

Quarterly News

and Annual Review

Canalside Coach Trip

What do you want for Banbury?

As the Oxford Canal and the River Cherwell pass through Banbury, the canal and river sides are clearly fragile and historic areas, vulnerable to flooding and destruction by unsuitable development. Clearly such an important and central area needs to be developed in such a way as to create a coherent, high quality, sustainable public environment for the benefit of Banburians and visitors alike.

With the planned development of this area in mind, a day coach tour of similar Midland canal towns is being arranged to see the various ways that other canal and river areas have been developed. An introductory meeting is planned, ten days before the visit itself, to maximise the benefit of what will be a whistle-stop tour, together with a discussion meeting ten days after the trip to offer the opportunity for opinions to be expressed and new horizons explored.

A formal consultation process is planned by Cherwell District Council to start in the Autumn of this year, and the purpose of this programme of events is to create a basis for informed discussion of the various ways in which the canal-side area could be beneficially developed. The dates of the events will be:

1. Tuesday August 25th – An evening of brief, illustrated talks in Banbury to provide the background for the tour. A short guide will be produced for distribution at the meeting.
2. Sunday September 6th – Coach tour

to the canal and river sides of Worcester, Stourport-on-Severn and Kidderminster, returning via Droitwich and Stratford-on-Avon. It is not intended to walk the canals but, on a flying visit, to observe the features illustrated in the earlier talks.

3. Tuesday September 15th – Evening discussion in Banbury to create a brief report of findings and suggestions to Banbury Town Council and Cherwell DC.

Coach travel has been costed at about £10 per seat and a pre-arranged soup or pub sandwich lunch should keep extras to a minimum. Ideas for sponsors are welcome.

Please let Mo Mant know as soon as possible if you are interested in joining the coach party so that we can gauge the likely numbers. Contact her on 01295 721630 or momant@onetel.com.



Examples of Canalside development, above: Worcester, below : Droitwich



Chairman's Statement

I confess I was greatly daunted at the prospect of taking over as Chairman of the Civic Society following John Bell's decade in the post. John has been a very hard act to follow, but I hope that members will feel that I have served the Society adequately over the last year. Certainly John's continued presence on the management committee has made my job considerably easier during what has been an eventful year.

The last year has seen a number of changes in the way the Society is managed:

- Membership has held firm, whilst membership details have been consolidated on a single database by Chris Seddon, our new Minutes and Membership Secretary. Chris has revolutionised our committee minutes and transformed member communication via email and through the website
- The Banbury Civic Society website has been launched, with the very able and freely-given support of Steve Paxton of Ice 9 Media, based at Twyford Mill. Steve has also provided a new email address for the Society: info@banburycivicsociety.org
- To speed up management committee meetings and streamline operations, sub-committees have been established to cover Admin and Membership, Planning and Built Heritage and Transport
- In order to make best use of members' subscriptions, no meetings (AGM excepted) are now held in paid venues. After a period of meeting at the homes of Kay Smith and John Bell, Management Committee meetings are now held at the offices of Acanthus Clews, for which particular thanks are due
- Cllr Kieron Mallon has joined as nominated observer for the Town Council, which has significantly improved communications with Town, District and County Councils
- We have also increased our participation in District-wide

environmental forums, with the Society normally represented by Mo Mant and her husband Graham.

- We are starting to give much greater thought to member events, the first being the proposed 'canalside' events (see page 1 in this issue)
- Regular meetings were also instituted with CDC planners, although these are in temporary abeyance at present.

