

KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY

The background image shows three large, cylindrical metal silos or grain elevators. They are made of horizontal metal bands and have conical tops. The silos are situated in an industrial or agricultural area. In the foreground, there is a large, dense thicket of green, leafy plants, possibly bamboo or a similar species, which partially obscures the base of the silos. To the left, there is a pile of scrap metal and debris. In the background, there are trees and a building with a gabled roof.

NEWSLETTER January 2012

*A society for people who think only the best
is good enough for King's Lynn*

King's Lynn Civic Society

January 2012 newsletter

From the Chairman

by Alison Gifford

May I wish all our members a happy and healthy 2012. The King's Lynn Civic Society has a website! These are very complex things to set up and make – as anyone who has had a go and given up will testify. So we asked a young local Fenland company, Passionfruit Designs, to make our website.

They made the template and operating language and we put on the words and static pictures. Peter Putterill's fine photograph of the riverside is the masthead used on all the pages.

We think it looks good and works well. But you can ask Sally or me to change information on the pages. Find us at www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk or Google King's Lynn Civic Society – Norfolk. Oli O'Connor at Passionfruit Design was a pleasure to work with, and that company will still host our site and renew our domain name annually. This has been an expensive but essential exercise to give the Society credibility in 2012 and beyond.

We have had a busy year. A lot of the work of the Civic Society is not headline grabbing, although Sally Smith's excellent report for the Lynn News on the ferry and its possible funding disaster if the County Council withdraw their grant

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Cover picture: South Quay silos site under demolition. The proposed redevelopment with retirement flats won't be as tall as the silos. But is the new building good enough for King's Lynn? See our analysis on page 6.

alerted many people to the importance of this ancient traditional transport.

As we went to press we learned that NCC had indeed axed the funding. But happily the borough had already decided to maintain its share. See page 23.

The sub-committees have met regularly, and the buildings at risk committee may soon receive good news about Compulsory Purchase Orders. See page 22. The planning sub-committee has a large portfolio, and the members, Desmond Waite our president, Colin Johnston, Ian Price, Rick Morrish, Sally Smith and now also Helen Russell-Johnson, consider plans that concern us with real zeal and astute knowledge. I think their letters to the Planning Department frequently sum up the intricacies of the plan and its problems admirably.

The Tuesday Market Place sub-committee was ad-hoc and Helen will tell you about the outcome of our meeting with the Council on page 11.

The word on the street is that the Town Hall Heritage Lottery bid did not succeed. However there has been no official announcement. If that is the case then its failure is a pity for the future of the archives, and also delays the very welcome desire to encourage more visits to this fine Town Hall building. We hope that a more carefully thought out scheme succeeds in the future, with local consultation paramount.

Today I see that The Early Learning Centre and Past Times shops are closing, and I am afraid others may follow. Priors the butchers on the Saturday Market Place will also close. The recession and changing shopping styles are responsible. The challenge is to keep our town centre busy despite these problems and out of town shopping. King's Lynn's retail offer

will have to be different in the future. More should be made of the idea of shopping and visiting the town as an enjoyable and varied social experience, quite unlike solitary on-line shopping or shopping in the soulless warehouses on the edge of town.

I must thank Jean Tuck who is standing down from Tuck's Tours after many successful years. Tuck's Tours has been a unique brand giving imaginative and inspiring hours of enjoyment to many people, both members and their friends. The tours will continue, see page 12, but perhaps we should have a competition for a new name?

Very grateful thanks too, to Janet Johnson who has re-drawn our increasingly fading logo. The original had been mislaid many years ago and so we were reduced to endlessly photocopying and re-copying. Janet nobly took it in hand, discerned the near-undiscernable and provided us with a fine piece of art-work for our stationery – and of course the website. How fortunate we are to have so much talent to draw upon within the society.

Recent planning applications

by Colin Johnston

As usual the planning team has looked at a large number of applications in the last few months: the most important, the redevelopment of the silo site, reported on page 7.

Kellard House site – proposed Travelodge: (11/02022) An application that generated much discussion was for a Travelodge Hotel on a site close to the South Gate between Nar Ouse Way and Hardwick Road (previously Kellard House). This is a large site and the hotel is just one element in a mixed-use development with no details so far of the other elements on the site. We had no objection to the principle of a Travelodge but felt that its design was not of the quality which we would hope

for on ‘one of the more significant and prominent sites in this area ... a gateway to King’s Lynn town centre on its southern approach’, to quote from the developer’s own submission. We also pointed out that it was premature to determine this application in isolation without having a comprehensive development plan for the whole area in place, as recommended by the Borough Council’s Urban Development Strategy. It was on these grounds that we have objected.

