



Maidenhead Civic Society

Estd. 1960

NEWS

Issue 4/23

November 2023



*What a difference
fifteen years makes!*



Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

The Chairman's Page

We must never lose sight of the fact that the Civic Society was established over 60 years ago, at the behest of the then Town Council, to, in effect, be the parish council that Maidenhead has never had. Our founding members were invested by the council with a responsibility to reflect informed public opinion. They took that very seriously and, coupled with its primary objective of stimulating public interest in Maidenhead, the Society has remained true those principles ever since – often incurring the wrath of their instigators along the way by saying things they didn't want to hear!

As a society we need to encourage new members to join to help stimulate debate and to be part of the future. The Society is looking towards the future, as we all play an important role in Maidenhead. There is a steady debate about what is happening within the town and you could be part of that conversation.

If you talk to local residents everyone has an opinion about the development that is taking place in Maidenhead. However, times change and the Society must evolve and grow to meet those challenges. If you know anyone that would be interested in joining to help us shape this challenge, please bring them to the AGM. Our AGM is a great way to meet fellow members and to raise issues that are important to you. It is good to get views from all age groups and demographics, as we all share a passion about Maidenhead.

As I am writing this introduction it has been announced that the Berkeley Homes development on land south of Harvest Hill Road for 215 properties has been approved. It is noteworthy that Berkeley Homes had consulted with the Society on this scheme early on. The Borough Local Plan has been accepted by an Independent Planning Inspector, and we should not necessarily disagree with change. Back in 2007, the previous local plan was rejected by the Planning Inspectorate and his recommendation was future growth should occur in Maidenhead, due to the advent of Crossrail – now called the Elizabeth Line. Unfortunately, it has taken until last year for Crossrail to become fully operational, and we have since suffered a worldwide pandemic, that has significantly changed commuting patterns to London.

Nevertheless, it is a good time to be involved and we are all working towards achieving the same goal of having a voice in Maidenhead.

I hope you enjoy this edition and please encourage friends to get involved, as we would welcome them to a great society.

Derek Wilson

63rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY

**To be held on Wednesday, 22nd November 2023
at 8.00pm, in the main hall, Methodist Church, High Street, Maidenhead**

We hope to have a speaker to start off the meeting before the usual business agenda, but at the time of going to press we can't confirm this. We'll let you know via our *Keeping in Touch* e-letter nearer the time.

AGENDA

1. Introduction by the Chairman of the Committee
2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 62nd Annual General Meeting
3. Accounts for the year ended 31st May 2023 (see pages 7-9)
4. Chairman's Report for 2022/2023
5. Election of the Officers. To elect a Chairman, an Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer, who shall be Committee Members
6. To approve the election of Members of the Committee. *See note below.*
7. Any other business.

Election of Officers

Officers are elected for a term of one year but are eligible for re-election at the AGM. Nominations for the role of Chairman should be accompanied by a seconder and the consent of the nominee, and be with the Hon. Secretary prior to the AGM.

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, Jane Wright, Tim Burt 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, Roger Panton, Bob Dulson and Joyce Delasalle will retire. Bob Dulson and Joyce Delasalle offer themselves for re-election, and there will consequently be one vacancy.

