

Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



Spring 2013 Newsletter

Major Developments

Former Magistrates Court

Given that the present building is apparently unsuitable for conversion the Society has given a cautious welcome to the proposals put forward by Quora Developments to demolish the current building and replace it with retail premises, above which would be a Premier Inn. This is because it believes that a low cost hotel is needed in Lewes and retail development is preferable to having a disused building on the site. However much will depend on the detailed plans, including whether the design complements rather than detracts from neighbouring properties, and the materials to be used. The possibility that the current private car park will become available for public use on similar terms to the existing public car park is welcome.



North Street Quarter

Santon, the developers of this site are currently considering the results of their public consultation sessions. These showed that there is a clear desire for well-designed affordable housing on the site and a riverside

walkway. There was less enthusiasm for major retail development but the need to integrate the site with the existing town centre was considered important. Other points to emerge were that the amount of car parking should not be reduced from its present level and the possibility of including community facilities explored. Santon are currently considering these points before coming up with an indicative site plan, which is likely to be the subject of public consultation.

South Downs Road

Although the Society accepts that it is appropriate to provide housing on the vacant reclaimed site opposite Sackville House, it objected to the proposal put forward as it felt that there is a greater need for affordable housing than the 4 bedroom type that would have formed half of the development. It also objected to the provision of office accommodation as there appears to be little or no current need for such additional facilities in the town and to the fact that as designed the development would be an enclave which had no connection with the existing housing to the north. After the Society addressed the National Park Authority's Planning Committee on these points the latter decided to refuse the planning application and suggested to the developer that local interests are involved in drawing up new plans for the site.

Consultations

The past few months have seen many policy consultations by the various public bodies that are concerned with the town. The Society endeavours to consider the effect of any proposals on the town and comments accordingly. Among the consultations in the past few months have been:-

Joint Lewes District Council/South Downs National Park Authority Core Strategy

The Society recognised the need for more housing, particularly of an affordable nature, to be provided in Lewes in the plan period up to 2030 and made the point, that after excluding the North Street Quarter site, the 360 units proposed should be provided on brown field sites. However it suggested that higher housing densities would not be out of place in the town centre. The criteria for the North Street and Eastgate sites were considered sound and the need for small industrial premises accepted, although the need for further office space was disputed. Other points made in the Society's response were to facilitate access to the Downs by the provision of small car parks with interpretation boards at appropriate points and seek the re-opening of the railway line to Uckfield in order to provide a second route to London.

Town of Lewes Neighbourhood Plan

Production of such a plan is the responsibility of the Town Council who have just initiated the process with initial meetings to establish the views of the public. They will be forming a small group to move the matter forward on which the Society will be represented. Essentially a Neighbourhood Plan has to be consistent with the Core Strategy mentioned above but provides more detail on the policies to be adopted. Before it can come into force it has to be approved by a majority in a town referendum.

Flood Risk Management Strategy

The County Council have recently become responsible for this and have produced a draft strategy. The Society welcomed the way in which they propose to go about discharging

these responsibilities especially those relating to previously neglected sources of flood risk such as groundwater, surface water and ordinary watercourses. It also thought the delivery plan realistic over the way in which the County Council will lead other authorities in reducing, as far as is affordable, the probability and consequences of flooding.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan

The National Park Authority is currently consulting about what infrastructure will be needed to support the Local Plan they will start drafting shortly. The results of this exercise will also be used to determine how money collected under the shortly to be introduced Community Infrastructure Levy is used. The details of this levy are currently being worked out by the National Park Authority but essentially a fee will be payable on a square metre basis for any new development to support necessary infrastructure. Some of the money collected will be returned to the Parish Council in which the development takes place and where this Council has a Neighbourhood Plan the proportion paid to them will be 25%. However the money must be spent on projects in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and so it is important that these are identified in responding to the current consultation.

Public Realm

The District Council have engaged consultants to consider what improvements need to be made to the public realm in the towns within the District. Public realm is a term used to define all that one sees in the public area and include such things as roads, pavements, street lighting, recreational facilities and green space. The Society has responded to the consultants' recommendations .

Biosphere

This is an initiative supported by various public and large environmental bodies to promote a Biosphere in the area between the Rivers Adur and Ouse. This is a concept which supports and enhances nature conservation, encourages sustainable and socio-economic development and improves environmental knowledge, learning and awareness. The Society has supported the initiative which could attain UNESCO accreditation.

Transport issues

At long last the implementation of a 20mph zone in the town centre, which the Society first put forward nearly 10 years ago, has taken place. Another project suggested by the Society, which is to change the priority at the Fisher Street/West Street junction, has just been completed.



Associated with this is a slight move of the pedestrian crossing at the Elephant and Castle.



It is also understood that the changes to the parking scheme will be implemented this summer. They include permitting free parking on bank holidays and reducing the hours when charges are payable at some locations in the town.

Society projects

Trees

The survey of Lewes trees which the Society commissioned from David Saunders, an arboriculturist in the town, and for which a grant was obtained from the National Park Authority's Sustainable Communities Fund, has been completed and its results are being used to determine further work on this subject. This will include tree planting at appropriate sites in the town and for which further grants will be sought to add to the funds reserved for this purpose in the Society's accounts. It will be particularly important to involve people who live locally to the sites selected so that they can help maintain them. Other projects, including creating a town arboretum and having a photographic competition and public lecture on trees this coming autumn, are being planned.

Magic Circle

The Society has applied to the County Council to have the footpath linking Castlegate with Castle Ditch Lane past the Magic Circle formally designated as a right of way. This will allow the public to continue



to traverse this route in the future and prevent any future owner of the car park adjoining the Maltings building from preventing its use as a thoroughfare. Whilst it is known that the Records Office currently in the Maltings building will be moving to Moulsecomb later this year the Society is also enquiring of the County Council what its intentions, as the owner, are for the future of this building and the adjoining car park. Pending these issues being resolved the Society's plan to improve and enhance the Magic Circle is being put 'on hold'.

Heritage Open Days

The Society is taking the lead in organising Heritage Open Days this year from 13 to 15 September.

Offers of interesting buildings worth visiting by the public on one or more of these days

would be welcome as are offers to act as a steward for all or part of the time. If you can help in either way please contact Judith Davies on 477447 or e-mail her at jdavies@gables2.fsnet.co.uk

FUTURE EVENTS

TRIP TO RYE. A group from Friends of Lewes will visit Rye for a day trip on Wednesday June 12th, as guests of the Rye Conservation Society. There will be a chance to see aspects of the town's heritage and an opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest over lunch. Travel will be most straightforward by rail. See: <http://www.ryeconservationsociety.org/default.htm>

If interested, please contact the Secretary, Marcus Taylor. enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

TRIP TO MIDDLE STREET SYNAGOGUE, BRIGHTON. A small party of FoL members will be visiting this striking listed building on the afternoon of Tuesday July 9th. If interested, please contact the Secretary, as above.

See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Street_Synagogue,_Brighton

Our **AUTUMN GENERAL MEETING** is on Thursday 26 September at 7.45pm in the Lecture Room of the Town Hall.

Lewes History Group have advised us of the following events which take place at Kings Church, Brooks Road at 7.30pm. Admission is £ 2 for History Group members or £ 3 for others. Further details are on their web site [www.leweshistory.org.uk/meetings'](http://www.leweshistory.org.uk/meetings)

Monday 13 May The Duke of Newcastle and his political allies – Sue Berry

Monday 10 June A turbulent history of pub life in Lewes – Matthew Homewood