was a deficit on the annual dinner; this year the jazz evening and themed teas produced a surplus of £273.

### Expenditure

Expenditure overall has increased by £307 on the previous year. Several areas of expenditure (the newsletter, insurance, annual subscriptions) remain much the same. New posters at £126 were approved and urgent project work at Battlemead Common for £125 was approved. Hire of rooms for meetings increased by £186 because in years gone by the monthly meeting was often held at the Advertiser offices without charge. This arrangement ceased in the summer of 2018 and there has since then been a monthly charge at St. Luke’s church hall.

### Balance of Funds

The Society accounts show bank funds in hand of £11,781 compared to £10,622 in the previous year. As at today funds have risen to £13,250.

*Peter Child*



**MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY - Charity No.  
272102**

**Annual Accounts for Year ended 31st May  
2020**

**2018-2019**

**2019-2020**

**INCOME**

559	Donations/Grants/Bequests	300
2,489	Subscriptions Received During Year	3,050
46	Interest On Bank And Other Deposits	59
517	Tax Refunds On Gift Aid	636
(687)	Surplus (Deficit) on social events	273
<b><u>2,924</u></b>	<b>Total</b>	<b><u>4,318</u></b>

**EXPENDITURE**

**Administration**

228	General Expenses, Printing, Postage, Etc.	373
1,378	Newsletter	1,363
270	Hire Of Rooms, Speakers And Meeting Expenses	456
394	Subscriptions	374
231	Insurance	285
173	Ockwells And Associated Projects (Net Costs)	364
232	Maidenhead & Me	0
302	Website	300
<b><u>3,208</u></b>	<b>Total</b>	<b><u>3,515</u></b>

<b>(284)</b>	<b>SURPLUS (DEFICIT) of Income over Expenditure</b>	<b>803</b>
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11,579	Balance Brought Forward	11,295
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<b><u>11,295</u></b>	<b>Balance Carried Forward</b>	<b><u>12,098</u></b>
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**FUNDS**

941	Bank (Lloyds TSB)	2,041
9,681	Charities Deposit General Fund (COIF)	9,740
849	Subscriptions & Insurance Payments In Advance	726
(176)	Member subscriptions in Advance and Expenses paid in June	(409)
<b><u>11,295</u></b>	<b>BALANCE OF FUNDS</b>	<b><u>£12,098</u></b>

**Peter Child - Hon. Treasurer - 2 October 2020**

# Planning Matters

During the coronavirus crisis the monthly meetings of the Planning Group continue to be suspended. The weekly listings of new planning applications are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Recently there has been a lull in significant applications and only one or two per month are worthy of submitting comments. We are always watchful for applications for development on the floodplain, especially where extensions may exceed the level of increase in footprint permitted under the relevant policy. The one major scheme that has been proposed since the last newsletter is for the demolition of **Braywick Gate** and **Statesman House** which are located on the site forming the north east quadrant of the Braywick Road/Stafferton Way roundabout. The application is in two parts – firstly, detailed permission for the demolition of Statesman House which is to be replaced by a larger office block and secondly, an outline application for the demolition of Braywick Gate with a larger office block on the site of the existing building and an additional residential block of 115 flats on the site of the main parking area which currently serves the existing offices. Our full comments can be seen below but in summary we are not happy with the reduction in the level of parking provision across the site, the loss of 41 trees and the unsuitable location of the proposed residential block which is surrounded by office blocks on two sides, a multi-storey carpark (MSCP) on the east side and the railway embankment to the north. There is a view that it would be more suitable to extend the existing MSCP westwards rather than develop the proposed Vicus Way MSCP which is unpopular with many residents of the Loftings. The Vicus Way site could then be used for residential development. It is understood that arrangements are too far progressed for such a site swap to be considered.