The year has seen a number of emerging proposals and themes of interest:

- Credit Crunch, seeing factory and shop closures, and a plunge in planning applications. It is hoped that the slowdown may provide the opportunity to take stock and put tools in place for more sustainable and better designed development in future
- Closure of Alcan, bringing to an end over 75 proud years of production, and our first petition (at the Banbury 400 Jacobean Hobby Horse Day 2008), demonstrating 100% public support for the retention of a substantial vestige of the factory
- Options for Growth – Banbury to take

1600 to 2800 new homes, with 1200+ in the Canalside regeneration area (Options for Growth Site E)

- Reorganisation of Planning at CDC
- Forthcoming pedestrianisation of Parsons Street
- Proposals for residents-only parking areas
- Improvements to Peoples' Park on Gulliver's Travels theme
- Reopening of the open-air swimming pool this summer
- Ongoing refurbishment of the Town Hall, previous external works and reopening of Minstrel's Gallery being followed this year by refurbishment and restoration of the main chamber
- Encouraging upsurge in private-sector residential developments over shops in the town centre

Listing

The last year has seen the successful Listing of:

- the former Mechanic's Institute (the Library), and



'The former Mechanics' Institute (Library) (built 1884) and Municipal Technical School (now Borough House) (built 1893) which have been listed by English Heritage. The Mechanics' Institute was largely funded by local industrialist and philanthropist Sir Bernhard Samuelson.

- Alcan offices gates and war memorial following applications by Rose Todd at CDC

Unfortunately applications by CDC to list Stanbridge Hall (ex Banbury Grammar School), Dashwood School, Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Marlborough Road terraced villas and the lighting shop on Broad Street have been unsuccessful, as has been an application by this Society to List the Alcan factory and labs.

Appeals

It has also been a good year for fighting Appeals.

Following the Planning Inspectorate's vindication of the Civic Society opposition to the demolition of 44 West Street and intrusive extensions to Neithrop House in 2007, our further opposition to harmful developments in 2008/9 has been further vindicated by the Planning Inspectorate's refusal of appeals for:

- 49 Oxford Road (extension to Listed Building)
- 12-14 Dashwood Road (retrospective application for ramp and railings)
- Marlborough Arms (demolition of locally-listed building)
- 8 Calthorpe Road (alteration and extension of Listed building)
- 22 Milton Street (retrospective application for large dormer window)

We have maintained our 100% track record where our advice to refuse damaging applications has been tested at appeal. This has not gone unnoticed by elected members and officers and has done much to enhance our reputation for reliable planning advice. This has been reflected by our elected representatives or their officers also refusing harmful planning applications following representations from this Society, at:

- Church Lane (former Methodist Chapel)
- Town Centre House (Warwick Road / Southam Road)

Continuing areas of concern

- Decline in the Old Town through shop closures and a lack of investment in Conservation Area enhancement schemes
- Lack of additional controls on satellite dishes, loss of front gardens, plastic windows, etc. within conservation areas
- Ongoing problems with damaging subdivision of historic buildings, including in the last year 22A, 44, 60 and 78 West Street, 19, 21 and 23 Castle Street, 27 Gatteridge Street and 19 Marlborough Road.

These themes of Permitted Development, Subdivision and Conservation Area enhancement are envisaged as requiring significant effort in the coming year, which is highly appropriate as March saw the launch of English Heritage's 'Conservation Areas at Risk' initiative – a national project in which we are already fully engaged, with a strong commitment to ensuring that Banbury and Grimsbury are not overlooked.

Departures

Stepping down from management committee duties this year are Rachel Kinchin-Smith and Graham Anker. Rachel, who was highly instrumental in first establishing the Society, left the management committee when I became Chair. Rachel has stepped down principally due to increasing problems with mobility, but she continues to be an active and valued member of the Society, hosting the Admin sub-committee and coordinating member mail-outs. Graham Anker (elected last year) unfortunately found himself unable to play as active a role as he might have wished due to increased masonic and other duties. We hope that Graham may rejoin the management committee when he has more time.

Two long-standing stalwarts of the management committee are unfortunately standing down permanently. Rev. George Fryer, our former Correspondence and Minutes Secretary, has retired from a post he

originally took on temporarily, following a decade of faithful service. Penny Carey has also left, because of her artistic commitments and because 'one Carey on the committee is enough'. Penny has expressed her desire to continue on the Banbury Town Council Built Heritage Working Party.

