

Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



Autumn 2011 Newsletter

LDC/SDNPA EMERGING CORE STRATEGY

Careful consideration has been given to the public consultation about this important document as the final version of it will set the policies under which planning applications are determined for the next few years. As a joint document between the District Council and National Park Authority its vision is dependent on appropriate resources being made available for implementation, particularly in the area of conservation. The Society accepted the need to plan for some housing and employment growth in the town but considered that this should be on brown field sites and at a level which took account of geographical constraints and the town's situation in the National Park.



Strong opposition was registered over the proposal to zone the fields at Old Malling Farm for housing as they are in the countryside outside the development boundary of the town. Building there would also be highly visible from Offham Hill and detract from the tranquil setting of the Malling Deanery Conservation Area. The

Society was pleased to note that when the National Park Authority's Planning Committee discussed whether to agree to the publication of the Emerging Core Strategy they made it clear that by doing so it did not indicate support for the development at Old Malling Farm. They also decided that prior to any consideration being given to developing the site a comprehensive assessment of the implications of developing it, including a Landscape Impact Assessment, should be undertaken and advice provided as to how developing this site would meet the needs of the town and its hinterland.

CONSERVATION AREA ISSUES

The National Park Authority have confirmed that they are directly dealing with conservation area issues and have started preparation of a Management Plan for the town. They will also consider the possibility of extending the conservation area to take in the additional area in the St Anne's area which was recommended in the Conservation Area Appraisal some 4 years ago.

The Society has commented on the draft Malling Deanery Conservation Area Appraisal and suggested that the Management Plan for it should be combined with that for the town. Beyond that disappointment was expressed that the draft appraisal did not include a recommendation to extend the conservation area as had been put forward by the Society. We also considered that the appraisal was weak in its consideration of the historical and archaeological links which this area has.

DRAFT NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Concern has been expressed about this draft Government document. Whilst the Society welcomed the overall aim of simplifying and de-mystifying the planning system, the purposes of which is to sustainably manage changes in land use, the proposal goes too far in ditching the existing system and many of the policies that have been carefully crafted under it. The draft document is based on the premise that the existing system is constraining economic growth but the Society's view is that this is only the case in specialised fields such as minerals, waste and major infrastructure. If the proposals are brought into effect without fundamental change there is a danger that the over-simplification envisaged will lead to much legal argument and delay. The Society therefore recommended that the Government should revisit the draft document and adopt a more cautious and incremental approach to change so that the planning system remains fair and just

WAITROSE & TESCO

Nothing has been heard about when the approved extension proposals for Tesco will be started or about the proposed new Waitrose store. Possibly both supermarkets are waiting to see the effects which the recent opening of the Aldi store will have on their businesses.

CANON O'DONNELL HALL

Following the discussion at the Society's Autumn General Meeting both the District Council and National Park Authority were advised that it might be helpful if a development brief were prepared for this site. The National Park Authority have indicated that they are willing to consider doing so but it would be based on making best use of the existing building;

ALFRED HOMES

It is understood that a planning application is being submitted for this housing development on the former Chandlers site beside the river.



The Society has not yet seen the detailed plans but has indicated that it would wish to see a riverside walkway incorporated into the scheme, preferably with a through walking route to Bear Yard. It has also made the point that the sheet piling needed for the flood defence should be cladd above ground level and the whole site suitably landscaped.

LOCAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The County Council have recently consulted on their proposed implementation plan for their local transport strategy covering the period to 2016. Whilst the Society agreed with the proposals envisaged for Lewes it felt that they were more in the nature of a wish list and most were unlikely to come to fruition unless more public finance becomes available. In suggesting priorities for action the Society put forward the strengthening of the Station Road bridge over the railway as number 1. Other issues deserving early implementation were a 20mph zone in the town centre, improvements to walking and cycle routes, and improved public transport infrastructure such as the facilities outside the railway station. As far as road schemes are concerned the Society championed the need to improve the air quality in Station Street



and Fisher Street by changing the priority at the Fisher Street/West Street junction and improving the Earwig Corner junction to provide a proper filter lane for traffic wishing to go to Ringmer. Concern was expressed that the plan made no reference to the conservation area in Lewes and the Society observed that street lighting and pavements in the area should be to a higher standard than elsewhere.

PAVEMENTS

The Society was delighted to learn that Norman Baker MP took up the question of pavements in the conservation area with the County Council as a result of reading our last newsletter. In reply the County Council said that once there is sufficient work to occupy a gang they will reinstate appropriate pavements in places where back tarmac has been used as a temporary repair. In addition the Society continues to press the County Council to improve the narrow pavements in Station Street which date back to the time over 40 years ago when the road had two way traffic and now make it difficult for wheelchair users.

PUBLIC TOILETS

The Society has asked the District Council to consider siting a new set of public toilets close to the boundary wall between the Convent Field and Priory Park as it considers it desirable that such facilities are available in an area where people spend time on leisure activities.

SOUTHOVER GRANGE

It is understood that the District Council intend replacing the chestnut paling fencing alongside the Winterbourne stream with



something more aesthetically pleasing. However it is hoped that the similar paling fencing alongside various shrub borders will be removed as it is unnecessary.



LITTER

Whilst the District Council keep the High Street comparatively free of litter the same cannot be said of other streets and public places in the town. This has been taken up with the District Council but where there are particular problems they should be brought to its attention so that action can be taken.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Congratulations to Judith Davies & David Hutchinson for arranging, with the co-operation of others, a good programme of buildings to visit as well as some excellent

literature about it. The Society hopes to repeat the event next year and suggestions of buildings to visit or offers of help with arranging it would be most welcome.

WEBSITE

Very many thanks go to Barbara Merchant for giving a makeover to the Society's website. It is now intended to keep it updated as it is recognised that websites offer one of the easiest ways of keeping up to date on Society affairs. The link to it is <http://friends-of-lewes.org.uk>



VOLUNTEERS

The Society urgently needs volunteers to sit on both the Events and Planning Committees. The former involves 4 meetings per year and members are expected to organise one function in that time; the latter involves monthly meetings before which the planning applications validated since the previous meeting need to be examined. Please contact Marcus Taylor (Tel 473098) for the Events Committee or Frances Tufnell (Tel 475525) for the Planning Committee.

SALES ITEMS

A new supply of tea towels has recently been received and Marietta Van Dyck (Tel 474521) is handling sales. Together with our books they may be excellent Christmas presents. Both tea towels and books will be on sale at our

forthcoming lectures.

BATTLE OF LEWES

Sussex Archaeological Society are holding a conference at the Town Hall on Saturday 14 April about the Battle of Lewes. Details are available from them.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

January 12th 2012 – Gideon Mantell's Lewes

Debby Matthews introduces one of Lewes' more interesting former residents and sets him and his work in the context of the town as he knew it.

March 8th 2012 – Gems from the collections of the Sussex Archaeological Society.

Emma O'Connor, the Museums Officer for the Sussex Archaeological Society introduces this talk.

March 29th 2012 – Society AGM (Papers for this will be distributed in late February.)

All these meetings are at 7.45pm in the Lecture Room of the Town Hall.