

Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



Autumn 2013 Newsletter

North Street Quarter

Members will have had the opportunity of visiting the recent second consultation event which put forward outline proposals as to how the site might be used. The comments made are now being evaluated by Santon and they envisage a further consultation with specific detail before they submit a planning application. This is the stage when the Society will need to carefully consider whether the proposals are appropriate, whether sufficient affordable housing has been included, whether the design will make the development a worthy addition to the town and whether the proposals for traffic and parking are adequate. Members with views on any of these topics are invited to send them to us either by e-mail or in writing to the Town Hall so that they can be considered before the Society itself responds.

Former Magistrates Court

Revised plans to demolish the former Magistrates Court and erect a new building containing retail units on the ground floor and a Premier Inn on the upper floors have been submitted and the planning application is likely to be determined by the National Park Authority at its Planning Committee meeting in due course. Although there have been some improvements since the original planning application over the materials to be used and the corner elevation with Court Road the Society remains of the view that it is a box like design which does not enhance this part of the conservation area and is too close



to Fitzroy House. It is therefore maintaining its objection to the proposals.

The Maltings

The Society is aware that a proposal is being put forward to the District Council, to whom the building is being transferred, for it to be converted into a History and Visitors centre. This would appear to be an appropriate use for this historic building which is in close proximity to the Castle.



Rising sea levels

An EU Intereg programme has recently consulted on the effect that rising sea levels, coupled with spring tides, could have on Lewes and the lower Ouse valley. The Society has welcomed the consultation as it

seeks to address longer term issues and builds on planning policy documents and both coastal and river basin management plans. Whilst the consultation notes that sea level rises are likely to be greater in the next 500 years than in the preceding 500 years experts have suggested that in the next 50 years flooding in Lewes is more likely to arise from



local factors than an increase in sea level. However it is clearly important that any new development on the flood plain should be resilient to any flood risk

Dormer Windows

The Society has become increasingly concerned at the proliferation of planning applications for dormer windows, as the cumulative effect can lead to an adverse impact on the street scene. As there is no formal policy for such windows each planning application has to be treated on its merits and the Society considers that there should be some guidelines as to what is acceptable and what is not. A paper is



therefore being drafted for submission to both the National Park Authority and the District Council with recommendations as to what such guidelines should contain so that some consistency results in how planning applications for dormer windows are determined.

Transport matters

The County Council has been successful in obtaining funding from the Government Local Sustainable Transport fund and has made proposals as to how these funds could be spent in Lewes. In addition to extending the current cycleway from Ringmer into Lewes, where a final decision on the routing appears to involve it being routed via Mill Road, it is proposed to have a clearly marked route through Lewes for cyclists coming from Brighton and travelling on the A 27 towards Beddingham or vice-versa. A number of options have been put forward for this and the Society has indicated a preference for a route along the bridleway to the rear of Montacute Road rather than using the steep Delaware Road; going directly across the Bell Lane recreation ground and using Court Road rather than Pinwell Road to access Cliffe High Street. However safety concerns have been expressed about the route using the junction at the foot of Station Street and if a new exit route were constructed from the station car park, the junction could be made safer by making Pinwell Road one-way.



Other improvements planned include better signposting for both pedestrians and cyclists and creating a pedestrian crossing near the railway station, as well as a refuge near the Mountfield Road junction. In addition, changes to the car and taxi parking arrangements by the station are proposed whilst the long awaited strengthening and painting of the bridge over the railway seems nearer. Improvements are also intended for Station Street and Fisher Street so that they have slightly wider pavements and the Society has strongly supported this.

Consultation is also taking place about extending 20mph zones into almost all parts of Lewes excluding the main roads. This is a logical extension of the existing town centre and Southover 20mph zones but the Society has indicated that if physical measures are needed to reduce speed at certain locations then chicanes are preferable to road humps.

Trees

The Society's Urban Arboretum project is moving forward and is gaining in recognition locally thanks to publicity in the *Sussex Express* and elsewhere. The Society is in discussion with the District Council regarding plantings in the Landport Estate and is talking with landlords in the South Downs Road/Brooks Road trading estate. Consideration is also being given to other



sites. The tree photography competition attracted a modest level of interest and the winners, who were announced at our lecture on October 17th were George Cade in the junior section and Paul McDonald in the adult section. The Society is planning to conduct a more extensive tree survey in 2014 to serve as the foundation of a long term management plan.

Memorial to Russian/Finnish prisoners of war

The Society was pleased that this memorial has been restored again at the behest of the

Russian and Finnish Embassies in London. Nearly 60 years ago the Society had arranged for the memorial's restoration but over the years its condition had deteriorated again. It is a great pity that so much environmental growth has taken place in the churchyard, although the recent initiative by the Sussex Wildlife Trust to manage this is welcome..

Heritage Open Days

This year the Society became the lead organisation for arranging this annual event in Lewes which took place in the town from 12-15 September. It is part of the annual Heritage Open Days events nationwide. Over 2,300 visits were made to venues in Lewes, and our tours and walks were fully booked. There were also tastings on the brewery tour, organ recitals at the Priory School Chapel, a choir at St Michael's, and special exhibitions at 1 North Street and the Dripping Pan. As always, everything was free to visit, and the Society is grateful for sponsorship from estate agents Strutt & Parker as well as support from the District Council.

The success of the Heritage Open Days weekend depends on people agreeing to open up their properties. Next year's event is from 11-14 September, but the Society will be beginning to plan it in January. If you would like to help, or you would be interested in opening your own property for the weekend, please contact Judith Davies, jdavies@gables2.fsnet.co.uk.

VIEWS FROM MEMBERS

Members' views on relevant topics are welcome and, subject to editorial constraints, will appear in this newsletter. They should be sent to the Secretary at enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk. It will be made clear that the views expressed are not necessarily the views of the Society.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

a) *Society* meetings in the Lecture Room of the Town Hall, starting promptly at 7.45pm

Thursday 14 November: **The Evolution of the Lewes Bonfire Night Celebrations**

Jim Etherington takes us from its origins, through to the present day –from a night of excess and riot to one of organised spectacle.

Wednesday 22 January: **Putting Lewes Priory on the map**

Helen Chiasson & Kate Hickmott from the Priory Trust's Education Team outline their current projects.

Wednesday 19 February: **A Matter of Detail and Lewes from High Up**

Marietta van Dyck shares her acute observation of Lewes features and Marcus Taylor shows some of John Houghton's vintage slides.

b) *Society visit* - Tuesday 17 December – **Visit to Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility starting there at 10am**

If you are interested in taking part please contact Marcus Taylor to book a place. The size of the party is limited and only about 10 people can take part. Marcus can be contacted at marcusstaylor@btopenworld.com or 01273 473098.

c) *Lewes History Group* meetings at Kings Church starting at 7.00pm. A charge of £ 2 for History Group members or £ 3 for non-members applies.

Monday 11 November – Lewes railway connections.

Monday 9 December – AGM and history of children in Lewes

Monday 13 January – Report on Ale and Hearty project – The History of brewing in Lewes.

d) *South Downs Society* at All Saints Centre starting at 7.15pm. Tickets priced £ 9.50 need to be obtained from the Society's office at 2 Swan Court, Station Road, Pulborough RH20 1RL (01798 875073) as this event includes mince pies and mulled wine.

Tuesday 17 December – An Old South Downs Christmas with songs by the folk-singing trio, Emily and the Hares.