Sadly the last year saw the death of our one-time Treasurer Derick Ingram, who whilst he had not served on the management committee for a number of years due to declining health, will be sadly missed. Derick's most enduring memorial will be the buildings he designed in Banbury, not least, the Bradley Arcade, the Whately Hall Hotel Annexe and the General Foods Social Club.

Arrivals

We have been most fortunate that Chris Seddon, Benita Lee and David Finlay have very kindly agreed to join the Management Committee. Chris (Minutes and Membership Secretary) has revolutionised our committee minutes and membership database and has also transformed member communication via email and through the launch of the Banbury Civic Society website. Benita is a lifelong Grimsbury resident and doyenne of the Grimsbury Residents' Association. She has very strongly held views on the declining state of the Grimsbury Conservation Area and will be keeping us on our toes in this respect. David is an architect and Director with the nationally-renowned Acanthus Clews conservation practice. We very much look forward to the additional professional expertise that David will bring.

Thanks

My job as Chair has been made all the easier and more pleasurable by the constant and able support of our management committee. Particular thanks are due to Mo Mant (Deputy Chair), Adrienne Rees-Brown (Treasurer), Laurence Carey (Newsletter) and Cllr Kieron Mallon (Town Council observer).

I must also express my enormous gratitude to the members of our subcommittees:

Rachel Kinchin-Smith, Mo Mant, Adrienne Rees Brown, Chris Mant, Laurence Carey and Chris Seddon (Admin sub-committee).

Mo Mant, Chris Mant, Laurence Carey and Penny Carey (Built Heritage and Planning)

John Bell, Henry Ormerod and John Batts (Transport sub-committee)

Thanks are of course also due to management committee members Kay Smith and Lynda Pamment for invaluable contributions as lifetime residents of Banbury and Grimsbury and to Cllr John Gazey of Coventry, who acts in an ex-officio advisory role, notably with regard to LOTS.

Transport

Traffic and Transport Update

At the June meeting of the Banbury Traffic Advisory Committee the Civic Society expressed concern over the difficulties and dangers caused by the sudden narrowing of Ruscote Avenue northbound from two lanes to one beyond the roundabout at Lockheed Close (the junction for Tesco and the retail park). The squeezing together of two lines of traffic can make it quite unpleasant for drivers coming from Tesco and turning left on to Ruscote Ave. towards the Southam Road. The TAC were aware of this, and said the only solution would be the widening of Ruscote Ave. along that section; in time that might be implemented.

It was reported that the Parsons Street pedestrianisation scheme would have an anticipated 40 week period for the necessary repaving and other work connected with it. The construction programme would be suspended for the period of the Michaelmas Fair and the run-up to Christmas. The famous "Reindeer" inn sign would be put back in due course. Also work in connection with the new

Spiceball Leisure Centre would involve some temporary reduction in the amount of car-parking space available in that vicinity.

The Civic Society had asked that there should be clearer signage between the railway station and the town centre/ bus station, for pedestrians unfamiliar with Banbury. It was suggested that they might be encouraged to use the towpath and the path through the Bridge Street Park, thus avoiding the Bridge Street crossroads. It has nevertheless been suggested that this could cause difficulties for those with heavy luggage, as a small part of the path is very steep. The whole matter is being considered by

junction has had some recent "re-jigging", with the hope of smoother traffic flow. It is understood that the lights at the Bridge Street crossroads are also being given careful consideration, following the Civic Society's earlier request to try to avoid the frequent long delays caused to traffic turning right from Concord Avenue into Bridge Street.

Planning

Current Planning Matters

As mentioned in the Chairman's Statement there has been a very significant drop in planning applications



Above :The current Iceland building, with the Listed former Globe P.H. to left.
Below: The consented development

the authorities.

There does not seem to be anything further to report at the present time on the complex matter of improving car parking at the railway station, although the current Canalside masterplan indicates a large multi-storey station car park to the south of the station concourse.