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

MINUTES OF THE 62nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY

Held on 16th November 2022 via Zoom

34 persons in attendance

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Martin and Shan Alexander, Helen Craik, June Jorge, Allister Miller, Matthew Shaw, Sally Somerville
2. **Approval of Minutes of 61st AGM held 17th November 2021 by Zoom:** The minutes were approved as read. Proposed by Jill Powell, seconded by Joyce Delasalle.
3. **Accounts for the year ending 31 May 2021:** Presented in the November 2022 Newsletter. Report accepted; proposed by Bob Dulson and seconded by Donna Stimson.
4. **Chairman's Report on 2021/22:** Taken as presented in the November 2022 Newsletter. In addition: We have been examining the future of our Society. Judith Littlewood surveyed 15 of our new members. 9 were over 65 and 6 under 65. There was unanimity of reasons why individuals had joined: concerns about the lack of affordable housing; the height and scale of flat provision; the fact that Maidenhead is providing 70% of the Borough's housing requirement and the lack of planning for the Town Centre which is currently a mess with no provision for shopping. New members expect the Civic Society to address these issues. We have reached a crossroads. We are struggling to meet our commitments owing to a lack of energy. There is a long list of areas we would like to be involved in: Heritage/Design Awards/more social events, for example. This is the last meeting Bob will chair. Derek Wilson will be interim chair until the May elections when he will stand for Bray.
5. **Election of Officers:** Bob is not offering himself for re-election. Peter Child as Treasurer and Eileen Goford as Hon. Secretary do, and were duly elected. Proposed by Brian Darracott, seconded by John Reekie.
6. **Members of the Committee:** Derek Wilson, Mac Kenny and Martin McNamee retired. Derek and Martin offered themselves for re-election. There were two new nominations for membership: Tim Burt proposed by Ann Darracott and seconded by Brian Darracott and Jane Wright proposed by Bob Dulson and seconded by Martin McNamee. Both were elected.
7. **AOB: Bob's retirement as chair:** A huge thank you to Bob Dulson for 14 years of leadership of the Maidenhead Civic Society. He has made a huge contribution to the Society's standing in the community. Bob was presented with wine and theatre tickets in recognition and gratitude.
Zoom meetings: It was pointed out that now Covid has gone we should be meeting in person. Members present were asked to raise their hands if they were willing to attend meetings in person. A majority were, though some still had reservations.

CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2022-23

Our AGM is a time to reflect over the past year, and I must first thank Bob Dulson for his Chairmanship over the previous years along with all our committee members whose efforts make sure all our activities and events go smoothly.

Planning

The ongoing support and involvement of individual members of the Planning Group is much appreciated. Throughout the year the Planning Group has continued to review the weekly list of applications published each Friday by RBWM. Applications of potential interest have been circulated to the Group members for feedback. Around 25 proposals have been the subject of comment submitted by Maidenhead Civic Society and our views on some of the major schemes have often been reported in the Maidenhead Advertiser. We also analysed the housing data within the Authority Annual Monitoring Report for 2021/22 which showed that the overprovision of flats continued, with a corresponding shortage in the construction of family homes. The delivery of affordable/social housing remained at a really inadequate level. We have also participated in a number of pre-planning consultations relating to major future schemes. Some members of Maidenhead Civic Society have also been actively involved with Maidenhead Neighbourhood Forum which was successful in being ratified by RBWM in its attempts to deliver a series of policies which will form a Neighbourhood Plan for Maidenhead.

The Millennium Walk: Last year the missing link in the walk across Battlemead Common that follows the 1934 boundary of Maidenhead was opened from April to October, and the leaflet was updated to show this. This year all the Millennium Walk route from Hurley to Maidenhead was waymarked, funded by the Society, East Berks Ramblers, and with help from the Royal Borough and Rotary Bridge.

Battlemead Common: In conjunction with the Cookham Society we have raised certain issues with the Royal Borough concerning the management of this public open space which currently does not have a car park and there are no warning signs on the road of walkers crossing into and out of the common.

The Green Way: The main problem this year has been the failure of the pump to take away water leaking onto the path from the stream and so keep the A4 underpass dry enough to walk through. We have been in contact with Maidenhead Waterways and Cllr Jack Douglas to try and persuade the Royal Borough to resolve the problem. RBWM's solution appears to be to create a pedestrian crossing on the A4. The Green Way route into the now open Waterside Basin in the town centre is therefore problematical. The *Make Space for Life* group continues to manage North Town Moor including the productive apple orchard they planted. North Town Moor pond unfortunately still has fish in it that make short work of small aquatic fauna. The

Society continues to monitor and sample the water quality: faunal diversity has however improved slightly but numbers of each species are still low.

Maidenhead Waterways: A pollution incident led to fuel oil entering the stream in the neighbourhood of Blackamoor Lane in the August Bank holiday. The Environment Agency placed booms across the stream to contain the oil which was eventually removed. Ann Darracott surveyed the aquatic fauna and compared data from the Library Bridge and the Boat Lift sites with that collected last September. Faunal diversity had reduced though other factors may have influenced this drop.

