

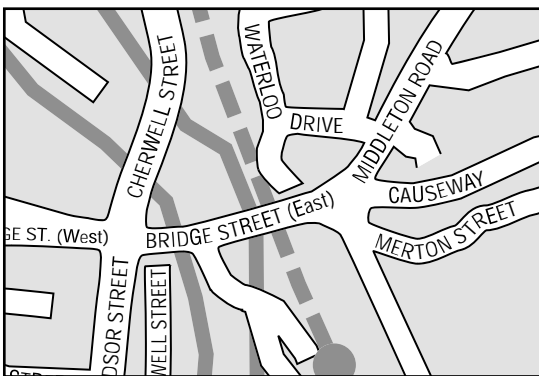
## Highways and traffic

### Traffic Advisory Committee Report

At the December Transport Committee Meeting only The Civic Society members advocated measures to discourage car usage. Otherwise the rise in car usage seems to be regarded as inevitable. The only reference to public transport was a request from the Stagecoach manager for measures to prevent motorists from parking or stopping at bus stops – this is a particular problem in Banbury High Street near the Post Office.

The use of certain roads as “unofficial” car parks was causing difficulties to local residents and obstructing the free flow of traffic. A typical example of this is the considerable volume of traffic from the Middleton Fields Estate, all siphoning into Waterloo Drive to get into Middleton Road which was reported to be severely obstructed by parked cars. We are told that until Waterloo Place is officially adopted by OCC (soon we hope) parking there cannot be restricted.

The Bridge Street crossroads, controlled by traffic lights, continues to cause delays and long queues at busy times. The Civic Society



proposed that traffic from Bridge Street East (including traffic from Middleton Road Waterloo Drive and Station Approach) should have clear passage in all directions over the crossroads without the obstruction caused by vehicles being allowed to come out from Bridge Street West at the same time. This is being considered by the authorities, though they are reluctant to reduce the north-south traffic flow by shortening the green light periods.

One of the problems identified by the

authorities is the tendency of cars to position themselves badly at the junction, particularly when turning right. It is probable that road markings, lines and arrows will be used to help this problem.

Concern was expressed about the part of Broughton Road near the Flowing Wells pub. Cars parked along the road caused the carriageway for traffic to be far too narrow for such a busy section of road. The problem would be carefully examined and appropriate affordable action taken.

*The next meeting of the Traffic Advisory Committee is in early March. If you have relevant concerns you are invited to contact the Secretary of the Society.*

## Planning and the historic environment

### New documents from Cherwell District Council

Since the last Newsletter, two interesting documents have been received from Cherwell District Council.

The first was the Consultation Draft for the proposed Grimsbury Conservation Area, described in last April's Newsletter and now adopted by Cherwell. The document traces the early history of Grimsbury. Although it was not incorporated into the Borough of Banbury until 1889, Grimsbury has been part of the Ecclesiastical parish of Banbury since Saxon times and in 1832 following the Great Reform Act, the Ecclesiastical parish was adopted as the Parliamentary Borough of Banbury. The curious outcome was that the inhabitants of part of what was Northamptonshire were part of the electorate of an Oxfordshire constituency for over 65 years.

The politicians of the day were not slow to take advantage of this. In 1851 there was formed the “Banbury Freehold Land Society” which the same year purchased 13 acres of land north of the Middleton Road. This was divided into 151 plots available for purchase by those able to afford them who would thereby qualify for the parliamentary vote.

The houses, then constructed over the following years fronting the north side of the Middleton Road, East, West, North, South, and Centre Streets form the greater part of the

proposed Conservation Area. The individual ownership of sites produced the characteristic variation in architectural styles. The other part of the Conservation Area includes the properties on the south side of the Causeway and the north side of Merton Street which were built at the same time by the railway companies to house their employees at the nearby stations.

The overall result is a still relatively unchanged assemblage of Victorian and Edwardian housing with interesting historical origins. The Council and the Built Heritage Working Party are to be congratulated on the extensive work that has gone into the preparation of the appraisal and are assured of the full support of the Society in implementing the proposals.

In further support of the new Conservation Area the Society has taken a strong line in opposing the application to demolish a house within the Area (see next page).

One of the features of a Conservation Area is that it is intended not only to preserve but to enhance buildings in the Area. This may involve expensive restoration. In the case of Grimsbury, the removal of inappropriate and possibly damaging stone-cladding, the replacement of plastic double-glazed windows and the reconstruction of missing wrought iron railings are examples of desirable enhancement. To encourage this work the Society has asked the District Council if they can make an application for government funding by means of a “Single Budget Programme” grant to assist householders with this type of work.

The other document received is again a consultation draft – a design and planning guide for householders considering home extensions and alterations. In the Society's opinion this has been well prepared with good readily intelligible illustrations, which should give property owners little excuse for having to make retrospective applications. In the context of heritage buildings it underlines the need for both Listed Building consent and in some cases planning consent. The draft omits any reference to buildings in Conservation Areas and the Society has suggested that this should be remedied.