The phasing of the traffic-lights at the Oxford Rd / Upper Windsor Street

due to the current state of the economy. The following applications have been worthy of note:

22 Milton Street

In the last Newsletter we reported that an Appeal following the refusal of a retrospective application for large dormer windows had been refused. CDC are now considering an application for a smaller

replacement dormer window. Dormer windows in this location are contrary to CDC's conservation area policy, but CDC must consider the new application before enforcement action can be taken for the removal of the existing dormer.

44 West Street

Following the refusal of an Appeal against CDC's refusal of an application to demolish this building, work has been underway on a consented application to extend the building and convert it to two flats. The Civic Society alerted CDC to the work, as planning conditions requiring the agreement of details of timber sash windows, front garden walls and appropriate brick for the extension had not been complied with. We have been assured that CDC's planners are now monitoring the situation.

12-14 Dashwood Road

Following the threat of enforcement action by CDC, the visually intrusive ramp has been replaced with steps. The new piers and railings to the front gardens, whilst not ideal, are much better than previously.

Iceland store, Calthorpe Street

Following their success at Appeal against CDC's refusal of a proposal to redevelop this site as a new shop, with three storeys of flats above, the applicants had lodged a further Appeal regarding an earlier and much more harmful proposal that had also been refused by Cherwell District Council. Following a request from CDC, the Civic Society submitted very detailed objection, following which the Appeal was withdrawn. It seems unlikely that the consented scheme will proceed in the current economic climate.

Calthorpe House, Calthorpe Street

Despite significant opposition from a number of elected members, CDC's Planning Committee granted Outline consent for the demolition and redevelopment of Oxfordshire County Council's 1960s Social Services offices in Calthorpe Street. This speculative application was for a large 4-storey block containing 13 flats over one or more retail units, made by OCC in an attempt to

elevate the value of the soon to be vacant site. The Society did not object to this 'in principle' application, but we will fight hard against any subsequent detailed application if it is considered harmful or out of keeping with the area.

13 Farmfield Road

The Society opposed an application to build a detached 2-apartment block in a garden on the corner of Farmfield Road and Beechfield Crescent (Easington). The proposed building would have projected well forward of the existing building line on Beechfield Crescent, adversely affecting the spacious character of Banbury's 'garden suburb'. The application has been refused.

1 Calthorpe Road

The Society objected to an application to demolish the last 19th-century stable block / coach house on Lucky Lane. We observed that not only was the loss of this building detrimental to the conservation area and to the setting of the Listed no.1 Calthorpe Road, but that demolition would be unlawful without Listed Building Consent (LBC). The application has now been withdrawn.

J&S Auctions, Cotefield Farm

The Civic Society wrote in support of an application to allow the popular J&S

Auctions to return to Cotefield Farm. It was held that the auctions provided a popular amenity and gave rise to no environmental harm. The application was approved by CDC's Planning Committee by a one-vote majority, against officer advice.

Canalside regeneration

Stakeholders Workshop

In early July three members of the Civic Society management committee were invited by CDC's Community Engagement Officer to attend a Stakeholder Workshop on the proposed regeneration of Banbury's historic 'Canalside' area ('Options for Growth' Site E).

The first part of the workshop comprised a presentation by CDC's master-planning consultants, LDA Design, who summarised recent progress and changes in thinking resulting from the current economic slowdown, the bursting of the buy-to-let bubble and remaining uncertainties about potential flood risk. This was followed by the unveiling of the 2008 masterplan for the Site, which we were told was provisional, as it did not yet



The Oxford Canal south of the bridge



Left: a Barrows & Carmichael portable engine



Right: Barrows and Carmichael works (now Burgess)



The last surviving Victorian buildings of Bernhard Samuelson's Britannia Iron Works

take account of the 1 in 200-year flood event that could overwhelm the proposed flood defences to the north of the town.

The 2008 masterplan incorporated many of the suggestions made by stakeholders at a similar event last year, including retention of some historic buildings on Lower Cherwell Street, a substantial mixed-use area at the north end of the site and a generous linear park between the river Cherwell and the canal, running almost from Banbury bridge to the water meadows to the south of the town. It also included a large, multi-level station car-park.

