

Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



Spring 2008 Newsletter

LEWES HOUSE SITE DEVELOPMENT

This development has now been approved by the District Council and work on the affordable housing part of it should start soon. The Society had objected to all the affordable housing being located together on the Walwers Lane site rather than “pepper-potted” around the whole site. Among other objections made was that no provision will be made for the cars which those occupying these residential units might own as there will be no vehicular access to this site.

The Society had also objected to the way in which the opening to be made in the Church Twitten flint wall, to gain access for the construction of the Walwers Lane site, was to be reinstated. Our view was that arched openings should be reinstated and we understand that the developer may be willing to do this.

The Society did not object to the demolition of an internal flint wall on the site for which conservation area consent was sought. Subsequently this application was withdrawn following legal advice that it was unnecessary. We understand, however, that a small section of this wall will be retained by the developer.

PHOENIX

The AGM minutes, circulated with this newsletter, detail the current position on this major development, for which an outline planning application is anticipated by Angel

Property this year. Whilst the Society has welcomed the concept of re-developing this part of the town, it has not given its approval to the plans under discussion as suggested in the local newspaper. The Society’s position is that it will consider the detail of, and comment on, the plans that are formally submitted, and at this time any member having comments is invited to put them in writing to the Society as well as to the District Council.

Separately a planning application has been made for industrial units on Malling Brooks into which businesses that will be affected by the main Phoenix development can be decanted. The Society noted that this application was consistent with the District Local Plan although we did say that the requirements of the Environment Agency must be met, and that the ditch between the site and Orchard Road must be maintained in an ecologically sensitive way with appropriate landscaping provided at this point. We understand, however, that the Environment Agency have objected to the application as the sequential tests necessary for building in the flood plain have not been adequately met.

WENBAN-SMITH SITE

The Society were pleased that the District Council refused the application to build on this site as what was proposed was simply not considered good enough in design terms for such an important gateway site to the town.

The developers, Barratts, have since appealed against the District Council's decision but the Society has made it clear to the Planning Inspectorate that it considers this decision to be the right one.

SOUTH DOWNS COLLEGE



An outline planning application has been submitted by South Downs College to demolish the existing buildings on their Southover site, and replace them with a sports hall and other facilities. The existing buildings were originally those used by Lewes County Grammar School for Boys and were constructed for its opening in 1930. The proposals also envisage selling off the western part of the site (nearest the Dripping Pan) in order to partially fund the development.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The District Council have told us that the timetable for drafting their Local Development Framework, which, when approved, will replace the current District Local Plan, has changed significantly. They now have to do more work considering the future housing provision needs in the District. As a result they will be consulting on a revised Core Strategy Preferred Options in 2009.

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

The reopened inquiry will not be concluded before the end of May and the Inspector will then need time to write his report and recommendations to Government. The latter have already said that they expect to announce a decision early in 2009.

Only at that stage will the Inspector's recommendations be known. Whilst the Society is grateful to all those who have lobbied the Government about keeping Lewes within the National Park, as originally designated, it will be important to keep up this pressure during the autumn so as to convince Ministers that those living in Lewes want it to become part of the National Park.

In the meantime the Society welcomes the support that both the District and Town Councils have shown for retaining the town in the National Park. In addition the support which Natural England, as the successors to the Countryside Agency, has given to the original designated boundary is also very welcome.

During the inquiry Society representatives, as part of the South Downs Campaign, put forward a well argued and illustrated case for the inclusion of Lewes in the National Park and also pointed out the anomalies that would arise if the Inspector's boundary were to be adopted. Not only would this leave out the town and Ouse Valley to the north but also, more crucially, effectively de-designate certain tracts of countryside around the town that currently are classified as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or are Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

FLOOD PROTECTION

The Environment Agency is currently consulting on the recommendations in their River Ouse Catchment Flood Management plan. This document, which can be viewed on their website or in the public library, considers the potential flooding risks in the whole of the Ouse catchment area and then makes proposals for alleviating them. Members wishing to influence the Society's comments on the document should ensure that they are received in a written form by 20th June.

