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The Leamington Society Newsletter

June 2006

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Local Plan Inquiry. In January 2004 the Society made comments on the first draft of the new local Plan; and in August 2005 we commented on the revised version. In April we submitted yet more comments on the next revision. These were very detailed and ran to nearly 70 pages of careful argument. We are especially grateful to Robin Richmond for this massive undertaking.

Quicks Site at Station Approach. In February 2005 WDC Planning Committee rejected an application for 183 flats at Quicks Site in a single massive five-floor block. Then the developers, Miller Homes, came back with an application for 163 flats in a marginally lower series of three five-floor blocks. This was rejected in September of last year. Miller Homes have appealed both decisions. The Society, working with CLARA, the Town Council, local residents and the Avenue Bowling Club cooperated in fighting these appeals, which were heard in April. The results should be announced by the end of August.

Of course we hope both appeals will be refused and that a fitting gateway to Leamington will emerge north of the station. This would include a bus-train interchange, a north side entrance to the station and better cycle and pedestrian facilities.

Physiotherapy at Station Approach. As we all now know this battle was lost. What we did not know at the start was just how massive the debt facing the Health Trust was – according to a recent local paper the Trust has a deficit of more than £20 millions. With hindsight we had no chance.

Decriminalisation. The start date has slipped a year to October 2007. The Society is watching with apprehension how the proposals for Leamington are evolving. At the moment we believe that there will be very considerable disruption, and probably chaos, for those living just outside the town centre. Commuters will be no longer be able to park all day in the Town Centre so they will move to the residential streets just outside the town centre and use those spaces so that local residents do not have a chance to park from 8 am to 6 pm. Robin Richmond and Gordon Fyfe are watching the proposals very carefully.

The Parade Safety Scheme. The scheme is partially complete, with considerable disruption for all who use the Parade, and considerably over budget. But the Parade does look more spacious with the removal of so much street clutter. Work on the remaining part of the Parade and Bath Street is starting this month and should be finished this year.

The new licensing laws. These came into force last November and involved longer opening hours and stronger powers for the Police in dealing with hooliganism and violence. So far there has not been any additional trouble on the streets of Leamington. We continue to be very grateful to Gordon Goddard-Pickett for all his work on this problem and also to Dr Andrew Cave.

Archie Pitts

Dates for your Diary

Leamington Society Awards Ceremony

The 2006 Leamington Society
Awards to be presented by
**The Mayor of
Royal Leamington Spa
Andy Leahy**

July 13th, 7.15 for 7.30
Town Hall

Early notice of the first meeting
in the autumn

George Goodall
will speak on
Planning Permission
on September 14th
Oddfellows Hall

More details on George Goodall's
talk as well as the full programme
of events will be available in our
next Newsletter

Platform 2 garden. This was our first project, starting April last year. The team of Ruth Bennion, Paul Edwards, Jean Halstead and Bridget Winn tend the garden each week mowing the lawn, planting and weeding the long flower bed immediately beside Platform 2. This border (about 50 yards long) was widened last winter and new stock, mainly perennials, planted there. This border is looking magnificent and gains very favourable comments from both the public and the rail staff at the station. Last winter the Leamington Town Council gave us £225 which combined with a generous donation by member Julie Morgan, enabled us to plant a 50 yard long yew hedge, as well as three trees (Prunus Amanogawa) that used to grow on Platform 2 garden. The yew hedge will form a backdrop to the Platform 2 garden. It was planted last December and nearly all the 100 yew we planted are making good shoots.

The terrace gardens. These are in two separate parts – the upper and lower terraces. Both had been neglected for some years and were very overgrown. Convolvulus, couch grass, brambles, ivy and other perennial weeds were rampant making cultivation of the area impossible.

Last July the worst of the wild growth on the upper terrace was cut back by a dozen volunteers, and the deep rooted weeds given a couple of treatments of Roundup by Roger Charters. A team consisting of Lyn Buckle, Annabel Rainbow and Gill Barker then moved in and have since worked regularly planting and tidying the area. The effect is already striking, and will develop further as the plants grow and spread.

We are still at the weed clearing stage on the lower terrace. The perennial weeds are even more rampant here and several further treatments of Roundup will be needed. The work on this area is being done by Roger Charters, Marianne and Archie Pitts. If the weed clearing goes well we shall start planting it up this autumn – planting before then would likely to be a waste of time while the weeds are still so rampant.

The lampman's hut. The gardeners use this to store the tools needed for their work. They cannot be expected to bring forks, spades, mowers, wheel barrows etc from home each week. A year ago, the hut had no window and no lock on the door. The door is now bolted and a new 15 panel window has been made generously by Dave Twiddy in his own time. Since the station and *all* its buildings, including the hut, are listed we had to have an exact replica made. Our garden equipment is now secure.

HELP: Summer trip. To "reward" all the hard work by the volunteers we have arranged a trip on the Severn Valley Railway on Sunday July 9th for the volunteers and guests.