You will have seen that the appeal to convert the **Thames Riviera Hotel** into 30-plus residential flats has been dismissed. The appeal process comprised many hours of online representations over two days. The RBWM had refused planning permission on three counts. By the time of the appeal two of those objections had been withdrawn – namely flood plain concerns and the non-provision of affordable units. There were fears that the case would be lost, but the detrimental impact of the development on the setting of Maidenhead Bridge and the surrounding Conservation Area persuaded the inspector that the proposed development should not be permitted. Maidenhead Civic Society and Boulters Lock Community Interest Company made other points – especially the ongoing privatisation of the river bank, together with two residents directly impacted by the scheme. It is to be hoped that the owners, Galleon Hotels, part of the giant Arena Leisure Group, accept the decision and turn their attention to investing in making the Riviera Hotel a landmark heritage asset that will enhance Maidenhead Riverside for years to come. Roux and Boulters have shown that it can be done. Anyhow, the outcome has restored some faith in the planning appeals process.

The September meeting of the Development and Control Panel considered a further application to demolish **Zaman House** in Church Road (Fisheries) and replace with a block of eight residential flats. Two previous, similar applications had been refused,

with the most recent refusal (which included a new access onto Maidenhead Road) subject to a pending appeal. Although refused previously and completely out of character with the locality, this proposal to introduce flats to a residential setting of large houses on substantial plots was recommended for approval by the planning department. The only significant change from previous applications was that the entry/exit point to the development had been restored to Church Road. We were very concerned at the officers' recommendation, and are encouraged that the panel decided to defer a decision on the application for one month. Mysteriously, on the eve of the application coming before the Panel, the pending appeal against the previous refusal was withdrawn..... We await further developments.

In the wider world of planning there has been much coverage and discussion relating to the government's radical reform and overhaul of Planning as outlined in a White Paper. There is an inbuilt assumption that the current process slows things down, yet nationally there is more than two years' worth of housing target remaining unbuilt. The government cannot maintain that it is committed to local stakeholder input while riding roughshod over many of the checks and balances that currently preserve the character and suitability of our housing stock and the built environment. We are delighted to see that our MP and patron of Maidenhead Civic Society has taken strong views against many of the new proposals.

### **STATESMAN HOUSE/BRAYWICK GATE**

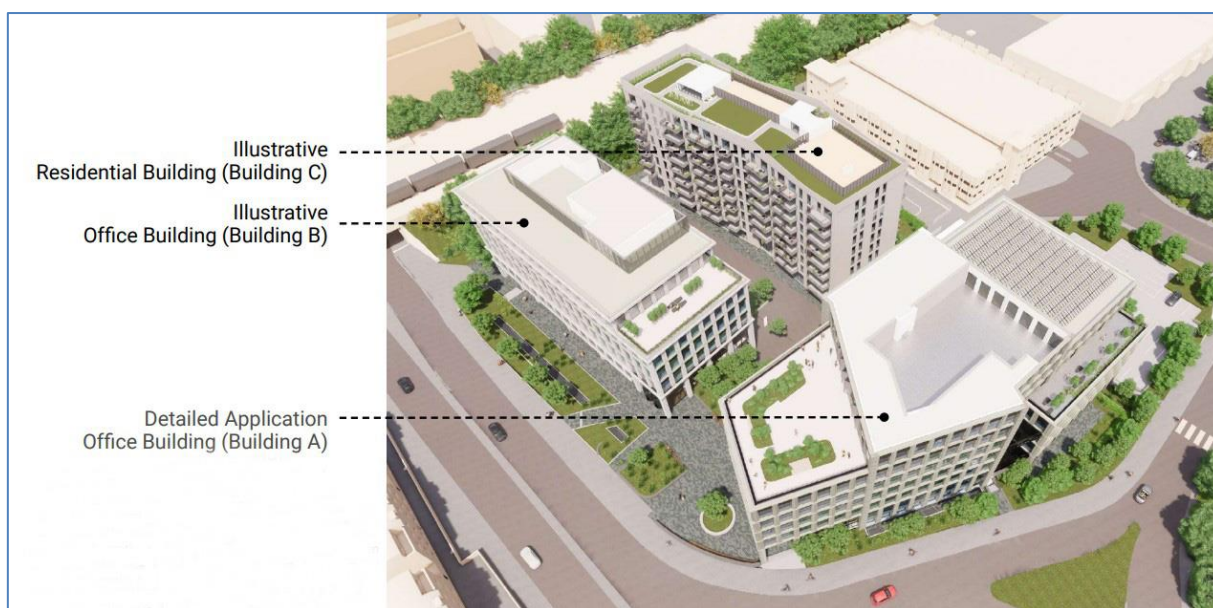
This application is in two parts – detailed permission for Statesman House and outline proposals for Braywick Gate and an additional residential block of flats on the current parking lot which serves the existing office buildings. We commented on the site as a whole.