Ockwells Manor: The book *Ockwells Manor - a history of the house and its occupants* was launched at Taplow Court on 12th May with the kind permission of SGI-UK. An aim of the book is to show the historic importance of this C15th house and therefore hopefully secure its future. It has been on and off the market since 2019. It went back on in August this year. It was empty for many years after the last owner left with consequent effects on the structure of the house.

Membership

Figures for the 2022/23 year-end were:

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Total Membership						
(Family, Honorary, Life, etc	227	223	219	208	235	226
Total Members (Excl. Corp)	329	322	306	294	332	318
Life members (Headcount)	86	82	78	74	70	68
Honorary Members	17	14	18	17	18	20
Corporate	1	2	2	2	2	2

This year we were pleased to welcome: Mr Neil Savin, Viviane Holland, Akshay Pal, Mr & Mrs I Caird, Mrs J Francis, Lisa Curtin & Rich Smith. The drop in total membership numbers is again largely due to members passing away, moving away from the area or retiring and no longer taking an interest in the town.

Once again, we attended the Cox Green May Fayre, Waterways Fun Day and a very rainy Maidenhead Festival. These shows give us an opportunity to meet up with current members and to also speak to other members of the public to promote the Civic Society. If you have any friends or relatives that would be interested in joining or helping at any of our shows please contact me – Joyce Delasalle – 07917 876145; joyce.delasalle@btinternet.com.

TREASURER'S REPORT 2022-23

The annual accounts for the year ended 31st May 2023 are set out below. The main points from these accounts are as follows:

There is a surplus of income over expenditure this year of £1546 compared with a deficit of expenditure over income last year of £799. The main reason for this surplus has been the donations and grants received this year and last year towards the publication of the book on Ockwells Manor.

Book on "Ockwells Manor"

The financial impact of the publication is reflected in three parts of the accounts:

- (a) £2800 donations are included in income. All donations were much appreciated, particular thanks to the Baylis Trust and the Prince Philip Trust.
- (b) The cash deficit of £1160 on publication expenses to date, including licences, fees, and launch costs, is shown in expenditure with details under note A of the accounts.
- (c) The stock of books as of 31 May is included at cost in the balance sheet under note B. Since May, a further 22 books have been sold.

Income

Normal Income has increased by £676. Subscription income (including gift aid) increased by £442, principally a result of the membership drive 18 months ago, where new members were offered their first year free. Most applicants renewed this year and paid normal subscription rates. After many years of almost zero interest, our CCLA deposit account generated £234 more interest as interest rates increased. It should be noted that our first social events for 2 years broke even.

Expenditure

Excluding the book, expenditure was almost identical to the previous year but with significant variations. Last year, £600 was made in donations (mainly Norden Farm) while this year the only donation was £100 as part of the Chairman's retirement gift. Last year included £450 printing costs on the membership drive. This year £852 is included for the purchase and installation of the Jubilee bench at Battlemead Common (still worth visiting). This year £371 was spent on other small projects, including Millenium walk leaflets and supporting RBWM's Christmas lights event. General expenses this year were lower, last year having included the printing cost of double-sided flyers. Other areas of expenditure remain very similar to last year. Insurance was slightly less, following a change of provider.

Balance of Funds

The Society accounts show bank funds in hand of £10,021 compared to £12,158 in the previous year. This reflects primarily the expenditure on the printing of the book on Ockwells Manor. As of 12th October there remain only 61 books in stock so members may wish to purchase in the run up to Christmas by which time we hope

stocks will be a lot lower. It should be noted that a transfer of £2,000 was made from the CCLA account to the Lloyds bank account during the year.