Former J&I garage site: (11/01397/CU) We had no objection to the demolition of the former J&I garage on Boal Street but hope that a better use than an extension of the car-park will be found before too long for the site. In the meantime the demolition has opened up the view of Greenland Fishery, but we were concerned at the proposal to erect a high fence round the re-located car-park for Greenland Fishery, which would detract from this Grade II* listed building. We made representations and understand that this part of the scheme is being reconsidered.

Site next to 29 Church Street: (11/01348/F) This site is next to Friarscot (listed grade II) and is at present an empty and unattractive site. This is the third proposal. We would have welcomed a development that would respect the character of the area and the adjacent buildings. However we felt that the proposed design was too intensive and that its bulk would dominate the adjacent buildings. We particularly disliked the large area of unrelieved and unadorned render on the north elevation. Our objection was similar to that of the Conservation Officer and the application was refused.

Norfolk House, County Court Road – uPVC windows: (11/01254/F) This application was to replace timber windows with uPVC. We are reluctant to approve the use of uPVC windows within the conservation area but, bearing in mind that

this is a modern building, we would have accepted them here if we had been confident that they were in keeping with the original design of the building and respected the area. Unfortunately the applicant had not provided enough detail to enable us to check this and so we have objected to the application unless better drawings are provided. We also said that uPVC should be discouraged on environmental grounds, as it is intensive to manufacture, utilises a range of toxic chemicals and is expensive and difficult to dispose of at the end of its useful life. In terms of thermal insulation uPVC windows can be matched by well-made timber windows with double glazing.

Lynn Academy (Park High School), Queen Mary Road – Partial demolition and rebuild: (11/01960/CM) In principle we have welcomed this application but have submitted a number of comments. We questioned the use of flat-roof buildings with their constant maintenance problems. We also questioned the use of uPVC windows for the same reasons outlined above in the previous item. We noted that only 10% of power requirements are to be met from renewable energy; we would have hoped for a more aspiring goal for a building that should have a lifetime of at least 50 years. There appears to be an attractive landscape master-plan for the site but we suggested that there should be a long-term landscape management plan and perhaps more effort to ensure the best planting mix for local biodiversity. We put forward the need for some new oak trees in order to sustain local landscape character, bearing in mind that many of the mature trees in the area are reaching the end of their lives. Up to now most of our comments on planning applications have been restricted to the conservation area and/or historic buildings. The comments on this application show that

we are taking a broader view. The committee is glad that we have the expertise of Rick Morrish which makes this possible.

Full information on all planning applications, including our society's responses, can be found on the Borough Council's website: www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/planning by following the link to the application numbers quoted above.

Silos site plans: complexity is also a thief of time

by Sally Smith

To what extent can the roof of a building be seen at close quarters? For that matter just how much of a building can the eye take in, except at a distance?

Such questions much exercised the planning sub-committee as we debated the development proposed by McCarthy and Stone for the former silo site on the South Quay; indeed we have not devoted anything like the time to any other planning application in the past year. This is not surprising, as can be judged by the extent of comment logged on the borough's website.

The development is for what is described as 'retirement living housing for the elderly' with ground floor commercial units on the South Quay. It is the latest scheme for the site, others have been for residential development and an hotel.

The plan is to completely occupy the present empty area and build around an open courtyard providing 51 'units' of accommodation. The plans can be seen on the borough's website; go to planning and key in the application number 11/01466/CA. Necessarily the size and scale of the development is very large indeed and this is what has alarmed so many people, especially those living in adjacent properties in Nelson Street. When – if – built as proposed this development

will be the dominant feature of the South Quay and the Millfleet.

As we have reported to you previously, it will also involve re-routing Devil's Alley which currently crosses the centre of the site, so that this public right of way would run around the perimeter of the buildings. We are, and remain, opposed to this as it would mean the loss of an historic route linking the river to the town.

Among a number of other groups and individuals, including the Nelson Street Residents Group we were invited to discuss the plans at an early stage and then to view modified proposals a month or so later. Concerned about the size and scale, we wrote to McCarthy and Stone urging a re-assessment of and reduction in the number of units proposed so that the complex could be reduced and thus fit more appropriately with existing buildings. We also stated we were unhappy with the 'warehouse-style' design which was not replicated elsewhere in the immediate location, proposed a rounded corner on the south west corner and strongly voiced our opposition to the re-routing of Devil's Alley.