This is a landmark site on the main approach road from the M4 and the south. The existing office buildings are distinctive and relatively modern. It is assumed that the reconfiguration of the site and the demolition and rebuilding of the two existing offices is to increase the total office space and facilitate office parking (largely underground) within the new office



structures. It is not clear that this is ecologically desirable in carbon footprint terms, but of course it does free up the existing surface parking lot as a site for development.

In terms of height of the proposed offices the prevailing seven storeys is acceptable for the landmark location. In terms of bulk and mass the visual impact of the detailed schematic elevations of Statesman House (Building A) is more satisfactory and varied than the outline treatment indicated for Braywick Gate (Building B). The elevations indicated for Building B are uniform and block-like and lacking in variety and indentation. The Residential Block C at nine storeys is of similar height to the offices and the elevations are heavily balconied, which adds interest to the facades.



Adequate parking provision is a key letting requirement for offices in Maidenhead, in spite of proximity to the railway station. Existing parking spaces for the two offices number 342, many of which are on the surface car park which is proposed as the site for the new residential block. The detailed application for Block A provides 141 spaces which are largely underground. This would appear to be satisfactory even for the increased office space. However, the outline proposal for office Block B – 49 spaces and 56 spaces for residential Block C – is grossly inadequate. The Transport Statement indicates a RBWM requirement of 100 spaces for Block B and 70 spaces for Block C. In overall terms the total parking provision over the entire site has been reduced from 342 existing spaces to 310, which is a significant reduction considering the much greater intensity of development. However, many parking spaces are provided the proportion of electric vehicle charging points should be greater than the proposed 10% if the switch away from fossil fuels is to be delivered.

Whatever the landscaping, public realm and amenity space proposals have for planting, it is regrettable that 41 trees are to be lost across a site that does not have that many. More effort should be made to retain existing trees.

It has to be queried whether Building C is a suitable location for a new residential block of 115 flats. In the Design and Access Statement it is referred to as being in



danger of being a “left out space” in the Masterplan. It will be surrounded by office blocks to the south and west, the railway embankment to the north and an electricity substation and a multi storey car park to the east. Strategically RBWM needs to increase public parking capacity in the Stafferton Way area. The defunct Nene Overland site on Vicus Way is scheduled as a multi storey car park, which is largely unpopular with the residents of The Loftings. We would support a land swap or similar arrangement which we believe would be a better solution for the community by extending the existing MSCP westwards onto the site of Building C. The Vicus Way site could then be developed residentially. Furthermore, a pedestrian bridge link could then be constructed between the MSCP and Platform 1 of Maidenhead Station. We have long supported the idea of this safe and secure commuter facility.

As it stands we object to the proposal because of the inadequate parking provision across the scheme and the unsuitable location of Building C for residential development.

## **PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

Planning inspector Louise Phillips went straight to the heart of the matter in the first couple of days of the public examination of the emerging Borough Local Plan which resumed last month and continues into November.

How did the council resolve the tension between the need to accommodate large numbers of housing in a district so constrained by issues like flood risk, green belt, concerns over high-rise buildings and a desire to preserve the character of the area? Ms Phillips was also keen to know whether the council felt the proposals for Maidenhead would retain its character or change it in some way.

RBWM’s principal policy planner, Ian Motuel, said the council was confident that the increased density would not have a detrimental effect. The scale of growth had been robustly tested, he said. Development would significantly improve access to green space, all sites would require green and blue infrastructure and a tall buildings strategy would make recommendations on maximum heights to protect character.

But while our council strives to deliver a workable Local Plan for the Royal Borough, the government has produced *Planning For The Future*, a White Paper that proposes to “tear down” the current planning system, which has been in place since 1947, and replace it with one based on local design codes and automatic planning consent.

A series of sweeping reforms aims to boost the delivery and “beauty” of new homes in England by cutting red tape and literally re-writing the rulebook, transforming the role of local plans. For example, if they meet certain pre-determined criteria, developers would get ‘automatic’ outline permission to build in a series of “zones” which councils earmark for development. The proposals have brought a mixed reaction from architects, planners and developers, and criticism from our MP.