Peter Child

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

**Annual Accounts for Year ended 31st
May 2023**

<u>2021-2022</u>		<u>2022-2023</u>
INCOME		
350	Donations/Grants/Bequests	2,801
2,560	Subscriptions Received During Year	2,905
4	Interest On Charities Deposit Account	238
550	Tax Refunds On Gift Aid	647
<u>3,464</u>	Total	<u>6,591</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Administration		
370	General Expenses, Printing, Postage, Etc.	96
0	Jubilee bench	852
1,261	Newsletter	1,293
144	Zoom subscription for online meetings	144
600	Donations	100
429	Subscriptions	444
319	Insurance	285
	Deficit on Ockwells Manor book publication (Note A)	1,160
366	Other Projects (Net Costs)	371
0	Sediment Testing	0
0	Purchase of Gazebo	0
<u>4,263</u>	Total	<u>5,045</u>
(799)	SURPLUS (Deficit last year) of Income over Expenditure	1,546
12,389	Balance Brought Forward	11,590
<u>11,590</u>	Balance Carried Forward	<u>13,136</u>
FUNDS		
2,402	Bank (Lloyds TSB)	2,027
9,756	Charities Deposit General Fund (CCLA)	7,994
597	Subscriptions & Insurance Payments In Advance	827
	Member subscriptions for 23/24 received in Advance	(202)
(217)	Stock of books of Ockwells Manor (note B below)	2,490
0	Donations carried forward against the Ockwells project	0
(1,350)	Part payment of Platinum Jubilee bench carried forward	0
402		0
<u>11,590</u>	BALANCE OF FUNDS	<u>£13,136</u>

Note on the book on Ockwells Manor:

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expense</u>	<u>Deficit</u>
150 books printed at £30 each			
13 Books donated or used for promotional purposes		390	-390
Licences and fees prior to publication		300	-300
Launch costs		401	-401
54 Books sold	1551	1,620	-69
Note A	Total deficit		-1160
Note B	As at 31 May, 83 Books in Stock at £30 each, stock of £2490		

Peter Child - Hon. Treasurer - 16 October 2023

Events

It has been a successful year for events and really good to see so many of our members joining in.

In March we began with a visit to the Bray Keleher Water Treatment works followed by a delicious meal at Moor Hall and a talk by 2 representatives from South East Water in May. Let's hope their plans to provide water to lots of flats in Maidenhead work.

In April 2016 we visited Lillibrooke Manor before lots of renovation work had been undertaken. It therefore seemed a good idea to revisit in July of this year to see the works completed. A group of 42 members were made very welcome and after a tour of the Manor House and grounds an afternoon tea was enjoyed by all.

On 24th August 22 members visited St Marks Church which was marking its 150th Anniversary. The church was built in 1873 on the site of the previous workhouse when John Hibbert was Master of the Workhouse. Many of its buildings are still standing and being used. The workhouse closed in 1931 but the church still has services every two weeks. The history trail and exhibition were interesting and had tea and cake! Many thanks to Stephen Cronbach for being our guide.

Last but certainly not least, we paid a visit to The Maidenhead Heritage Centre on 13th September. Alan Mellins and his team spoke about transport in Maidenhead from the Horse and Carriage era to the motor industry in Cordwallis Road. We were also treated to a first showing and background story on the old fire engine dating back to 1737 which has just been donated by Bray Parish Council. It was a very interesting evening.

Planning Matters

Firstly, an update on an application carried over from the last edition of the newsletter. The application to create three additional flats in the undercroft parking of **Belmont Place** has been refused. The main building has already been permitted for conversion to residential flats, but the developer was hoping to pick up three additional units by converting a number of parking spaces – which required full planning permission. The refusal quoted reasons such as poor aspect, limited daylight and no amenity space.

Applications of note since our last newsletter include a proposal to construct 2 x 3 bed detached houses on green open space/amenity land at **Laxton Green**. This is one of a series of plots that have been speculatively sold at auction without planning permission. The outlook and setting of the existing houses around Laxton Green is a key feature of the neighbourhood, as is the enjoyment of the open space by residents. The boundary of the auctioned plot even includes the footpath and front access to houses on one side of the green! The application has already been refused and T.P.Os on its trees will hopefully protect this amenity land in future. Residents will continue to protect the open space.

There is a proposal for another nursery/pre-school in the Riverside area. **Bridgewater Lodge** is a listed redbrick double fronted Georgian building to the east of Bridge Clinic on Bridge Road. It is proposed to create a school for 126 children with around 30 staff. Entry and exit will only be via Guards Club Road which does not facilitate two-way traffic because of restricted width. Furthermore, only 14 car park spaces are available on site with limited drop off/pick up space for parents. In spite of a Transport Statement to the contrary it is clearly an unsatisfactory location for such an operation.

