

With the Society's Annual General Meeting taking place next month, we are anxious to recruit new members to the Management Committee or to the working groups which report to the Committee. You can devote as much or as little time as may be convenient to this involvement.

If you are interested please let us know, indicating your special field of interest and we can give you fuller details.

Highways and traffic

A Bus/Rail Interchange

In the last Issue we commented on the possibility of a Multi-Modal Interchange at the Railway Station to improve the integration of rail and road traffic at that site. We are pleased to report that this has been taken one step forward through an agreement reached between the railway authorities and the highway authority for the extension of Tramway Road to permit a regular bus service to the railway station. The route will be restricted to bus traffic by means of a retractable bollard so it will not create a possible rat-run for vehicles attempting to avoid the Bridge Street traffic lights. However, car owners will also benefit as the extension will lead to improved car parking facilities for rail travellers on the south west side of the station via Tramway Road. Bus shelters will be erected at the station. Other improvements are likely to follow dependent upon further finance becoming available. The work will commence in February next year and be complete by summer 2007.

As a consequence of this progress, minds are being focused once again on the possibility of the re-development of the whole area to the south of Bridge Street between the railway on the east and Upper Windsor Street to the west extending as far as Swan Close Road to the south. Through this area flow both the river and the canal. It contains buildings dating back to Banbury's early industrial days. The Society is most supportive of any plans to improve this part of the town, provided they retain and put to worthwhile use a significant part of the former industrial heritage and support the historical importance of the area.

The presence of the river and the canal suggests a strong emphasis on open space and leisure activities but hopefully there can be a wide range of uses, not least for family housing. This already exists in the excellent



The busy canal in the mid 20th century

conversion of the old Town Hall and the construction of the adjacent row of canalside houses.

We hope that redevelopment will not be regarded as yet another opportunity for large impersonal blocks of flats. Another possibility might be a museum of early agricultural implements and of farming activities: a reminder of the industrial production of Samuelson and of the days when Banbury had the largest cattle market in Europe.

We shall be glad to have the views of members as to how they feel this area should be adapted to be worthy of the town and its history.

Parking at the Horton

A continuing problem raised at meetings of the Traffic Advisory Committee is that of parking at the Horton Hospital. Visitors and, it seems, also staff are unwilling to pay charges with the result that the neighbouring roads are filled with cars. This is to be prohibited along much of Horton View and Foscombe Rise. However the erection of a large new Treatment Centre at the Horton with, presumably, an influx of car-driving staff to occupy it can only aggravate the problem. What is the answer?

Please let us have your views and let us know by 20th May of any other highway matters you would like us to raise at the next Highway Meeting.

Planning and the historic environment

Local Development Framework

Having failed to meet its summer deadline for a Public Inquiry on its brand-new Cherwell Local Plan 2011 and as a result of Central Government changes, Cherwell District Council has been obliged to start all over again on drafting a new-style 'Local Development Framework (LDF) that will eventually replace the old Local Plan. Once completed, the new-style LDF will contain the policies, proposals and other documents about land use and planning that will provide the basis for determining planning

applications and future development throughout Cherwell for a whole generation, until 2026.

The idea behind the new-style LDFs is to streamline the planning process and enable the building of hundreds of thousands of new homes, whilst also delivering "sustainable communities". As such the new LDFs will be critical for the future of our towns, villages, countryside and quality of life. [The official definition for sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"].

If it works well, the Framework system should encourage development in the places in which it will do the most good and discourage it where it would cause harm. It should mean positive planning that:

- Protects the character and tranquillity of the countryside
- Conserves and enhances the historic and natural environment
- Gives new life to previously used land and buildings and so brings about urban renewal
- Promotes good design, to reinforce the distinctiveness of each place
- Requires development to be sustainable

A badly done LDF could be little more than a 'house-builder's charter'.

Our particular concern is that, unless a LDF gives the highest priority to the protection of the historic built environment, the government's twin requirements to maximise high-density development on pre-developed sites and to provide nearly 10,000 new houses in Cherwell in the period to 2,026 (including 3,856 new houses in Banbury) will make it very difficult for the council to refuse new housing development within the hearts of our existing communities, whatever the cost to the district's historic buildings, character and environment.



Spencer House, demolished last year, was a victim of weak conservation policies

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

In order to produce policies that are sustainable and which reflect the views and aspirations of the community, local authorities are required to engage with local people in the process of formulating Local Development Frameworks. The Society was asked to respond to this initiative by Cherwell. Among many other things, this offers the possibility for earlier consultation on planning applications – that is before the Applications are officially lodged, when minds of the Planning officers often seem to have been made up. In our response to the SCI we requested that pre-application consultation should be required for applications affecting Listed Buildings and those in Conservation areas as well as the very large scale developments which the SCI document lists. We await a response to our request.