Maidenhead Civic Society has long argued that the voices of local people need to be included more in planning, both earlier in the process and throughout it. So while

we're encouraged that residents would be involved in determining the proposed "growth", renewal" and "protected" zones, we're concerned at the thought of automation thereafter. Automating planning decisions raises concerns over local democracy. It would, for example, mean scrapping parish planning.

Yes, our current planning system is at times unwieldy and slow and too often frustrated by political influence but nine out of ten applications get approved nationally. And currently across the nation more than one million permitted applications remain unbuilt – 1,558 of them in the Royal Borough.

But the housing crisis isn't just about numbers, and deregulation won't solve it. Recent attempts at streamlining the system have only made matters worse. Permitted development, for example, which allows development within set criteria without planning approval, has led locally to abuse of the floodplain and undersized living accommodation in office conversions. And the latest reforms appear to extend this tick-box presumed approval across the board.

So we were cheered to hear that Theresa May has urged the government to think again. The White Paper's proposals were "mechanistic and ill conceived", she said. "They might build up the number of planning permissions, but not houses."

We sincerely hope that our council and others will demand greater public participation in the process too.

### **NICHOLSON TOWER WILL RUIN THE VIEW, SAYS NT**

Plans for an "eye-catching" 25-storey tower block in the proposed new Nicholson Quarter would ruin the view from Cliveden, according to the National Trust.

A tower which is more than half the height again of the highest building approved for "The Landing" development and exceeds by a third the maximum height suggested in the Council's own Tall Building Strategy would, they say, be a "significant and discordant" feature when viewed from Cliveden's heritage rich site.

In a three-page letter to planners, the Trust says that although the views from Cliveden to Maidenhead have changed over the years, the built form and height has grown uniformly without a modern "eye catcher" but the proposed 25-storey building would change this situation and adversely impact the setting of Cliveden's heritage assets and the significance of the view. The Trust also endorsed a criticism by Historic England that the building would become a "beacon from Cliveden... especially at night".

Meanwhile, unconnected with the NT, word reaches us that owners Areli are considering amending their plans for the Nicholsons Quarter. To what extent and why we shall have to wait and see.

*Martin McNamee and Bob Dulson*



## From the Archives

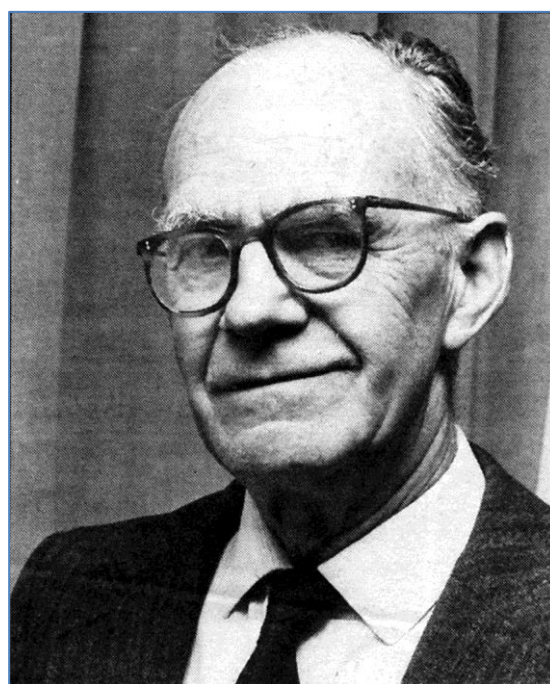
Many members will recall that on the occasion of the Society's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary we compiled a special edition of the Newsletter which featured a number of items from our archive. I say "archive" as it's really just a disparate collection of material that various Committee members appear to have hung onto over the years and which have somehow ended up in my hands! This year the Society celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday and to put that into some sort of perspective I thought it would be interesting to see what we were up to (and against!) all those years ago. Well, the earliest set of business papers that I can find relate to the Committee meetings for 1966-67 and these seem to have been "donated" to me by the late Michael Bayley – a (very) long-term Society member. Below I reproduce the Chairman's Annual Report for the period 1966-67, delivered at the AGM held on Wednesday 19 July 1967 in the Town Hall, followed by a couple of other snippets from that time.