Castle Hill Terrace is a Conservation Area and at the western end sits a property known as **Hollydene**. The building serves as a residential facility for people with mental health issues. A large portacabin structure has been sited in the garden area and used in recent times to provide dining and rest facilities for staff and a treatment/therapy room. A retrospective application has been submitted, but the “temporary” building is highly visible and detracts from the character of the Conservation Area. In the supporting documents the applicant states that the structure is intended for long-term use and that in the event of permission being refused then a new application for a properly constructed extension to the main building would be submitted. Hopefully, such an extension will reflect the existing architectural character and is obviously a more satisfactory outcome.

Up on Norreys Drive there is an office building known as **Highway House**. On an adjacent underused car parking-lot it is proposed to build a six-storey care home with a total of 68 rooms. With an ageing population there will be an ever-increasing

demand for such care facilities. However, we believe that the scale of the proposed operation is too large for the car parking and amenity space surrounding the building. Only 28 parking spaces are provided of which only two are for Blue Badge holders. Given the likely profile of residents and their visitors this is surely inadequate. In addition, the documentation suggests that there will be around 60 staff on site. The location is 1,600 metres from the town centre and vehicle use will be considerable, although staff will be encouraged to walk, cycle or use the bus. Outside amenity space for the use of residents is also very limited. The scale of the proposed care home should be reduced so that it can be accommodated on the available site with adequate parking and outside space for the enjoyment of residents.

There is a proposal to demolish two buildings at **51 St Marks Road** to create a development of eight new dwellings (4 x maisonettes and 4 x semis). The site is an awkward shape and does not permit satisfactory or adequate parking arrangements. Although the semis have back garden amenity space, the maisonettes are poorly provided. We believe the site should be reconfigured with fewer dwellings.

To the south of **Stafferton Way** sits a car parking-lot currently used for vehicle storage by a nearby garage servicing facility. In 2004 an application for a garage workshop and offices on the site was refused. As you are probably aware, an application has been submitted for a 6-storey residential block of 43 flats. The flats are located on the top five floors with an undercroft on the ground floor providing 15 car parking spaces – including three Blue Badge spaces. There is also an off-road loading bay facility for (small) delivery vehicles. The site is very constrained sitting alongside the southern section of York Stream. It is only around 15 metres in depth between the roadway and the waterway but nearly 100 metres from east to west. The south elevation has balconies (mainly very small in area) overlooking the waterway. The north elevation is a grey expanse of masonry with high level small windows to the undercroft and little architectural relief to the array of windows above. In design terms it is very unattractive and of necessity situated right on the road frontage. This creates a height, bulk and mass unsuitable for the location. It is situated on the Southern Link Road with double yellow lines. In spite of the proximity to town and the station, the parking provision is inadequate and there is zero outside amenity space available. The immediate proximity to the waterways will adversely impact the natural habitat and setting which was intended when the waterways were introduced as part of the regeneration of the town.

Of course, these proposed flats on Stafferton Way will add yet more to the current oversupply of flats in recent years. Whilst we need more housing, it is important that the stock is a balanced mix in terms of size and type of dwelling; 80% of completed new dwellings are flats and this is neither desirable nor sustainable. The number of flats being completed is a matter of fact, but how high we should build them is a matter of opinion. We welcome the views of members regarding the vexed question of high-rise development.



The present car park at the eastern end of Stafferton Way and, below, an impression of the proposed block of flats



At the October Development Panel two ongoing applications were permitted. The Berkeley Homes scheme for 8.5 hectares **South of Harvest Hill Road** is part of the wider development of SW Maidenhead (we described this in the August 2022 edition of the Newsletter). A total of 215 dwellings will be constructed – 140 houses and 75 flats. The majority of the flats will be “affordable” which is positive news. There will be considerable areas of open space and there will be cycle and walking links to the pending development of the Golf Course site to the north of Harvest Hill Road. For several years our Newsletter has regularly featured proposals for the demolition and re-development of **Zaman House** and **Awan House** on Church Road in The Fisheries. In the most extreme manifestation two blocks totalling 16 flats were proposed. Ultimately, a scheme for a development of five large, detached houses has been permitted for the adjacent sites. Whilst it is an increase in density it is much more in keeping with the character of the neighbourhood.