Long term Planning

As a first step in the consultation process the CDC published the LDF Draft Core Strategy – Issues and Options Paper in February and asked the Society for comments. This Paper sets out possible strategies for Planning until the year 2026. It makes use of various options from which Consultees are asked to select. The Society is concerned that:-

a. the questions and printed discussion dictate that due to the council's "limited resources", stark, simplistic choices have to be made with regard to the protection of the historic environment, with no real consideration of national conservation policy or of the council's statutory duties.

b. that the greatest single block of Consultees is not local bodies at all, but the 82 national house-builders, property developers, property companies and planning consultants, of which only 25 are based in Oxfordshire. Your committee has communicated its concerns to other local Consultees such as Parish Councils throughout the Cherwell District many of whom have responded with full support for the Society's views.

A representation to the CDC has also been submitted by the Society.

Other planning issues

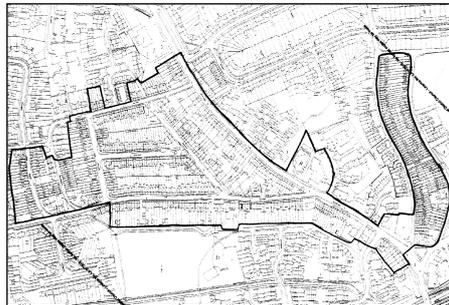
There have not been many significant Applications with the Banbury Town Area. However we are anxious about an application involving the demolition of a wall at the back of 18-20 Broad Street. We will pursue this to make sure that a minimum amount of alteration is carried out to ensure the safety and viability of one of Banbury's few remaining Ironstone Houses.

We would welcome input from members about specific issues and observations such as inappropriate shop signs or poor replacement windows

Grimsbury Survey

The Banbury Built Heritage Working Party, including members of the Civic Society are actively involved in helping CDC to define a new Conservation Area in Grimsbury.

We would welcome input from members, who are familiar with and value this area.



Suggested Grimsbury Conservation Area

Allotments and the flood plain

Banbury Flood Alleviation Scheme

From the outset the Civic Society Working Party has contributed to the discussions taking place at formal meetings under the auspices of the Environment Agency. These meetings have included the representations of County and District Councils Public Utilities and Members of directly affected organisations.

Objections to the Environment Agency's proposals have obliged the agency to request a date for a Public Enquiry, which has now been confirmed for later this year.

The risk of flooding is aggravated by the state of the River Cherwell and its tributaries. In the past these have been kept clear by dredging. But these operations have ceased. The Society would like to see them recommenced.

Your letters

Bus/Rail Interchange

The bus/Rail interchange proposals have been supported for a long while by Chiltern Trains and CRUG who have done much research. Unfortunately a very biased report commissioned, I think, by the County Council denied the importance of the scheme and discouraged funding. A little co-ordination with CRUG is called for in order to present a united front.

Stanbridge Hall

Stanbridge Hall, formerly Banbury County (then Grammar) School is a very important part of Banbury's heritage. The claim that it "unsuitable for modern teaching methods" makes no sense at all. I don't know if planning permission for a change of use has been applied for or granted but, if not too late, it should be strongly opposed. Nowhere have I seen what is proposed for the playing field. Is it to remain with the other school buildings or

sold? Has anyone considered the requirement for peace and quiet in a care home when suggesting putting it next to a big school? Discussion and campaigning are called for.

John R. Batts, 51 Horton View,
BANBURY, Oxon.OX16 9HW

Please send your letters via e-mail to design@h-and-p.demon.co.uk or post to:

Chairman, Banbury Civic Society
The Manor House, Overthorpe,
Banbury, Oxon, OX17 2AE

Open Forum

Does the Society's membership need to know more about what's happening to Banbury's townscape, and what's being done about it?

Obviously Yes!

We are aware that many members get 'hot under the collar' about things they see happening in the town or read about, and would relish the opportunity to record their disquiet to others. An OPEN FORUM for members may be the answer. This might take the form of allowing members to attend one or two of the monthly Management Committee meetings in order to have their say. The meetings are held at St Hugh's Church Centre, Ruskin Road.

Your thoughts on this initiative would be most welcome.

Banbury Civic Society AGM will be on Thursday 18th May at St. Mary's Centre, Horsefair, Banbury at 7.30 p.m.

Speaker: Michael Clews
Founder and Director of
Acanthus Clews Architects

"Conservation and change: has Banbury achieved the right balance?"

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