

This is the first issue of the Banbury Civic Society Quarterly News. The object is to provide members with a regular update about the activities of the management committee. It will alert members to many issues that arise within the town, especially in the area of planning and infrastructure. It will also provide a platform for members to voice their opinions and raise their own issues. Members will be better informed to provide support for the various campaigns in which the Society is engaged. In addition to the regular Quarterly Newsletters there may be occasional special Newsheets in response to urgent situations, particularly when more active support is being sought for instance on planning matters.

Highways and traffic

Overview

The Society keeps a close watch on highway and traffic problems and proposals in the town. It is assisted in this by being represented on the Banbury Traffic Advisory Committee, a group which meets quarterly at the Town Hall under the auspices of the County Council and is attended by its officials, members and officers at the District Council and the Town Council together with representatives of other road users such as the Association of Driving Instructors and the bus operators, Stagecoach. Membership used to include a representative from Thames Valley Police but this unfortunately ceased earlier this year.

Out of the many matters considered space permits mention only of a few. An example is the rapid increase on the pavements of the town centre of "A" frames advertising a myriad of sales and services. These are totally unauthorised and illegal, cause potential hazards and obstructions to pedestrians and are an eyesore to the street scene. We are pleased to report that steps are now being taken to secure their early removal. An allied problem is cars still being driven in the pedestrianised section of the High Street and cyclists continuing to ride their bicycles in the area. The possibility of retractable bollards and "no cycling" signs is to be investigated with greater police presence requested.

The Society continues to support efforts to obtain a Multi-Modal Interchange at the

Railway Station, encouraging easy transfer from buses to rail transport. The longer term objective is to re-design the area surrounding the station entrance to provide a much



improved introduction to the town. The Highway authority is currently preparing plans which may permit buses to access the station via the Tramway estate. The project is not helped by further proposed reductions in government funding.

If any member of the society would like a highway related matter to be raised at the Advisory Committee please send details to the Society's Chairman by 16th February 2006.

Banbury Visual Arts Centre Trust

Consultant's report

The Banbury Visual Arts Centre Trust campaigns for the establishment of an art gallery in Banbury. The Trust, whose origin owes much to the Banbury Civic Society, have just received the results of a feasibility study funded by an award from the Arts Council and Cherwell District Council.

From meetings held with representative local artists the consultant concluded that at the present time there was insufficient "hunger" among artists to sustain an art gallery in Banbury. However, local artists expressed strongly the need for positive assistance for their professional development and networking opportunities. To this end, the consultant is in discussion with the Arts Council to obtain agreement that the balance of funds from the Arts Council grant should be used to promote this. Specifically, there is already in existence an organisation, Oxfordshire Visual Arts Development Association, funded by the Arts Council for this very purpose and which from now on will be working closely with BVACTS to meet the identified needs of Banbury based artists. Information on advice, training, events and

opportunities will be provided via the OVADA e-newsletter and one member of the BVACTS committee will be assisted by Cherwell District.

While BVACT committee members and the Civic Society were disappointed that local artists did not appear to support the idea of a gallery, we hope that once they feel they are in charge of their own their professional development, the pressure for an art gallery in Banbury will evolve naturally along the way. The Civic Society recognise the need for the arts to have strong emphasis within the current plans for Banbury's urban regeneration and will continue to support BVACT in its efforts.

Blue Plaque scheme

John Cheney and Thomas Hunt

We are currently looking to commemorate John Cheney, the founder of the long standing Banbury printing business and Thomas Hunt, who started Hunt Edmunds Brewery in the town. The original location for both was the Unicorn Inn on the Market Place. The plaques must be located where they are visible to the public, which creates a small problem as the only public frontage to the Unicorn is the entrance gate, where the siting would be impractical. We hope we shall be able to resolve this in another way.

If members would like to suggest other Banbury personages they consider should be commemorated (that person must have died more than 20 years ago!) or any building worthy of commemoration, please send details to the Chairman.

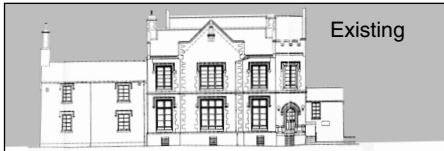
Planning and the historic environment

Neithrop House – part demolition gets go-ahead

At the North Area planning meeting on October 27th consent was given by a 6 to 2 majority for the demolition of part of this Nationally Listed Building and the construction of two large extensions to create flats. The Civic Society, supported by English Heritage and CPRE has made many representations to

the Planning department as well as to the councillors opposing this development. This was a re-run of a 2003 application which had been approved in committee but which had not received final consent owing to the applicants having appealed against financial 'planning gain' contributions. Therefore once the applicant had agreed to a new contributions package, a fresh planning application was required.

The need for a new application presented the opportunity for the Society to urge CDC to review their original decision, particularly as Neithrop House was now within the Banbury



Neithrop House

Conservation Area. The consent for demolition at both applications centred on assertion that the part of Neithrop House to be demolished was 'a later addition of little architectural merit' and that the character, appearance and special interest of the building and its setting would not be affected by the proposed demolitions and extensions. Both assertions ran contrary to the specialist advice of English Heritage.

Stanbridge Hall

The Order of St. John are hoping to purchase the site from OCC and Banbury school to build a Care Home. Their intention is to demolish the building and replace it with their own standard Care Home design. The Society along with the Built Heritage Working Party would like to see, at least, the 1930s facade retained and the rest modified to suit the needs of the Care Home. Our view is shared by CDC who are negotiating the issue with OCC.

Other planning issues

The society continues to take an interest in all planning applications in Banbury. We supported CDC in its rejection of an application to put a mock Victorian shop front on the left hand side of the White Lion frontage. We were pleased that Jenny's Cafe was refused retrospective consent for a sign on one of Banbury's most historic buildings.

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

Allotments and the flood plain

Spital Farm Allotments

During the past five years the Civic Society has given its support to Spital Farm Allotment Association in its longstanding campaign to protect its rightful and statutory tenancy against pressures of development on its ten acre site in Grimsbury

The Society has played a serious part as adviser and mediator aware that local councils are faced with a national paradox whereby the Secretary of State exerts pressure on them to look at the regeneration of brown field sites and open spaces, and at the same time requires them to act as guardian for the Act of Parliament that protects the Allotment movement.

As a result of such efforts progress is being made and protection is gradually being secured for the 50 strong membership of Spital Farm Allotment Association.

Amenities

Woodgreen open-air swimming pool

The future of the pool, closed in recent years owing to problems with the lining, is the subject of a consultant's report, which will be



presented to Banbury Town Council in mid January. The Civic Society is taking a close interest in the report.

We regard a refurbished and upgraded outdoor pool as an essential leisure amenity for this growing town.

Your letters

We intend to provide room for some of your comments and concerns.

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

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

Join the Banbury Civic Society today

If you share the Society's concerns, please join us. The widest possible membership greatly increases the effectiveness of our work in Banbury.

Members can join specialist working groups in specific areas such as planning or transport. Or you may have areas of expertise and concerns of your own. In whatever way you think you can help Banbury you can do so most effectively in the Society

Subscriptions

Full membership	£10.00
Two or more full members in the same household each pay p.a.	£6.00
Junior members (under 17) p.a.	£3.00
Unwaged p.a.	£3.00
Life members	£150.00
Two or more life members in the same household each pay p.a	£100.00
Corporate members p.a.	£20.00

Membership

If you would like to join please complete the form and send it to the address underneath.

Whether you are already a member or are applying for membership and would like to receive information via e-mail please give your e-mail address.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel. no.: _____

e-mail Address: _____

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