Readers may not be aware that there are plans – at last! – to redevelop the empty, almost derelict, office block known as **Sierra House**. The site is located in the town centre, north of the High Street, with Providence Place to the northwest and St Mary's Walk defining the eastern boundary. The building has been empty for many years now and is a blot on the local landscape. At a recent initial public consultation Derno Estates Ltd showed their outline plans to create a new high quality eight-storey office building with a café at ground floor level. The proposals will open up a new link between St Mary's Walk and Providence Place and should enhance the overall look of the area. The existing shop with flats above which front the High Street is not affected. This scheme promises to be a real enhancement of what's there now and is one to watch.



Sierra House seen from St Mary's Walk, going north

The present view of Sierra House, looking south from Providence Place



The existing shops and flats on the High Street are not affected by the new proposals



Impression of the proposed new Sierra House block, looking south from Providence Place. You can just detect the transparent outline of the existing “theatre” building in the left part of the image, which has been “removed” to show the full structure

TOWER BLOCKS – WHO WANTS THEM?

As editor of the quarterly Newsletter I welcome contributions from members in addition to the regular items from Committee Members. It is useful and informative to know what our members think about the issues and projects that feature here on a regular basis. This time, society member **Michael Gammage** writes:

Many readers may have nodded at the comment in the last Newsletter that while the Civic Society is broadly supportive of the *One Maidenhead* scheme (formerly *The Hub/The Landing*) now emerging between Broadway and the station, “it’s a shame about the tower blocks”. I’d like to try to persuade the Society that it should have a far more positive perspective on tower blocks, and in fact be welcoming these particular ones.

I have no political affiliation, and no connection with any developer. I’m just a grandfather who has lived in the town for almost forty years, and, like most of my generation, is trying to give something back.

The starting point has to be that we desperately need many more homes. For more than a generation, governments of all hues have failed to deliver their housing targets – dismally – while the number of UK households has continued to grow (the 2021 census recorded 1.6 million more UK households than a decade earlier). The result is

that the opportunities which many of us enjoyed have disappeared. The possibility of eventual home ownership is no longer plausible for so many families, and rents are crippling high. We owe it to those without a property, and especially to younger generations, to be passionate about providing many more dwellings to provide the kind of ownership opportunities of my generation. And an expanded housing stock will also help those who will never be able to afford to buy a home, because it will moderate rents and drive up rental housing standards.

So when we look at the civic need – we are the *Civic Society* after all – there must be a case that the Society should, by default, be in favour of *any* scheme for new housing which would be well-designed and well-built, with quality public open space and decent community facilities.

Against this backdrop, well-designed and well-managed tower blocks have an essential place, especially in a town centre and clustered around transport facilities. They are not for everyone, nor for every stage of life, but they can provide very attractive homes for a large number of people.

Many single people are happy to live in good quality tower blocks. And living alone is becoming more and more common. The latest census found that 30% of UK households (more than 8 million homes) are people living alone. The ONS estimates that the UK will have almost 11m single person households within fifteen years. Couples without children may also be attracted to tower blocks. There are a lot of them, too: the 2021 census found that more than 8 million households are couples without children. Many of these one and two person households will be pensioners, and many of them might be happy to leave behind the worries of looking after a house and garden in favour of the security and simplicity of an apartment.

The attraction of providing good quality tower blocks for those who want them is that it releases houses for those who need them most: families with children. If single people, couples without children and pensioners are able to move into tower blocks, then the homes they would otherwise have occupied become available for families with children.

It's easy to be prejudiced, to hear "tower blocks" and think instinctively of dreary, dangerous council high-rise estates. But some of the world's most expensive housing is in tower blocks: Manhattan, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Toronto, London. Tower blocks, of the right kind and in the right place, have a lot going for them. In Maidenhead town centre, within walking distance of the station and the Elizabeth Line, tower blocks are likely to reduce the need for cars, and so are likely to be more sustainable. They can also reduce pressure on Green Belt land because they provide a much higher residential density in the town centre. And, not to be underestimated, they can bring life to the town centre, making it vibrant and attractive for everyone.

