

Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



Summer 2010 Newsletter

CONGRATULATIONS

To our Vice-President and MP, Norman Baker, on being appointed a junior Minister in the Department for Transport in the new coalition Government. Within the Society's history there has not been a previous occasion when our MP has been a member of the Government.

REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY

The new coalition Government have lost no time in abolishing the former South East Plan and the Government Office for the South East that was based in Guildford. Whilst this now leaves local authorities without any housing targets to meet in the period up to 2026 it is expected that their Local Development Frameworks will make provision for a land supply requirement that meets identified local housing needs.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

As part of the process for determining the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework the District Council have consulted on a set of topic papers. In many respects these were of a very general nature particularly as some of the key components of evidence such as a land availability assessment and housing needs study were not available. The District Council, in conjunction with the National Park Authority, will now be considering the responses to this consultation exercise before drafting the core strategy itself.

The Society submitted a detailed response to this consultation exercise and a copy of the response is on our web site. It emphasised the need to cover flood risk management and climate change in the core strategy whilst it also questioned whether the inherent concept



of economic growth remains appropriate. Other issues covered were water and air quality, tranquility, parking, and the need to put more resources into genuine protection and enhancement of the historic environment. The need for any new development in Lewes to be in the "national" interest now that the town is in the National Park was also mentioned.

As far as the topic paper on North Street was concerned the Society welcomed this attempt to try to resolve the policy issues involved. However without information on the demand for cheap business accommodation or the need for housing in Lewes and, if so, whether providing housing at North Street passes the "national" test it was difficult to comment. Equally any constraints that the Environment Agency might put on building there need to be known and the fact that public money is unlikely to be available in the foreseeable

future to make further improvements to the flood defences needs to be recognised. Subject to these provisos and on the assumption that any development would



retain the historic buildings on the site and provide a riverside walkway our preference was for option B which was defined as a comprehensive mixed development of the site with all supporting infrastructure including appropriate flood defences.

NATIONAL PARK

The shadow National Park Authority (NPA) have now met four times, one of which was in Lewes, and developed their organisational structure. This includes a Planning Committee who have decided to delegate the majority of development control functions back to the District Councils. Thus in Lewes planning applications will still be made to the District Council but they will be acting on behalf of the NPA, and subject to their policies, when granting planning permission. The District Council will be paid for undertaking this function by the NPA who are funded directly by Government. Whilst the size of the NPA's 2011/12 budget is not yet known and may be less than first anticipated, it should be significantly higher than that of the South Downs Joint Committee who cease to exist after 31st March 2011. The NPA have not yet made a decision on the location of their Headquarters although the results of their consultation was that it should be in a market town within the National Park and accessible by public transport. They have, however, decided to have four area offices geographically spread across the National Park.

WEST STREET POLICE STATION

Whilst the Society welcomed the retention of the existing façade in the planning application submitted by the Police Authority to convert the building into a series of flats, it objected to the missed opportunity to improve the Sun Street façade. When originally built the entrance to the car park was flanked by buildings on both sides and it is only in relatively recent years that the Police Authority demolished these buildings to make a larger car park. This has left an ugly gap in the street scape in Sun Street which could be



remedied by providing a new building in this location and possibly linking it by a bridge to the remainder of the property.

EAST STREET CAR PARK WALL

For some time most of the wall on the North Street side of this car park has been in a poor condition and recently it was demolished. Whilst the District Council have put forward a planning application to provide a new wall, the Society has objected on the grounds that it is not of the same height as the previous wall, and thus does not afford the North Street residents the same privacy. In addition we have said that the material used, design and construction must be of a quality appropriate to the conservation area and suggested that a similar new wall should also replace the unsightly brick wall provided a few years ago to the East Street flats owned by the District Council.

MALLING DEANERY CONSERVATION AREA

The Society will shortly be submitting comments to the District Council on their draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Malling Deanery. In particular we will be suggesting that the area should be extended to cover other historic buildings in the area such as Old Malling Farm and Malling House. In addition the possibility of linking it with the Offham conservation area will be raised in view of the many environmental features which are common to both areas.