A less welcome feature of the 2008 masterplan was the requirement for 1207 houses and flats located on both sides of Windsor Street, the Swan Foundry site, on Tramway and on the current Banbury United ground. These were shown as requiring the loss the mid-19th-century former Barrows & Stewart steam engine works of 1861 (now Burgess) and the last surviving

Victorian buildings of Bernhard Samuelson's Britannia Iron Works, currently located within the Swan Foundry. We were also informed that financial considerations and the need for development not to exceed four storeys meant that the 2008 masterplan made no provision for the primary school and social /affordable housing that would normally be required with such a major development.

Lively discussion followed. Whilst the stakeholders comprised landowners, local

councillors and representatives of a number of local organisations, there was a high degree of unanimity in the views expressed. A cause of significant concern was that the existing masterplan did little to heal the dislocation of the town caused by the railway, 1960s slum clearances and the Cherwell Street / Windsor Street inner relief road. Of similar concern was that the defined development area did not extend to the site east of the railway, perpetuating the Banbury Bridge bottleneck and ruling out connections to a south-east link road, the derelict gas works / Friswells site and the Thorpe Way / Spittal Farm site ('Options' Site D). Many expressed concerns about the absence of residents' parking and fears about metropolitan-scale development and spec-built housing and flats built to standardised, non-local styles. The potential benefits of developing the site in small and individual parcels on the Continental model was discussed.

Many stakeholders felt that the necessary relocation of industry away from the Canalside area should provide a *raison-d'être* for the re-use of the Sapa / Alcan buildings, whilst it was also pointed out that necessary school facilities might be provided off-site through the refurbishment and reopening of either the Dashwood or Britannia Road schools. The suggested demolition of the historic Samuelson and Barrows & Carmichael buildings was a cause of great disquiet, given that these are the very last surviving vestiges of Banbury's importance as a 19th-century engineering centre serving national and international markets. It was felt that the retention of the site's historic industrial buildings was absolutely essential both to the site's successful regeneration and to the preservation of the town's links with its industrial heritage.

The organisers said they thought the consultation had proved to be a highly valuable exercise and thanked everybody for their thoughts and contributions. We have subsequently been informed that the next version of the masterplan will factor in flooding issues and will take on board all of the views expressed by stakeholders at the consultation event.

Options for Growth

Landscape Sensitivity Consultation

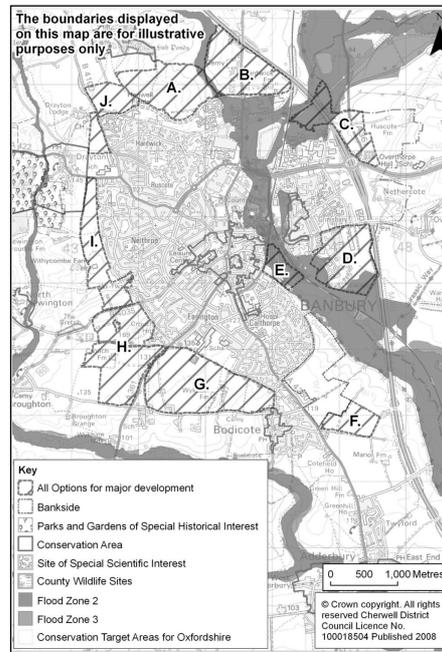
The Banbury Civic Society has been contacted by Halcrow (on behalf of CDC) regarding a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the possible sites identified in 'Options for Growth' for Banbury's future housing needs. The landscape sensitivity assessment is part of a suite of thematic assessments commissioned by CDC. We are very pleased that all of the 'Options' sites are under review, rather than just those previously identified by CDC as the 'Reasonable Options' (see illustration).

The purpose of the consultation was to gain local knowledge about ecology, local beauty spots, current public uses, historic features, archaeology, cultural associations, stories, myths and legends. Although only 10 days were given for responses, the Society carried out a detailed review of each site, under chosen headings of Place names, myths and legends, Archaeology, Historic buildings, Historic boundaries, Landscape value, Recreational value and Other issues of note.