That's the case, then, for why the Society should not be prejudiced against tower blocks per se but instead see their potential and assess each proposal on its merits.

And the merits of the *One Maidenhead* tower blocks seem considerable. This is a "build-to-rent" development creating 400+ new high-quality apartments, adjacent to the station and the town centre, with attractive public open space. They are built to rent, not for sale, so they won't be sold off-plan to overseas investors and left empty. And, what's more, in order to maintain its premium rents for decades to come, the developer will have every incentive to keep this site, at the core of the town, clean and attractive.



All in all, the *One Maidenhead* development should really deserve the Society's whole-hearted support. It's a very appropriate use of that part of the town, and has replaced some very forlorn and near-derelict properties. We should welcome it, and accept that well-designed tower blocks are not "a necessary evil" but one part of the means by which we will create the housing stock we need. There are many reasons why the high-rise development of Maidenhead town centre might, if done well, be a very good idea with many benefits.

Now, if we could develop a new town centre with high quality tower blocks within walking distance of the station, together with comprehensive bus services and extensive and safe cycle paths, then we really would be leaping ahead, but that's another story....

Martin McNamee responds on behalf of the Society: Thank you, Michael, for contacting us about our comments on the flats at *One Maidenhead* which was referred to in the Planning Matters section of the August edition of the Newsletter.

I cannot disagree with you about the need for more dwelling units to accommodate our increasing population, which is indeed reflected in the Borough Local Plan. Of course, the problem with the housing targets is that they are excessively skewed towards Maidenhead – largely because of the perceived benefits of the Elizabeth Line.

We have been against the number of flats and the ever-increasing building heights in the Town Centre for years. We opposed the original plans for 17-storey office blocks at The Landing (now called *One Maidenhead*) from the outset and continued when these were revised to 19-storey residential blocks. On the subject of building heights the Inspector in the BLP review suggests a prevailing maximum height of 7 to 8 storeys for the Town Centre. The permitted height of the Landing has emboldened the developers of Nicholsons Quarter to propose a landmark block of 25 storeys. Even the height of the Countryside development of the former Magnet site on St Cloud Way has been increased from 8 storeys to 11.

The required proportion of flats in the market is approximately 25%, although this increases if a high element of affordable/social housing is delivered. For the last five years completions in the RBWM have delivered more than 80% flats. But affordable delivery has been very poor over that time – around 8% of dwellings against a target of 30%. In addition, there are 650 flats planned at Nicholsons Quarter, 450 at St Cloud Way and around 300 flats at four sites on York Road. Unspecified flats are also proposed for West Street. And still there are very few affordable/social dwellings.

Of course, flats are often the first step on the accommodation ladder for singletons and young couples. The concept of “build-to-rent” is a good initiative when house prices to buy are so high. But the market rents at *One Maidenhead* will not be cheap and it remains to be seen whether the scheme can be fully let. With the heavy over-delivery of flats there is a shortage of family homes for young families to move on to. There needs to be a rapid rebalancing of the housing mix in favour of family homes with outdoor amenity space. It is established historical fact that high rise flats are not suitable for raising young children.

The Society will continue to make the case for more family homes rather than flats because in the long term it is essential that Maidenhead has a balanced housing stock in terms of the mix of size and type of dwellings. I’m sure that the Housing Needs Assessment currently planned by Maidenhead Neighbourhood Forum will confirm the need to limit the delivery of flats unless they are affordable/social housing.

I hope that the above explains the context in which the “shame about the flats” comment was made in our Newsletter. Nevertheless, your interest in contacting us is much appreciated.

Projects

Waymarking the Millennium Walk

This summer the route from Hurley to Maidenhead Riverside, was waymarked by collaboration with the Civic Society, East Berks Ramblers and Maidenhead Bridge Rotary (interested because the Millennium Walk mostly follows the Boundary Walk from Pinkneys Green and some of their markers needed renewing).



Putting up the first waymark: left to right Ann Darracott (MCS), Tim Burt (MCS), Steve Gillions (EBRA) and Maureen Bell (MCS) photo by Bridget Morris (MCS)



A new finger pointer with both waymarks

Tim Burt (MCS) and Eddie Piekut (Maidenhead Bridge Rotary) fixing a waymark finger post



We hope to waymark the link to Marlow next year. Many thanks to Tim Burt and the rest of the waymarking team.