### Marlborough Arms

The Society has opposed a recent application for a residential development of 13 1-bed flats and associated parking on the site currently

occupied by the Marlborough Arms public house on the corner of Gatteridge Street and Newland Road. This is a detailed planning application that builds on an outline consent granted in October 2003, before the existing building was added to the local listed, or brought within the extended Banbury Conservation Area (both in 2004). The current proposal is for an L-shaped four-storey building designed to closely reflect the existing 19th-century 3-storey terraced housing within Gatteridge Street. The current building occupies a visually dominant corner plot and, because of its historic and current function as a local pub, is visually distinct from the neighbouring housing in terms of height, layout, window form and finish. Our argument is that the proposal to replace this building with a new building that replicates the adjacent terraced housing will reduce the diversity and interest of a part of the Banbury Conservation Area whose historic character is still defined by its mix of mid to late 19th century artisan housing, shops, public house, schools and its few remaining small workshops and places of manufacture.



## Neithrop House

Also coming back for planning consent is Neithrop House, the Grade II Listed gothic villa on the north side of People's Park. The previously approved scheme for the demolition of the building's wings and the construction of new extensions to create thirteen 1-bed flats and a town house (opposed by this Society in 2003 and 2005) has required a number of amendments. Most of these were needed in order for the design to comply current building regulations. Neithrop House and the Peoples' Park have been added to the Banbury Conservation Area since the original consent for this building's redevelopment was first granted. As previously, debate on the revised proposal is likely to centre on whether the proposed demolitions and extensions will harm the special interest of the Listed Building or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Previously the combined voice of this Society, English Heritage and Banbury CPRE could not persuade the CDC's North Area Planning Committee that the redevelopment would be harmful. We understand it that this time our voice will be joined by most of, if not all the Statutory Consultees, the Victorian Society, the Ancient Monuments Society, the Council for British Archaeology, the Society for Ancient Building (SPAB) and possibly the Georgian Group, as well as Banbury Town Council, Banbury Built Heritage Working Group, Banbury Historical Society and Banbury CPRE.

## Other planning issues

There has been a threat to the new Grimsbury Conservation Area – an application to demolish no 44 West Street, and its replacement by two 3 floor houses.

The Civic Society has responded to this by urging the Cherwell planning officers to refuse consent. We pointed out that justification for this application appeared to centre on the stated condition of No 44 West Street as "derelict". As the house appears sound are the applicants using this word "derelict" simply to gain support for their plan to demolish one perfectly good house in order to squeeze two on its place?

We reminded the Planning Department that this part of Grimsbury had earned its new status as a Conservation Area because it was widely recognised as an outstanding example of Victorian Freehold Land Societies, whereby land was divided up and sites sold to individuals to build a dwelling for themselves and one or two others for sale or rent. This policy resulted in an attractive mixture of architectural styles, usually involving two or three houses of one style followed by two or three houses of a quite different style. No. 44, West Street is entirely consistent in this respect and could well have been the house of the original freeholder while the two neighbouring semi-detached houses to the right were also built by him in the same vernacular. Despite



No. 44, West Street and neighbouring semi-detached houses

the inappropriate fenestration, no. 44, built with local and irreplaceable bricks retains much of its original charm. We pointed out that the proposed three floor replacement building would be entirely inappropriate – an overscaled poorly detailed pastiche of the existing house. The loss of no. 44 and its proposed replacement would be entirely detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area..

## Banbury Visual Arts

### "Christmas Gallery"

This was the appropriate title in the Four shires magazine for Banbury's first ever gallery by artists from the area. Organised principally by Christine O'Sullivan and Margot Bell, BVA's first ever gallery was open for six weeks, closing as scheduled on New Years Eve.

On display was a wide range of creative work:

paintings, sculpture, jewellery and textiles from over 20 artists, including some who are internationally acclaimed, and all living within 20 miles of Banbury. The venue was the first floor of the new Bookshop "Books and Ink" in White Lion Walk. BVA was grateful to the proprietors Sam Barnes and Sheryl Root for providing the space.

The artists were encouraged by the positive response to the exhibition and are anxious to participate in future events. Until the District Council can be persuaded of the cultural and economic benefits to Banbury of a permanent gallery, this temporary sharing of retail space seems to be the way forward for the BVA.

## Heritage Forum

### How you can get a word in

It has been suggested that members of the Society who are not on the Management Committee should be given the opportunity to 'put in their spoke' about matters affecting Banbury – heritage, the environment, traffic, pollution, noise, youth or anything else. What we propose is a special meeting open to all members on on March 12th at **8.00 pm** after the Management Committee meeting at St Hugh's Parish Hall held earlier.

## Your letters

Please send your letters to:

The Rev.d. George Fryer, Hon. Secretary, Banbury Civic Society, 7, Spencer Court Britannia Road, Banbury, Oxon, OX16 5EY or e-mail: [design@h-and-p.demon.co.uk](mailto:design@h-and-p.demon.co.uk)

## WANTED

The Committee is looking for volunteers to promote the aims of the Society:

- Publicity – to broadcast the activities of the society to the widest possible audience within the town and surrounding area.
- Events organising – to devise and arrange meetings and outings of interest to members.

*Offers of help gratefully received by the Membership Secretary (address below)*

## Banbury Civic Society Membership

If you are not already a member, or you know of others who might be interested in joining please write to the Membership Secretary at the address below. The widest possible membership greatly increases the effectiveness of our work in Banbury.

Please write to:

The Membership Secretary  
Banbury Civic Society  
Pitts Orchard, Station Road  
BLOXHAM, Banbury  
Oxon, OX15 4QG

or telephone: 01295 722925