URBAN DRAINAGE

The Society has commented on proposals drawn up by a working party of the various statutory bodies concerned with urban drainage. Essentially this is how to avoid

flash flooding after periods of heavy rainfall. In some instances more drains are required but in many cases flash flooding could be avoided if drains and gullies were regularly cleaned and emptied by the relevant authority.

AIR QUALITY



The Society has been participating in a series of meetings considering how air quality can be improved in Lewes. This is particularly poor in Fisher Street and Station Street, doubtless due to the exhaust fumes emitted by traffic queuing in those roads. One possible way of reducing the queuing in Fisher Street would be to change the priorities at the Fisher Street/West Street junction. However the County Council are not prepared to do this on safety grounds but they are considering ways in which traffic speeds in Mount Pleasant can be reduced so as to make it easier for traffic to filter from Fisher Street into West Street. As far as Station Street is concerned it is difficult to make any positive changes. The Society has also been concerned to note that there is currently no commitment to enhance the appearance of the road.

CLIFFE HIGH STREET ENHANCEMENT WORK

It is understood that this scheme, which the Society supports, will be going ahead in June. Very small kerbs will be provided on each side of the pavement to assist visually

impaired people, whilst the width of the pavement on the south side will be increased.

BUS STATION

The Bus Station is now owned by a developer who could close it at any time. However he is prevented by the District Local Plan from developing the site unless alternative bus interchange facilities are provided in the vicinity. The Society has been involved in discussions about alternatives that might be acceptable and members views on what this should consist of and its precise location would be welcome.

PADDOCK LANE

The condition of this lane, linking New Road and Paddock Road, and in particular the retaining wall alongside it, has also given the Society cause for concern. The County Council do not own the wall and consider that the surface of the lane does not warrant resurfacing. However there is a possibility that the retaining wall might be repaired by the developer of the former Circa Fish site as part of that project.

CASTLEGATE



As the part of the historic environment of the town which most tourists visit, the Society has been concerned about the deteriorating condition of the surface in Castlegate for some time. It has recently submitted a

technical survey of its present condition, with recommendations for the repairs needed, to the County Council.

AWARDS

Every two or three years the Society likes to give awards to completed building projects that have been well designed and enhance the street scene. These can be entirely new builds, conversions, or extensions that have been completed in the last 3 years. The present stage is to assemble a list of projects meeting these criteria from which the Awards Panel can decide if they warrant being recognised in this way by the Society. Your suggestions of projects to go on to this list would be welcome. Please put them in writing to the Society at the Town Hall.

RECRUITMENT

The supplement which the Society had in the January edition of *Lewes News* was effective in boosting recruitment and we welcome the 48 people who have become members since our last newsletter. An increased membership gives us greater respect in dealing with the various public bodies we lobby to try and conserve the historic environment of Lewes. Any assistance that you can give in

persuading others to join would therefore be welcome. Membership leaflets are available at the Town Hall.

MINUTE SECRETARIES

We have been pleased to welcome Ms Jennie Wotherspoon and Ms Judith Davies as minutes secretaries.

“A MAGICAL MOMENT IN LEWES”

A member who now lives in Suffolk has sent this short article about his days working for the former Lewes Borough Council. He has asked whether other readers can recall similar moments.

“It was an afternoon in the late summer of 1966. I was working in my office in Fisher Street, draughting (dreaming) away at my drawing board which was, as I remember it, situated in a bay window, and from which I has a view straight down Station Street to the Ouse valley beyond where Firle Beacon was bathed in hazy sunshine. To add perfection to my reverie the strains of Parry’s Jerusalem came floating from the assembly room below where the WI were holding a convention. England’s green and pleasant land indeed!”

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Autumn General Meeting – Wednesday 1st October 7.45pm, Lecture Room, Town Hall.