Great emphasis was placed by us on the value of the prehistoric Salt Way as a recreational resource and its value as a natural barrier to further urban expansion, especially in view of its designation as part of the Banbury Fringe Circular Walk, Bodicote Circular Walk, Salt Way Nature Trail and National Cycle Network. Similar emphasis was also placed on the recreational and landscape value of the canal and its towpath, Crouch Hill and the Broughton Road pick-your-own farm. Attention was drawn to the value of the landscape around Banbury Crematorium and cemetery in providing an attractive and much valued setting for the activities carried out there. Surviving township, parish and Hundred township boundaries were also identified wherever possible, as these are often the most ancient visible features in the landscape.

Despite the limitations on time, assistance was sought from the Banbury Historical Society and the planning archaeologists at Oxfordshire County Council. This provided much information of interest:

Banbury retains two recognised Deserted Medieval Villages (DMVs), Wykham and Hardwick, the latter (Site B) being viewed as a nationally important archaeological site. Wykham (combining vicus (a Romano-British trading/roadside settlement) and ham, an early Anglo-Saxon settlement) was the only outlying manor in Banbury parish to be important enough prior to the Conquest to be mentioned by name in the Domesday Book (1086) and the only outlying portion wealthy enough to be held by



*The site allocation map of Banbury, as published in CDC's 2008 'Options for Growth' consultation document and captioned "All Options for Major Development at Banbury". All of the sites featured are the subject of the **Landscape Sensitivity Consultation***

tenants for military service. The proposed Wykham Farm site (Site F) includes the below-ground remains of a Neolithic causewayed enclosure and at least one Bronze Age round barrow.

The place names Crouch Hill and Crouch Farm (Site H) derive from the British/Celtic crug meaning a hill. Its conical top is artificial, possibly Iron Age. Crouch Hill was the site of the Bishop of Lincoln's deer park, the site of a revolt by the peasants whose grazing he displaced, it was occupied by both roundhead forces and royalist cavalry in 1644. It was used for May Day celebrations and local legend claims that it was created when the Devil dropped a hod of mortar he was carrying to build Bloxham church.

The hillside above Hardwick Farm (Site B) was the location of a plywood decoy factory, built to misdirect German bombers attempting to bomb the aluminium factory. It was hit once, killing a pig.

The name Spittal Farm (Site D) derives from Banbury's medieval leper hospital,

St Leonard's, founded in 1265. The location of the hospital is unfortunately now lost. Some sources assert that it lay on the Grimsbury landfall of Banbury Bridge, possibly beneath either the Elephant & Castle P.H. or the recently redeveloped former Bridge Motors site.

The river Cherwell (Site E) was navigable to Oxford during the Civil War. The Oxford Canal is of exceptional historic interest, being part of the trunk network of canals established by James Brindley from the 1770s to connect the Thames, Severn, Trent and Mersey. Site E also contains the site of Banbury's gallows (between Station Approach and the canal) as well as a number of sites and buildings of industrial archaeological interest. These include the remains of the engineering works of Banbury's agricultural implement and steam engine makers - the Britannia Iron Works, Banbury's largest employer in the 19th Century (now Swan Foundry), and the Barrows and Carmichael works (now Burgess).

Whilst some areas of Banbury's medieval open fields were still cultivated as strips into the 18th Century, large areas were Inclosed by agreement in the 16th and 17th Centuries. Many of the surviving 'post-Inclosure' field boundaries are potentially of this period This is borne out by Banbury's surviving legacy of fine 16th / 17th-century farmhouses, all of which stand in what had previously been open-field landscapes. These include the threatened Grade II and Grade II* listed 16th and 17th-century farmhouses at Hardwick (Site B), Wykham Farm (Site G), Crouch Farm (Site H) and Withycombe Farm (Site I), as well as listed farmhouses of similar date elsewhere (Easington (Oxford Road), Manor Farm (Grimsbury), Wykham Park (Tudor Hall) and Wykham Mill). Surviving 16th / 17th-century boundaries created through such 'Inclosure by agreement' would form important elements of the setting of the 16th / 17th-century farmhouses to which they relate.