My immediate impressions from reading it are firstly how relatively formal the language was (and the Committee minutes are even more so) and secondly that much of what the Chairman addressed then is relevant today: *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, and all that.

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 1966 - JUNE 1967

It has been thought proper to hold the Annual General Meeting as soon as possible after the end of the financial year (31st May) and consequently this report covers a much shorter period than usual.

Following the resignation of Lord Palmer as President (due to his leaving the district) Mr John Smith MP, who lives at Shottesbrooke Park, White Waltham, has accepted the presidency. The Society is fortunate to have one in this office who has demonstrated over the years – in Parliament and out of it – his keen interest in the objects of the Civic Society and his active promotion of proposals for the preservation of amenities.



*Gordon Slater: Chairman 1963-70;  
President 1980-89*

During the period of this report the Committee of the Society has met regularly to consider the many questions arising out of proposed developments in the Borough, and the surrounding districts. Because of financial stringencies the further extension of the shopping centre has been delayed though the plans are now being actively prepared. It is always a difficult matter to decide when the Society's views can be most effectively stated; general ideas can be expressed at the earlier formative stage of planning but until a more detailed application of these plans is available it is not easy to see what improvements or modifications might be made. The opportunity for doing this should arise shortly.

The development of the riverside area has continued to exercise the Society. The Ministry of Housing and Local Government's inspector gave full support to our strongly held view that an overall survey should be made to determine the nature of the future shaping of the area to preserve the amenities. A proposal for the development of the Guards' Club site has not been acceptable to the Borough Council and we hope this indicates a greater recognition of the principle of looking at the riverside as a whole and not dealing with each site in a piece-meal way. A report on the area conducted by the Borough Surveyor is expected to appear in the autumn and we shall study this with much interest. In this concern we have a sturdy ally in the River Thames Society (to which we are affiliated) which is trying along the whole of the upper Thames to preserve its character in spite of the inevitable changes which will occur.

The controversy regarding the new public library continued during the early part of the period. Once proposals had reached the drawing board and had been accepted by the Library Committee and later by the Borough Council any fundamental changes in layout and use of the site are resisted. Everybody wants a library worthy of the town and additional accommodation for meetings but many will regret the demolition of the present library building and the building over of the memorial garden. The Society is by no means satisfied that the right solution has been reached and it spent much time in studying the proposals and putting forward constructive criticism. The detailed plans and elevations are now awaited.

At various times the Society has expressed views to the Borough Council about pedestrian crossings, sign-posting and the addiction to the erection of massive and ungainly concrete lamp-posts in preference to the more elegant and less obtrusive structures which other local authorities favour.

The Society has been shocked by the tentative proposal of the County Council to take over the Norden Farm site to erect yet another school in this area. Schools, of course, are needed but this involved the demolition of one of the few buildings scheduled as of architectural merit in the district and we expressed our views very strongly to the County Council. It seemed to be a classic example of a planning authority being unaware of the need to plan its own requirements until all suitable sites had been swallowed up for housing. The Borough Council joined the protest against the proposal and we have been assured by the County

Council that we shall be informed should the proposal, or any variation of it, be proceeded with.

The Society is keenly appreciative of any steps taken by the Borough Council to improve the appearance of the town and has been particularly pleased with the improved layout of the Lower Cookham Road. It is an example of the greater emphasis now being placed on the use of trees in the landscape. Increasingly, when approving plans for development, permission is only given subject to the retention of trees wherever possible and to replanting of new ones. The mortality rate among new trees is unfortunately very high and the replacement rate very low. Planting by developers can easily go by default.

British Railways has been co-operative in agreeing to improve the design and decoration of the main booking hall at Maidenhead Railway Station in response to comments made by the Society. The rather featureless railway approach for which the Society has tried over the years to secure improvement will remain so until the much more radical changes resulting from a new road structure are made. Approval for the new inner relief road on the north of the High Street has now been given and the Society will be concerned with the effect of this road on existing buildings and open spaces. All roads lead to increased noise; in this case the High Street will benefit to the greater comfort of shoppers.