One couple, who paid in full on March 10th at the Barby evening in the Town Hall, has not left us any contact details – would they please phone Marianne Pitts ASAP on 01926 885532.

Future projects. We have a number of projects planned. Some should be delivered in the next few months; others are still at the drawing board stage. We have been given £2000 by the Town Council for Railway heritage posters. Posters are to go into the waiting rooms and over the two stairwells from Platforms 2 and 3. When the planned revamp of the booking hall by Chiltern Railways is carried out we hope to have a replica of the original booking hall clock made for the hall. The original was given in 1939 by the Corporation of Royal Leamington Spa.

Running-in-boards. We would like to reinstate two GWR running-in-boards as well as two GWR benches on Platform 2. We have been promised £8159 pounds if we can raise a further £2000. So far we have raised £1200.



Photo of Running in Board by Patrick Kingston

***Please help us raise the last £800 to secure the £8150.
Would you sponsor a letter for the boards at £25 per letter,
or an iron RiB post at £100 each?***

SOUTHERN JUSTICE CENTRE

Sadly the Southern Justice Centre proposal received a unanimous vote in favour by WDC Planning Committee. The application was recommended by the Planning Office and strongly supported by the Leader of the WDC, Bob Crowther, who argued that the proposal was right for the town. It would provide for the safety of witnesses as well as decent conditions for those "going through the system". The SJC would be good for the town centre and provide major benefits for our community. It had a good internal design. While it was a big building, so it should be, he argued, showing respect for its location. Nor was he concerned about its effect on Jephson Gardens, which is a garden in the town centre, and must live with buildings around it – he compared the effect of the SJC on the gardens with that of the Pump Rooms. Overall he was sanguine about the effect of the building on Jephson Gardens.

Earlier in the year both CAAF (the Conservation Area Advisory Forum) and the Town Council had been highly critical of the proposal. These bodies are only consultees on planning applications and so could merely comment on development proposals to Warwick District Council. A number of local groups, including this Society, CLARA, The Warwickshire Gardens Trust, had also expressed strong opposition. The WDC Planning Committee acknowledged the various objections raised, but were not swayed. One councillor conjectured that it might even be listed in the future. Our view was that it was the wrong building for that site; there were better locations for it.



Newbold Terrace in first half of the 20th century



... in the second half



... and in the 21st century?
(Artist's impression by HLM Architects, with trees omitted)

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Newsletter Distribution

Jo Clark

The Leamington Society is a registered charity. It is affiliated to the Civic Trust and to the West Midlands Amenity Societies Association. It exists to preserve the heritage and improve the character of Royal Leamington Spa and to encourage high standards of planning and architecture.

Charity No. 516078

Unless otherwise indicated, views expressed in these newsletters are the contributors' own and not necessarily the corporate view of the Society.

PLANNING MATTERS

We are seeing a number of proposals for changing family dwelling houses into multi-occupation for students. As most of these students then have to travel to the two universities in Coventry, it seems very bad planning, at a time when we are trying to reduce travel, congestion and C02 emissions. One of the attractions to developers is that students do not pay council tax, the rest of us pay for their council servicing.

The West Midlands Regional Strategy aims to reverse the outward movement of people and jobs from the major urban areas of Birmingham/Solihull, the Black Country, Coventry and the North Staffordshire conurbation. This aim, together with the fact that the target housing figure has been exceeded in Warwick District, has led to our planning department producing in September 2005, a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It is titled "Managing Housing Supply". It will be formally adopted once the WDC Local Plan is approved, but meanwhile it will be used as a part of the emerging Local Plan in decision making. In summary, it states that 'in order to manage the supply of housing in relation to the strategic housing requirement between 1996 - 2011, planning permission for housing development on urban windfall sites will be refused, unless one of the following criteria applies.' These exceptions apply chiefly to regeneration of Old Town and affordable housing.

Warwick District Council covers three important historic towns – Warwick, Kenilworth and Leamington Spa. Too much development over too short a time scale will destroy their character. The new SPD 'Managing Housing Supply' is therefore to be welcomed and supported.

Paul Edwards

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AWARDS 2006

Thank you to all our members and others who have made suggestions for an Award. Judging will take place in June, and the winners announced on Thursday July 13th by our new mayor, Mr Andy Leahy, in the Town Hall. The ceremony starts at 7.30 pm. All members are invited, but **please inform Archie Pitts by email or letter by the end of June if you would like to come, so you will have a seat and light refreshments.**

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Thank you to Tom Holloway

Tom, who has provided considerable IT support for the Executive Committee of the society in the last few years, is moving away from Leamington. We shall miss all his help – but he will remain a loyal member of the Society.

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New member

We are delighted to welcome Richard Lemberger as a new member, following his father who was a long standing member.

May we remind all members who do not pay by standing order that their subscriptions are due. Our subscription year runs from April 1st.