

Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



Summer 2008 Newsletter

DEVELOPMENTS IN LEWES

The number of developments being proposed in the town, together with those for which planning permission has been given but have not yet been started, caused the Society's executive committee to reconsider its planning policy. A copy of the agreed paper is attached but in essence it confirms the existing line of considering planning applications in a professional way within the context of the various policies which either Government or local authorities have imposed. However the Society will also take appropriate action to ensure that these policies are themselves realistic, and so far as land use is concerned it means that much thought will need to be given to the draft Local Development Framework when the District Council consult about it.

The Society also recognise that under current legislation it is not legally possible for the District Council to defer the consideration of a properly submitted planning application which is in accordance with the extant District Local Plan in order to take a holistic view of the situation, or because new policies on developments in flood prone areas have not yet been adopted. However the latter can only be permitted at present if a number of sequential tests are satisfactorily completed.

Unfortunately the Society's position is not always understood by the public and some of this is due to the Society not being proactive

in seeking publicity. This is partly due to the small number of members, who are willing to undertake the detailed work needed on both planning policy documents and planning applications, often not having time to consider the public relations aspect. If we had a greater pool of members able to undertake some part of this work it might avoid this problem and those with relevant experience willing to do so should make themselves known to us. It would also be helpful if members generally could spread the word that the Society endeavours to consider issues in a responsible way rather than seeking immediate publicity to become popular. However, we are willing to co-operate with other organisations about inappropriate development where this would be consistent with our objective of protecting and enhancing the townscape of Lewes.

The Society does limit its work by strictly applying its constitution over the geographical area in which it operates. For many years the phrase "surrounding area" in our constitution has been taken to mean the immediate surrounding area and whilst we do concern ourselves with the immediate downland including the racecourse area, we have not become involved with the proposed incinerator at Newhaven or the Glyndebourne wind turbine. Similarly we do not anticipate being involved with the proposed reservoir near Clayhill.

SOUTH EAST PLAN

The Government are currently consulting on a revised version of the South East Regional Spatial Strategy with comments being required by 24 October. The housing allocations for Lewes District for the period to 2026 have not been changed from the average of 220 new builds per annum.

PHOENIX

The outline application for this site is still awaited

WENBAN-SMITH

The Society supported the District Council at the inquiry into the refusal of planning permission to develop this conspicuous site with buildings whose design was very ordinary. We have been pleased to learn that the Planning Inspector agreed with our views and has dismissed the appeal made by Barratt's, the developer. We now wait to see whether they will submit revised plans or withdraw from the site.

HARVEY'S DEPOT



Rees Elliott, the owner of this site in Pinwell Road, quite correctly sought public opinion on its draft proposals for the site which included a meeting with Society representatives. Whilst we accepted that residential development is appropriate on this site we were concerned about aspects of the design and trust that these points will be taken on board before a planning application is made.

SOUTH DOWNS COLLEGE

Outline planning permission has been given to redevelop the Southover site (the former Boys Grammar School) whilst the outline application to redevelop part of the Cliffe site (north of Mountfield Road) has yet to be determined. Whilst the Society understands the need to have modern educational facilities it will be concerned that the detailed design is appropriate and that relevant measures are taken to reduce the traffic impact of the proposals in Mountfield Road.

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK



The public inquiry has now finished and the Inspector is expected to present his report to Government in the autumn. It is therefore important that the Minister responsible, currently Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, should be made aware of the strength of feeling in Lewes to have the town and Ouse valley north as far as Hamsey, included in the National Park as first recommended by the Countryside Agency. Even if they have written already, members are asked to write again and also to sign the petition requesting the inclusion of Lewes in the National Park, which is in the Town Hall

FLOOD PROTECTION

The Society made detailed comments on the Environment Agency's River Ouse Catchment Flood Management Plan. Essentially we supported their policy for Lewes which is to take further action to reduce flood risk now and in the future.

Separately the Society understands that planning permission for flood defence works on the east side of the river from Phoenix Causeway to the end of South Street will be sought in the autumn with a view to the work being undertaken in 2009.

HERITAGE PROTECTION BILL

In commenting on this draft Bill the Society welcomed the interest being shown by Government in heritage protection but was concerned that whilst local authorities were being given new powers in this area it was not being matched by new funding for conservation projects.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday **1st October 7.45pm** Lecture Room, Town Hall, Fisher Street

Autumn General Meeting – see notice overleaf

Wednesday **12 November 7.45pm** Lecture Room, Town Hall, Fisher Street

‘The Future of Lewes Priory Remains’ a talk by Helen Poole, Senior Museums Officer for Sussex Archaeological Society.

Heritage Open Days 2008

Volunteers are sought to help with Heritage Open Days on **12, 13 and 14 September** when a number of buildings in Lewes of historic interest will be open to the public. Volunteers will be expected to undertake sessions of two hours. No detailed knowledge of the property is required. Potential volunteers are asked to contact Pat Sexton at patsexton@btopenworld.com or 01273 475205.

FACEBOOK

The Society has created its own Facebook group which allows discussion of current issues. If you are not already a member of Facebook, you will need to sign up on <http://www.facebook.com> and follow the instructions. If you have already joined, the Society's group is at <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=42145805491>