Further afield we have been concerned that under the Commons Registration Act 1965 steps should be taken by the local authorities concerned to ensure that common lands should be registered as such so as to be certain that the title to them is not disputed in the future. National Trust lands and those belonging directly to a Council e.g. the Town Moor, are not in question but in the country districts there are many strips of land whose ownership is not clear. Some difficulty has been experienced in finding out which of the several authorities – County, District or Parish – is initially concerned but we are now corresponding with the respective Parish Councils.

During the period the opportunities for holding open meetings have been fewer but for the 1967-8 season a more definite programme of events is being arranged and published beforehand so that all members will know what is afoot.

At the same time through the good efforts of our Membership Secretary (Mr H C James) we have consolidated our membership. But if we are, as a Society, to have the influence we should, we need an increasing number of new members. To this end a brochure is being prepared for distribution in areas of the town – both new and old – where residents might be expected to be interested to join the Society.

I should like to thank the Honorary Treasurer (Mr M J Raynes) for so ably looking after our finances and to express much gratitude to Mr John Haydon, our Honorary Secretary, who has given us devoted service at all times and never spared the effort on which voluntary societies such as ours depends. We are

fortunate also in having a considerable group of keen members who have done much to uphold the prestige of the Society and to advance its work.

We can look forward to next year with growing confidence in the capacity of the Civic Society to carry out the objectives for which it was formed and to secure the co-operation of the local authorities, other voluntary bodies and the press in this endeavour.

[Read by the Vice-Chairman Mr Basil Sheasby in the unavoidable absence abroad of the Chairman, Mr Gordon Slater]

## **A CIVIC SOCIETY MEMBER ON THE COUNCIL?**

Towards the conclusion of the Committee meeting held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 1967, Michael Bayley “suggested that in future a Civic Society member should stand as a non-political candidate for election to the Borough Council. It was agreed to refer this suggestion to the next AGM for consideration”. Was he really serious? – Michael could be quite impish at times. He probably was. From the various minutes of meetings for that period it would seem that the *Maidenhead Advertiser* regularly sent along a reporter, and a week later in the March 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Advertiser there appeared a piece in the “*Comment*” column penned by “*Looker-on*”:

### **“The Unpolitical Force**

From the Civic Society’s point of view, the suggestion that it should put up a candidate in the forthcoming Borough Council elections came too late. It takes time to mount a campaign. But the idea ought not to be shelved.

Political involvement in local affairs (with a small “p”) might broaden the society’s appeal to the general public. The Civic Society was born originally out of a suggestion by Alderman Robert Abell. It is an extremely useful pressure group outside the political arena, not that politics makes much showing here except at election time.

There is also the belief in some quarters that the society’s job is to pontify rather than participate. Involvement in the business of local electioneering by a group which already has lots of common ground with the general public might have another advantage. It would bring into the campaign the issues of planning and town living by the only group outside politics that has made a study of it.”

Item 11 on the AGM agenda reads: Mr M H H Bayley proposes “That in future one member should stand as a strictly non-political candidate for election to the Borough Council to represent the Society and all it stands for in watching rate-payers’ interests etc.” We don’t know how all the discussion at the AGM went, but at the subsequent Committee meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September, it is recorded that “Mr Sheasby reported what was said at the AGM. It was necessary to recognise that an independent candidate had little chance of success when elections were fought on political lines.

It was generally accepted that only in the most unlikely event of political candidates standing down would a Civic Society candidate have any hope of success; while an unsuccessful election might be a good publicity exercise while it lasted the lack of success might seem to be a reflection on the acceptance and standing of the Society. In the absence of Mr Bayley who had made the original suggestion it was agreed to defer.” It is interesting that any reservations were more of a practical nature rather than on points of principle. But what if we *had* fielded a candidate and won a seat?!

### **MONEY OF THE DAY**

Our current Hon. Treasurer may be interested to learn that the financial year-end bank balances on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1967 were £40 14s. 6d. in the current account at Lloyd’s Bank, and £264 2s. 3d. on deposit in the Trustee Savings Bank.

### **THOSE WERE THE DAYS!**

And finally, from the Detailed Agenda (for the use of officers, note) for the 1967 AGM, the last item reads: “Remind those present that the bar in the Drummond Room will be open from 9.30pm to 10.30pm”. That’s one way to encourage attendance!