Boundary Walk

As usual we helped Maidenhead Bridge Rotary marshal the annual Boundary Walk, which this year was held on Sunday 1st October.



*Left to Right: Jennelle Cosby
(Maidenhead Bridge Rotary)
Christine Jones and Tim Burt
(Maidenhead Civic Society) at
the Widbrook to Battlemead
crossing*



These signs were put up for the Boundary Walk. Warning signs are otherwise absent



Boundary walkers about to cross the causeway at Battlemead Common – a route pioneered by the Civic Society

For those who haven't seen it, check out the Boundary Walk map at the Boulters Lock noticeboard, which also feature a map drawn by the late Michael Bayley.

Grenfell Portraits at Firle Place



An unexpected outcome arising from the Ockwells Manor book launch at Taplow Court was meeting descendants of the Grenfell family. Deborah Gage, a kinswoman

of Imogen Grenfell, daughter of William Henry Grenfell, who had married Viscount Gage, was unable to attend the launch but very kindly invited me to visit the seat of the present Viscount Gage at Firle Place, East Sussex. Deborah is the Curator of the art collections at Firle Place. These include portraits of the Grenfell family inherited from the collection of William Henry's wife Ettie.

The house is open to the public in the season and is well worth a visit. If you do so, be sure to ask to see, in one of the bedrooms (not usually open), the full-length portraits of William Henry Grenfell and his wife painted by artist Ellis Roberts in 1891 (and unfortunately covered in glass so not easy to photograph well).



Also visit the nearby church where Imogen, Viscountess Gage (née Grenfell), is buried. Without her action in giving to Berkshire Record Office documents relating to estates in Berkshire from the Taplow Court Estate Office (itself a miniature Ockwells Manor) we would know a lot less about Ockwells, once owned by the Grenfell family.

Taplow Court Culture Award

At a reception held at Taplow Court on Wednesday 27th September, SGI-UK bestowed on Ann Darracott the *Taplow Court Culture Award* in recognition of over 30 years service with Maidenhead Civic Society and the publication of the Ockwells

Manor book. Members of our committee, the waymarking group and Maidenhead Waterways attended the presentation in support.



Robert Harrap, General Director, SGI-UK; Ann Darracott (sporting the medal!) and last year's recipient, Dame Claire Bertschinger DBE DL

Events

AGM – Wednesday 22nd November 2023, 7.45pm for 8.00pm

After holding our annual meeting online via Zoom for the past three years, we are now pleased to be able to resume our in-person meetings. The AGM will be held in the Bromley Room at the Methodist Church, Maidenhead High Street. This is where we used to meet prior to the Covid pandemic, and we do hope members will feel able to join us there and participate in the discussions.

St Luke's Christmas Tree Festival

The Society is again sponsoring a Christmas tree at this event. The chosen charity this year is the Number22 community counselling service. Apart from lots of trees to admire, there will be a raffle and refreshments. Do come along and bring your friends, especially if they aren't members. The church, on Norfolk Road, will be open on Friday 9th, and Saturday 10th December from 10am to 7pm, and on Sunday 11th from 12 midday to 6pm followed by the Christmas Tree Service.

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 22nd November 2023
AGM

Civic Society AGM
7.45 for 8.00pm. High Street Methodist Church

Friday 8th December to Sunday 10th December 2023
Event

St Luke's Christmas Tree Festival
Fri 10am to 7pm; Sat 10am to 7pm; Sun 12 to 6pm

CIVIC SOCIETY – KEY CONTACTS

Interim Chairman	Derek Wilson	01628 621176
Hon. Secretary	Eileen Goford	01628 638238
Hon. Treasurer	Peter Child	01628 632300
Planning Group	Martin McNamee	01628 623203
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Newsletter & Website	Brian Darracott	01628 620280
Events		
Membership Sec.	Joyce Delasalle	01628 637342
Newsletter Distribution	Sue Ross	01628 626849

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2024

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

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

The 64th AGM will be held on Wednesday 20th November 2024 at 7.45 for 8.00 pm.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
of the Newsletter is 19th January 2024**

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