Parsons Street

The following is an abridged version of a letter sent to Mary Harpley, Chief Executive of Cherwell District Council, over the forthcoming pedestrianisation of Parsons Street

Dear Mary

I thought I should contact you direct, as the management committee of the Banbury Civic Society has a significant concern over the forthcoming pedestrianisation of Parsons Street.

We have participated fully in the consultations over the details of disabled parking and times of vehicular access. Given Parsons Street's highly sensitive and very public location at the heart of the Banbury Conservation Area, we had anticipated that there would be similar public engagement and consultation over the choice of paving, signage, landscaping and street furniture. At the very least we had anticipated that there would be a planning application, given the obvious potential for these items to have a significant effect on the character and appearance of the Banbury Conservation Area.

Following announcements in the papers over the letting of the contract and the start of works, we are dismayed to discover that the choice of all of these features will apparently be decided with no public discussion. We understand that paving is to be in brick, signage will be the minimum required for traffic regulation and street furniture will match that used in the rest of the town. We understand that the budget is severely constrained, but under such circumstances it may have been better to have reconsidered the appropriateness of previous brick paving and whether spending the whole of the budget on hard-surfacing is actually the most cost-effective route to the effective 'place-making' that Parsons Street and Church Lane

so desperately need.

As a statutory undertaker, the Council can clearly do as it pleases, but we would observe that the proposals currently appear to run contrary to advice in Government guidance contained in Planning and the Historic Environment – PPG 15. This explicitly states:

Floorscape and street furniture... make a vital contribution to the appearance of a conservation area. In particular, where there is a tradition of rectangular slab paving, small block pavements and arbitrary new patterns should be avoided. Tarmac, preferably dressed with a suitable local aggregate, remains an appropriate and inexpensive finish for many conservation areas.... If a street is to be pedestrianised, it is important to retain the traditional relationship between footways and carriageway, including kerb lines. Wall-to-wall surfaces are often unsuitable and the scale, texture, colour and laying patterns of any new materials should be sympathetic to the area's appearance... In certain circumstances grants may be available from English Heritage towards the cost of street improvement schemes which incorporate the use of traditional paving features. English Heritage's publication 'Street Improvements in Historic Areas' offers guidance on the treatment of streets and public open spaces in historic areas, to encourage wider recognition of the important contribution they make to townscape quality.

We know from documentary sources that Banbury's historic paving materials were York stone paving, Gornal (Dudley) gritstone kerbs and rammed Hartshill (Nuneaton) granite chippings for road surfaces. Wall-to-wall brick pavements are clearly alien to the town and my own feeling is that the existing pedestrianised areas and street furniture already look rather dated. Rather than perpetuate these themes in Parsons Street, it may well

have been better to have considered alternative options, for example high quality materials throughout, taking advantage of government (EH) funding, or a cheaper and more traditional surfacing comprising quality stone 'pavements' and 'kerbs', laid flush with a cheaper bound aggregate surface laid in between.

I do appreciate that money is limited but, given that the re-paving is being paid for from Council funds (i.e. from the ratepayer), the current lack of public consultation on surface finishes, signage and street furniture does appear at the very least rather impolite. It is rather like telling granny that you'll have her house redecorated at her expense, then not allowing her any say in the choice of paint, carpet, wallpaper or furnishings.

I am very sorry to raise this at such a late stage, but getting this right now seems absolutely imperative, as the chosen scheme will be with us for a generation.

Kind regards, as ever

Rob Kinchin-Smith
(Chair, Banbury Civic Society)

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

Banbury Civic Society Membership

The committee is seeking your help. Do you have friends, family or colleagues who share your interest in Banbury's well-being? Help us recruit new members with the recently updated membership form, a copy of which can be obtained from the Membership Secretary. **More members = more action. More members = a louder voice. Help us help Banbury.**

And don't forget to fill in your own details in the box on their form before it is sent so we can thank you.

Please write to:

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