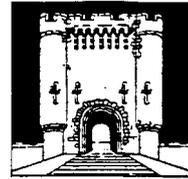


Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



Spring 2014 Newsletter

North Street Quarter

Following the recent public exhibition Santon are busy finalising their plans for submission to the National Park Authority which will determine them. Executive and Planning Committee members held a meeting with Santon in April to put forward our views and ask questions about what we had seen at the exhibition. Whilst the Society has always welcomed the possibility of this somewhat scruffy site being developed, we are concerned that the development should be one of which the town can be proud and which fits well into it. We accept that the majority of the site should be used for housing but it is important that a significant proportion of this should be of an affordable nature, as that is what is most needed in the town at present. However the design of the buildings is also important and at present we remain to be convinced about this. The amenities proposed, inclining a new river footbridge, as well as flood protection are welcomed, but we have some concerns about the proposed shared space on Phoenix Causeway as this could lead to significant congestion on the roads approaching it.

Former Magistrates Court

Following the refusal of the National Park Authority to grant planning permission for the original scheme on design grounds, the developer, Quora, has put forward a revised scheme which takes account of the criticisms levelled against the earlier one. The Society has met with Quora and accepts that improvements have been made to the design but reserves its position until it has fully

considered the drawings accompanying the revised planning application.



South Downs Road

The appeal into the refusal of planning permission for this site was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate on design grounds as the proposal would not contribute to the local distinctiveness of Lewes and would therefore cause harm to the character and appearance of the town. This is an important judgement which other developers will need to heed in the design of their schemes. In the Society's view this site would be suitable for affordable housing but at present it is zoned in the extant 2003 District Local Plan for employment activities and it was only because the developer argued that market housing was needed to enable the provision of some employment space that this had been allowed. However this zoning of the site may well be reviewed in the Joint Core Strategy which is currently being produced by the District Council and National Park Authority.

Lewes House Garden

Although planning permission for development of the former vegetable garden of Lewes House to the north of the Library was given some years ago the developer, Ash Mill, has not proceeded with it and is now seeking a revision to those plans. As the National Park has been established in the meantime, and with it the need to consider its purposes in determining applications, it is not a foregone conclusion that this revised design is acceptable. However subject to some detailed design points the Society consider that the proposal makes effective use of what is an unused town centre brownfield site.



Photo of part of the site

Canon O'Donnell centre

A revised planning application to convert the existing building into residential accommodation has been approved. The external appearance, apart from the inclusion of some well-designed dormer windows, will remain the same and the Society welcomed the scheme.

Dripping Pan

Lewes Football Club has put forward proposals to provide a new stand on the south side of the ground with improved facilities. In addition a tunnel will be provided from the new building under the bank so as to provide access to a new 3G pitch on the Priory School playing fields. These proposals are the first phase of a wider scheme which will be put forward in due course and will involve the west stand and the northern side of the pitch. Subject to some detailed points the Society

has welcomed these first phase proposals.

Planning Policy

The Options Consultation document for the National Park Authority's Local Plan was published in February and the Society has commented on it. In general we welcomed the approach being taken on what is at present largely a high level policy document as specific site allocations will not be put forward until a later stage. However it will be important to ensure that when they are published the Society is content with them, as future planning applications will be determined against the policies and allocations eventually agreed.

In the meantime the existing District Council Local Plan of 2003 is being updated by a new Joint Core Strategy between the District Council and National Park Authority which, once agreed, will supersede the 2003 Plan and be in place until such time as the National Park Authority have their own Local Plan agreed. Consultation on this Joint Core Strategy will shortly take place but the Society was pleased to note that the field at Old Malling Farm that has previously been thought suitable for housing is not being pursued on landscape grounds. Nevertheless there is a large discrepancy between the assessment of housing need in the District and the provision in the Core Strategy and it will be interesting to see whether this is accepted by the Planning Inspectorate.

English Heritage

The Government are proposing to split English Heritage into two parts: one to continue to be known as English Heritage, which will be responsible for all their properties, whilst a new body called Historic England will be responsible for English Heritage's existing policy interests. The Society did not object to the proposal but made the point that it was important that the two bodies were adequately funded and that the listing function was being retained.

