



www.leamingtonsociety.org.uk

The Leamington Society

Newsletter

February 2017

Chairman's Notes

One Small Hesitant Step in the Right Direction?

Warwick University is a remarkable success story and its presence undoubtedly brings cultural and economic benefits. At the same time, a huge expansion in student numbers has had a major impact on Leamington, as described by an article in this newsletter.

Applications for large, purpose built student accommodation blocks always claim that this will release HMOs (houses in multiple occupation) back to family housing. But numbers of rooms in newly licensed HMOs continue to escalate: for 2014-16 the figures were 59, 95 and 116 extra rooms each year. The "small step" of my title refers to a recent decision by WDC to refuse an HMO. The significance was that this reversed an initial recommendation to approve the application, after officers had reviewed their assessment. Is this a sign that evidence of residents' concerns is now being heard?

Last year Warwick University issued the Report of the Chancellor's Commission, which looked into both its wide international status and the university's relation to the local community. Among the "Action Points" were a recommendation that

"The University should hold discussions with the local authorities and Coventry University on the concept of establishing a Joint Housing Task Force or equivalent exercise for the city and district."

Have discussions been held? More to the point, warm words are no substitute for effective policy.

The local situation is not unique to Leamington and Warwick District. Councils elsewhere have also experienced major expansions in university numbers and Oxford City for example has put a specific planning policy in place to maintain a balanced community.

Fly tipping

At full Council meetings, one of the staple items is 'Questions to Portfolio Holders'. Recently there were several questions about fly tipping: specifically, over the last three years, how many incidents and how many prosecutions? Apparently there are up to 1000 incidents a year, while there have been **no** prosecutions. It's in the nature of fly tipping that evidence is usually hard to come by. But

Talks and events

Windsor Chairs

Jim Steele

Thursday March 9th, 7.30

Conference Centre, Dormer Place

The Leamington Slum Clearance Co.

Barry Franklin

Tuesday April 11th, 7.30

Lord Leicester Hospital, Warwick

AGM

Thursday May 11th, 7.00

Kristie Naimo - see AGM Agenda

Christchurch, Priory Terrace, CV31 1BA

The studentification of Leamington – causes, effects ... and solutions?

'Studentification' is 'the substitution of a local community by a student community'. Why is it happening?

- *National government* has expanded Higher Education but failed to manage the impact on local communities;
- *Universities* leave the accommodation of their students to 'market forces';
- *Students* usually congregate in 'student areas' - a self-fulfilling prophecy;
- *Landlords* exploit the demand for student housing;
- *Local government* is slow to develop strategies to preserve mixed and balanced communities;
- *Local long-term residents* leave what become pejoratively known as 'student ghettos'.

Warwick University has doubled in size since 2000; it now has 21,000 students and 15,000 of them have to live off campus. The University openly promotes Leamington as "a great place for students to live". But having created that situation, the University leaves it to the market to determine the impact. As a result, there are now almost 5,500 Warwick students living in Leamington, more than three times the number of 16 years ago. Nearly two thirds are in the Brunswick and Willes areas. This has been accompanied by landlords' enthusiastic conversion of family homes into Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's): we now have over 1,300 known HMOs, providing nearly 6,600 'bed spaces' (a 48% increase in the last 7 years), mostly occupied by students.

We also have recent growth of large student blocks, such as the 200-place Alumno development and the recent 198-place proposal for Wise Street. These developments, along with smaller ones recently approved or in the pipeline, will add another 500+ places to South Leamington's "student capacity". What is the impact? :

- Distortion of the housing market, squeezing out local residents;
- Increasing squalor and dereliction;
- Rise in anti-social behaviour;
- Distorted retail - increased numbers of off-licenses, clubs, fast-food outlets etc.;
- Fluctuating market and casualised employment - from high demand in term time to low demand in vacations;
- 'Second home syndrome' – whole streets become 'hollowed out' during the long student vacations, leaving hundreds of empty houses in the midst of a housing shortage;
- Council taxpayer subsidies to HMO landlords and tenants - they pay no Council or Business Tax yet receive disproportionately high levels of services;
- Studentification is also an *experience*, leading to a sense of alienation and powerlessness amongst residents - feelings of isolation (lost networks), revulsion from the squalor and anti-social behaviour, rejection by the 'student economy', anger at the self-interest of the University and landlords.



Rubbish in Mill Street



February 2017

Notice is hereby given that the **Annual General Meeting** of the Leamington Society for 2017 will be held on **Thursday, 11th May, starting at 7.00, in ChristChurch, Priory Terrace, Leamington Spa, CV31 1BA.**

Richard Ashworth, Chairman

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 60th Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 12th of May 2016
3. Matters arising from the Minutes not included elsewhere
4. To receive reports from the Chairman and Sub Committees
5. To receive the independently examined Accounts of the Society for 2016 - 2017
6. Election of Officers:
Chairman, Vice Chairmen, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer
7. Election of four Committee Members
8. Election of Independent Examiner
9. Any other Business

PLEASE NOTE: **Nominations** of candidates for Officers and Committee must be forwarded to the **Chairman not later than Thursday, 27th April 2017**. Any voting will be by Secret Ballot at the Meeting. **We would welcome more nominations for the committee.**

Any motions for consideration at the meeting should also be received by this date. Nominations or motions will **not** be accepted at the Meeting. Nomination forms may be obtained from the Chairman.

If there is to be an election or if any motion is received, notice will be sent to members seven days before the Annual General Meeting.

Following the formal business of the AGM we will break for refreshments after which there will be a presentation from Kristie Naimo, Director and Project Manager of local Community Interest Company ARC. The mission of ARC CIC is to transform underutilised or undeveloped assets in Warwick District to create quality open spaces that contribute to people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. Kristie will be talking to us about a number of ARC's current projects - including Foundry Wood, Packington Place, New Street Burial Ground.