

# Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



## Autumn 2008 Newsletter

### PLANNING POLICY MATTERS

Comments made to the Society on its *Planning Policy paper*, which was distributed with the last newsletter, indicate that it was well received as it strikes the right note in relation to how the Society should approach planning matters. Whilst the Society considers that the District Council could be more proactive on conservation and enforcement matters, subjects which are expanded below, it accepts that within the constraints of the planning system and the resources that have been made available to the District Council, a reasonable job is being made on dealing with the many tasks assigned to it.

However there is a need for bodies like the Society to try to *influence planning policies* which are made at national, regional and county level. Given the limited expertise available to the Society, it is not possible to comment on every consultation or proposal at national level but, through its membership of the Civic Trust and the Federation of Sussex Amenity Societies, comments are made on such issues. At present progress on the Planning Bill, which introduces an Independent Planning Commission to consider major projects and will reduce local input, and the Killian Pretty review of the Planning system, are being monitored and the need to include a review of the planning appeal system as part of the latter has been suggested

At regional level the Society has commented on the Government's proposed amendments to the *South East regional plan*. Whilst

generally supporting the vision proposed we have objected to the exclusion of references in it to sustainability and the need for the environment to be improved or enhanced. We also objected to the housing targets being a minimum and expressed concern about the omission of any requirements for new infrastructure to be in place before development commences. We welcomed the reference to national park designation being a material consideration in planning decisions that may significantly affect it but questioned who decides what is significant.

In relation to conservation issues we have been pleased that the District Council has at last initiated a consultation exercise on whether there should be a *Conservation Area Advisory Committee for Lewes*. We have pressed the case for this for some time and we now need to ensure that the objectives of such a committee are clear and its membership is willing to focus on suggesting enhancements to the conservation area as well as simply commenting on planning applications. Its success will depend partly on how well it does its work but also on whether the District Council pay attention to its recommendations.

*Enforcement* is another issue where the Society comes across examples of either developments that are proceeding without planning permission or are not complying with conditions imposed in a planning consent. A recent example of this is the development on the former Circa Fish site in Westgate Street. Often these matters do not appear to be given the priority they deserve by the District Council with the result that the transgressions are eventually accepted.

## NATIONAL PARK



**The Inspector's report to Government should have been delivered by now but its contents will remain confidential until the Government's final decision on the matter is announced. This has now been put back to early summer. It is therefore still appropriate to be lobbying DEFRA Ministers on the desirability of including Lewes in the National Park and to that end we enclose a postcard issued by the South Downs Campaign which we recommend you send to the Minister. We are grateful to all those members and others who signed the petition and this will be presented by Norman Baker MP at an appropriate time.**

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The District Council now has planning applications *on line* and details of an application and its progress through the system can be now be checked in this way.

The Government have recently revised the *Permitted Development Rights* so that more minor projects etc can be undertaken without planning permission. Since this is a complicated subject, and the position in the conservation area is more stringent than elsewhere, you are advised to consult the District Council (and not the Society) if you are planning a minor improvement.

A reminder that the Society's Planning Committee meets on the first Thursday of every month and if you have *comments on a planning application* in Lewes, which you would like the Society to consider before it

makes its own comments, please ensure that they are with Frances Tufnell, the Chairman of our Planning Committee, at least the day before the meeting.

The application for industrial units on land scheduled for such development at *Malling Brooks* was deferred by the District Council's Planning Applications Committee, pending further advice from the Environment Agency on the potential flood risks in the location.

The application for *flood protection works* on the east side of the river between Phoenix Causeway and South Street has just been submitted by the Environment Agency and the Society will be considering it shortly. If you have any comments on this application please put them in writing to the Society at the Town Hall.

## CASTLE PRECINCTS/ KEERE STREET



*The Society has taken up the poor condition of these two iconic roads with the County Council, caused largely by inadequate maintenance over the years and unwillingness to regard them as anything but ordinary thoroughfares. In the case of Castle Precincts it appears that remedial work will be undertaken next year after the work being undertaken by the Archaeological Society at the Castle has finished. The case for restoring the Keere Street cobbles is, however, still under discussion.*

## **MARKET TOWER**

As part of the celebrations next year to mark Tom Paine's birth and time in Lewes, proposals have been made to provide an exhibition space and ticket office in the Market Tower, the latter of which would be available for local organisations arranging ticketed events. Whilst the detail has yet to be examined the concept of using this building in this way makes good use of what is, at ground level, unused space that is often frequented by loiterers.

## **PARKING**

The Society is participating in meetings organised by consultants engaged by the District Council about off-street parking in the town. This consultation is not concerned with on-street parking but simply with whether there is sufficient off-street parking, whether and where more might be provided and how it should be regulated. The consultants are likely to recommend that more parking should be provided at the lower end of the town possibly by decking part or all of an existing car park, but the Society argued against the possibility of closing existing car parks, particularly those in the higher parts of the town as a result.

## **THE LEWES COALITION**

One of the Societies aims is to co-operate with kindred societies and to that end it has sought associate or observer status in the

newly formed coalition of groups concerned about development in Lewes. However it has made it clear that it will retain its independence in decision making on such proposals nor do things which might prejudice the reputation it has built up over the years

## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

It is hoped that many members of the Society will be happy to receive future communications electronically, via e-mail. This will include newsletters, and also notification of meetings, and important local events. This is not expected to be more than one e-mail a month, and the list will not be shared with any other society or organisation.

To sign up please send an e-mail to [mscotgrove@aol.com](mailto:mscotgrove@aol.com) indicating which preference you wish

1. Newsletters, AGM report, and meeting notices
2. Newsletters, and meeting reports, but AGM by post
3. Just notices of meetings

At any time, you can revert to normal paper mail.

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

### **Wednesday 21 January 2009 'The Baxters in Lewes'**

Following an exhibition on this subject last July, Lester Fielding, a member of the Baxter Society, will give a talk starting at 7.45pm in the Lecture Room, Town Hall.

**Friday 27 March 2009** – The Society's AGM, Lecture Room, Town Hall 7.45pm.

**Wednesday 22 April 2009 'The Bloomsbury Group'** a talk by Virginia Nicholson starting at 7.45pm in the Lecture Room, Town Hall.