Heritage at risk

The Society recently convened a meeting with other amenity and public bodies concerned with heritage to discuss the growing number of vulnerable heritage buildings and what might be done to keep them in good order. As a first step the Society is endeavouring to build up a list of listed buildings in Lewes which members may consider to be vulnerable so that this can be the basis for further discussion with the bodies mentioned. If you have any suggestions to put forward please let the Society have details either by post to the Town Hall or by e-mail to enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

Southover Grange garden

Meetings have been held with District Council staff about the possibility of removing the existing chestnut paling fencing in the gardens and, where some form of protection from the Winterbourne stream is necessary, replacing it with something of higher quality.



Trees

The Society's Urban Arboretum project continues to progress. Permission to plant trees on the Malling Industrial Estate, continuing the line that runs along South Downs Rd from the ambulance garage has been given and will be done in the autumn. The Society is also working with the Sussex Wildlife Trust and Southover School to plant a row of trees between the school car park and playing fields, and is helping fund this.

Longer term, the Society is examining the possibility of planting “gateway” trees at the town’s road entrances, for example near

Ashcombe roundabout, along the A275 in Nevill Road and on the approaches to Cuilfail tunnel. During the summer, the Society will be conducting what is known as an iTree survey across the town. This will yield a wide range of information on the tree population’s age, species mix and health, and the ecological services (carbon sequestration, pollution removal, water retention and other measures), and form the basis for a town-wide management plan. The Society is grateful to Plumpton College and its students for their assistance in conducting the survey. To drive engagement with tree issues and raise awareness amongst children, the Society will also be running an “I think trees are important to Lewes because.....?” competition, and inviting all local primary schools to participate. Schools can win 10 trees being donated as prizes.

Battle of Lewes celebrations

The Society has contributed £ 1,000 to the renovation of the Helmet in the Priory Park and has also contributed to the provision of one of the banners to be flown in the town for the 750th anniversary of the Battle of Lewes.

Heritage Open Days 11-14th September

A small team from the Society is already working on events for Lewes for this year’s Heritage Open Days weekend. There will be the usual mix of private, commercial, civic and ecclesiastical buildings open, together with special tours and walks. This year, some exciting new venues- two of which date back to medieval times, plus a ‘Wagnerian folly’ have been added. All are free to the public to visit, but where advance booking is required early booking is advised. From mid- July, look on www.heritageopendays.org.uk to see the programme, or, from early August, pick up the Lewes leaflet from the Tourist Office, Town Hall, Library and other outlets around the town.

The Society is indebted to all the building owners/managers who provide such a rich programme for the town - one which draws in many visitors from around the UK and from

abroad, as well as enthusiastic Lewesians . It would also like to thank the sponsors- Lewes District Council, Strutt & Parker and Beverly Ogden Solicitors – whose contributions enable it to produce the publicity, including the programme leaflet, and the volunteers who help with stewarding over the weekend. If you would like to help or suggest buildings for next year, please email us at enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk or use our post box at the Town Hall reception – either way, we'll get back to you.

Our Public Face

In an effort to improve the Society's image among the public and hopefully to encourage recruitment of new members, the Society's

Executive Committee have been mentored over possible changes that could be made to achieve this. Already a new recruitment leaflet has been produced and efforts to increase coverage in the local media undertaken. Consideration is currently being given to whether to make changes to our corporate design but there is no intention to change the Society's main objective, which is to conserve the history and character of the town

Visit

A guided tour of the Grade 1 listed Jireh Chapel in March was enjoyed by two dozen members.

Dates for your diary

Friday, 11th July – Special Tour of Harveys Brewery for FoL members.

Miles Jenner has kindly agreed to run this tour outside their regular, over-subscribed, tour programme. Meet in the yard for 6.30pm start. If interested, please contact enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk or on paper to the Town Hall address. [NB: Priority will be given to those who have not been on this tour before, but even if you have, please apply, saying so, because spaces are quite likely to be available with up to 50 places, unusually, being on offer.]

Wednesday, 1st October – Autumn General Meeting at 7.45pm – Lecture Room, Town Hall.

Lewes History Group have talks on Monday 9 June on Victorian and Edwardian Photographers of Lewes and Monday 14 July on Lewes' horse racing industry. These talks are held at the Kings Church building in Brooks Road and start at 7.30pm. Admission costs £ 3 or £ 2 for members of the History Group.