LITTER

A meeting has been held with District Council representatives about litter and detritus in Lewes since they are responsible for clearing it. Areas of particular concern such as the walking routes to and from schools were highlighted as well as the need to have sufficient litter bins which are emptied frequently. The District Council representatives accepted that things could be better but suggested that rather than simply make general complaints it would be more helpful if members could contact them about any litter problem in public places. Their phone number is 01273 484999 or by e-mail to customer.services@lewes.gov.uk.

SHOPPING TROLLEYS

Contact has also been made with the Managers of both Tesco and Waitrose about their store trolleys appearing in various parts of the town including the river. Both are aware of the problem and to try to deal with it. Tesco are introducing a magnetic strip on their trolleys to prevent them being taken beyond a red line surrounding their car park. Waitrose now have the store telephone number on their trolleys and are monitoring the situation.

STREET PRIDE

Street Pride is the name of a Civic Voice initiative in which local civic societies are asked to survey their streets with a view to having unnecessary signage or street furniture

removed. In his capacity as a junior Minister at the Department for Transport Norman Baker has welcomed it. The Society would like to be involved in the initiative but needs volunteers to undertake the survey work involved as well as somebody to co-ordinate it. The emphasis would be on surveying the main roads in the conservation area and the number surveyed would depend on the number of volunteers. To do so please contact the Society Chairman in the first instance either by e-mailing to enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk, telephoning 474357 or leaving a note at the Town Hall.

20mph

The Society's efforts over the past 6 years for a 20mph limit in Lewes seem once again to



have run into the sand as the County Council have said that one can only be imposed if the costs involved are raised locally. Since they have a statutory responsibility for the issue it is disappointing that they have reached this decision even though the need for them to exercise financial restraint is understood. However we will fight on and try to persuade them that there is clear justification for introducing such a limit in the conservation area particularly as Lewes is now in the National Park.

SOUTH DOWNS SOCIETY

The South Downs Society, which for many years was known as the Society of Sussex Downsmen, is now recognised nationally as the National Park Society for the South Downs. It plays a leading part in the South Downs Network, which brings together environmental bodies, including the Friends of Lewes, in the South Downs. Currently it is in close contact with both members and officers of the National Park Authority to ensure that the environmental interests are taken into account as they develop their policies and procedures. Hitherto it has not taken a particular interest in Lewes as its interests were in the countryside rather than market towns but now that Lewes is firmly within the National Park it is taking an interest in the town too. Whilst our Society has a close working relationship with the South Downs Society members may wish to take out personal membership of the latter so as to encourage them in taking the interests of Lewes into account. Details of the South Downs Society are on its website www.southdownssociety.org.uk or from its office at 2 Swan Court, Station Road, Pulborough RH20 1RL.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 23 September – Autumn General Meeting (see separate notice enclosed with this newsletter)

Friday 19 November - “Pictures from the past”. An illustrated talk by John Davey in which he will show many pictures of Lewes from his late father's collection, some of which have not been shown publicly before.

Both meetings will be held in the Lecture Room of the Town Hall starting promptly at 7.45pm.

SOCIETY EVENTS

Grateful thanks are expressed to Pat Sexton who has recently resigned as the Chairman of the Society Events sub-committee, a job she has undertaken for some years and which involves organising events for members. The membership of this sub-committee is now very thin and thus there is a real possibility that the number of events that can be provided for members will be reduced. Offers to help organise events or be a member of this sub-committee which determines them would therefore be much appreciated. Please contact the Chairman by either e-mailing enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk, telephoning 474357 or leaving a note at the Town Hall if you feel that you can help.

STREET NAMES OF LEWES

This recently published revision of the original book written by Les Davey some 50 years ago will be on sale at Society events at the reduced price to members of £ 3.20.