### **A FLUTTER AT THE TABLES**

Further to the comments above on page 10 about the dismissal of the appeal to convert the **Thames Riviera Hotel** into 30-plus residential flats, I found this little snippet in an edition of the *Advertiser* from the early 1960s – though the exact date is unknown.

“I think that today there is a wish by people to have a flutter at the tables – a sort of ‘high-class bingo’ if you like.” Mr L Strauss, proprietor of the Riviera Hotel and a leading member of the Civic Society, told a meeting of the Society on Wednesday. He was commenting on his recent planning application to use premises at the hotel as a casino. The application had been mentioned during a report on planning proposals. “We have had these particular premises at the hotel for five years and could not find a use for them,” he said. “They do not need to be altered at all for this purpose, but as it entails a change of use, planning permission is necessary. “If I can provide an additional amenity without affecting my hotel business, I am prepared to do so, and I shall have full control of it. I realise it is rather a contentious matter – you always have one set of people who feel the town will be degraded, and another set who declare themselves against roulette but who do their football pools”.

I wonder how far such a scheme would have got today.

*Editor*



# Projects

## Millennium Walk – 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Walk, Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020



*Socially Distanced walkers of group 1 at the beginning of the walk in Pinkneys Green*

On a splendid sunny day our walk to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inaugural walk (and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civic Society) went ahead. Our walk was registered for the Heritage Open Days Festival (HODS) for 2020, which had the theme *Hidden Nature*. The Millennium Walk (from Hurley to Maidenhead Riverside) is a joint project with East Berks Ramblers (EBRA) and when it looked as if it would need to be postponed yet again because of the pandemic, Ramblers HQ consulted Sport England who said it was allowable.



*Left to right: Steve Gillions (EBRA), Ann Darracott (MCS), Philip and Theresa May MP, Kate Ashbrook (OSS) in Pinkneys Green*

44 walkers took part divided into two groups. Each walker was given a pack including the Millennium Walk leaflet, guide notes for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary walk written by Steve Gillions (EBRA) and a card from HODS asking for feedback on the event. We are very grateful to our patron the Rt Hon Theresa May MP and her



husband Philip who attended the event and led the walk, setting a very impressive pace, and Riverside Councillor Greg Jones was also joined us. In addition, we were fortunate that the General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society, Kate Ashbrook, was able to walk with us. We have recently joined this Society (a society that has defended open spaces in England and Wales since 1865 and is the oldest conservation charity fighting for among other things, footpaths).

Before the start of the walk I outlined the past history of the Millennium Walk, a project with which the late Margaret Bowdery of EBRA had been closely involved, and noted that we had special permission from the Royal Borough to cross the causeway path on Battlemead Common. Then Steve Gillions detailed Covid safety provisions and Kate Ashbrook talked about access concerns post-Brexit.



*Registering the walkers at the start of the walk: Events chair Tina Sell and Joyce Delasalle – note the HODS sign*



*Walkers entering the missing link section on the East Field on Battlemead Common by special permission of the Royal Borough*





*The advance party crosses over the missing link on the causeway route in the East Field of Battlemead Common – note evidence of the annual mowing in the distance*

I am very grateful to the Events committee, especially Tina and Joyce for their help in making this event a success. Many thanks also due to Steve Gillions of EBRA who organised the walk with me and Gordon Maars of EBRA (the Ramblers' contact with Sport England) who rescued our walk almost at the eleventh hour; Owen Hibben of the National Trust allowed us to use their field opposite the Scout Hut in Pinkneys Green and got it mowed, and Erica Hunter, leader of Pinkneys Green Scout Troop, dealt with the entrance barrier to the field for us.

Apart from this article, the walk, in the middle of a pandemic, has been well documented for posterity! Kate Ashbrook of the Open Spaces Society wrote a blog about the event (<https://campaignerkate.wordpress.com/2020/09/23/mp-joins-maidenhead-millennium-walk>) and an article about it by Steve Gillions is going into EBRA's newsletter and will also be in the *South East Rambler*. Furthermore, I have sent feedback on the event to the organisers of the 2020 Heritage Open Days Festival, which brought forth the response: *"Thank you for sharing this – I may be wrong, but I believe this is the first ever former prime minister to take part in a HODs event! It looks like it was a wonderful day – congratulations to all involved"*

*Ann Darracott*

# Forthcoming Events

Sadly, there is very little to report due to the restrictions with which we are living. However, Society members may be interested in the following talks organised by local history and archaeology groups:

## **Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society (MAHS)**

Our November and December Lecture speakers are confirmed and will be “Zooming”. Details are as follows:

Wednesday November 25<sup>th</sup>: Roger Askew – “A Right Royal Christmas”. The AGM for members only will be held before or after the Lecture.

Wednesday December 9<sup>th</sup>: Colin Oakes – “Calendars – the Many Ways of Counting Your Days.”

The Lectures start at 8pm. For an invitation/link please email Paul Seddon on paul@c21networks.co.uk

## **News from the Heritage Centre**

Did you go to school in or near Maidenhead? Our researchers would like to hear your memories of school (or the memories/experiences of your children and grandchildren) for an exhibition “Back to School” which is in preparation. We are also planning “How we coped with Covid” which is timed for late March 2021, the first anniversary of the national lockdown.

Following that lockdown the Heritage Centre reopened at the end of July and Civic Society members would be particularly welcome to visit us again. Many measures have been put in place to make the premises Covid-secure. Face coverings are a legal requirement and hand sanitizers are available as you enter the building. We even have supplies of gloves for visitors wishing to browse in our shop, where there are several new books on sale as well as an attractive selection of new greetings cards. During lockdown we moved a number of exhibitions online and since late June we have presented a series of free Zoom lectures on topics ranging from the Dunkirk Little Ships to the Thames Valley Millionaires who built places like Taplow Court and Cliveden. Several talks on White Waltham based Air Transport Auxiliary have already been given, and with a decision to continue the lectures at 3-weekly intervals throughout the winter, more talks are on the way. Moving our talks online has enabled us to reach a much wider audience, and people as far away as New Zealand and California are regular participants. Details of talks and the online exhibitions can all be found on our website [www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk](http://www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk).

Meanwhile we are looking for a number of additional volunteers to join our enthusiastic team, both in the reception role and in other behind the scenes roles. If you would be interested please contact our manager Flora Woodruff on 01628 780555.

STOP PRESS: the discovery of the burial site of the “Marlow warrior” is very exciting, though the name is misleading as the site is believed to be on the Maidenhead side of the river – which is why we will be making a strong case for displaying some of the finds at Maidenhead Heritage Centre, if only on a short-term basis.

# Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
**AGM**

## **Civic Society AGM**

A virtual meeting via Zoom. 7.50 for 8.00pm.

9<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> December

## **Christmas Tree Trail organised by St Luke's**

As there will be no St Luke's Christmas Tree Festival this year, "our tree" ***Celebrating the Green Way – a Lifeline in Lockdown*** – will be put up at the junction of Green Way East and Green Way West, not far from the North Maidenhead Cricket Club entrance.

Further details of the trail to come.

## **CIVIC SOCIETY – KEY CONTACTS**

Executive Chairman	Bob Dulson, Bryher, Islet Road, SL6 8HT	627130
Hon. Secretary	Eileen Goford, 6 Laxton Green, SL6 3HW	638238
Hon. Treasurer	Peter Child, 34 College Road, SL6 6AT	632300
Planning Group	Martin McNamee, 14 Lower Cookham Road, SL6 8JT	623203
Projects	Ann Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
Communications	Brian Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
Events	Tina Sell, Marlborough, River Road, Taplow, SL6 0BB	628675
Outings Organiser	Mike Copeland, 14 Laburnham Road, SL6 4DB	634181
Membership Sec.	Joyce Delasalle, 7 Laxton Green, SL6 3HW	637342
Newsletter Distribution	Sue Ross, 3 The Chantry, 21 Boyn Hill Avenue, SL6 4EY	626849

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2020**

13<sup>th</sup> January, 11<sup>th</sup> February, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 14<sup>th</sup> April (cancelled), 12<sup>th</sup> May (cancelled), 9<sup>th</sup> June (cancelled), 14<sup>th</sup> July (by video), 11<sup>th</sup> August (by video), 8<sup>th</sup> September (by video), 13<sup>th</sup> October (by video), 10<sup>th</sup> November (by video), 8<sup>th</sup> December (by video)

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020 at 8.00 pm, via Zoom

**The closing date for copy for the next issue  
of the Newsletter is 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

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