The plans – an immense quantity of documents - were lodged in September. We did our best to view them impartially and dispassionately. After vigorous debate we concluded that we had to accept that the development would be very large but that we were not opposed to this in this location where previously there had been a group of silos considerably taller than what is now proposed - and rather uglier.

Pragmatically we accepted that any development was likely to be extensive because of the economics entailed and we were reluctant to see the present empty dereliction continue into the foreseeable future, which was the possibility if the application was rejected.

Furthermore a number of concerns we had raised at the consultancy stage such as the warehouse style and aspects of the elevational design had been addressed and amendments made by the design team. All in all we felt the scheme had some merit and that objection was not appropriate. Our view was also influenced by the design of the building, modern traditional, rather than uncompromisingly modern; for example our suggestion for the rounded corner had been adopted.

The comments we made, which included general site layout, suggested modification to the Millfleet and South Quay elevations, materials, telecommunication provision, air conditioning and external landscaping, can be seen with other correspondence on the planning website.

A month or so later further modifications were made to the plans, which we inspected and found acceptable. But we had been made aware of the very great opposition to the development and criticism of our stance and so in early December we felt we should take another look at the scheme.

The main objections being to size and bulk, we addressed this aspect, in particular the effect upon neighbouring properties, and whether or not we should now object to the development on these grounds. (This was partly academic because the period for making objections was well over, but we were aware that the planning committee would not meet until January and hoped that the committee would agree to consider a volte face should we make one).

Undoubtedly it will be a very large development – its likely effect on its surroundings is rather less certain. To return to those original questions. From what standpoint will the development be seen in its entirety? Nowhere. The most extensive views will be from the other side of the river from the west and the Boal Quay car park, Harding’s Pits and the Cut Bridge from the south, and these will only accord a portion of the complex, not the whole. Standing, say, on the South Quay one will be aware of a tall structure, but at such close quarters it will be impossible to see it all. This is where judging a building in its entirety is so difficult. Our president, Desmond Waite, explains that it is the eaves height which is relevant NOT the roof ridge.

We also took into consideration the design and the materials proposed. I am not suggesting that this is in anyway great architecture but nor is it another Hillington Square. Efforts have been made to break up the massing and elements, such as the ‘eyebrows’ over the windows, introduced to mitigate the effect of unrelieved slabs.

There was by no means complete concord when our committee came to its final discussion in the week before Christmas. In the end it came to a vote, which resulted in maintaining our original position and so we have not made further representations.

Our president sums up: ‘On the whole I personally do not feel resistance to the proposals. This might be the best chance yet of getting close to acceptability in view of previous discord amongst commentators about more modern schemes of the past. I personally feel that modern traditional will endure in that setting, while contemporary (whatever that is) might be an aspiration, but will not endure. Whatever happens I think we can

expect a tall building and intense occupation for it to be worthwhile for a developer.

‘Whatever is finalised, the introduction of this bulk of building as it nears the South Quay and Millfeet will be difficult to swallow, especially as we have been used to open space there for some time. The block of retirement flats behind Queen Street did the same but something large there was inevitable – as it is on the Boal Quay site.’

Tuesday Market Place

by Helen Russell-Johnson

A cordial meeting took place between the Borough Council and the Civic Society. The council will have some money in about two years’ time to smarten up the Tuesday Market Place and Chris Bamfield, executive director for leisure and open space, asked to meet us to discuss the possible development. This invitation is a very positive step and indicates the council’s appreciation of the role of the society in making the most of King’s Lynn.

It was refreshing to be consulted in the planning stage rather than commenting on a proposal when the council has already put in a lot of work. Relax – nothing drastic is planned, the space will still be available for the Mart, parades, Festival Too and the market of course.

As there is no prospect of new car parking becoming available in the foreseeable future, the Market Place will still need to function as a car park as at present.

Using the comments and plans provided by committee members, and following a meeting of the interested parties, Alison Gifford drew up a definitive Civic Society wish list. The

meeting was held at King's Court where Chris Bamfield brought out a large scale plan of the market place and the borough's list of ideas. It was really pleasing that our two principles matched very well. The council proposed a two-way road on the north and west sides only, with wider paving on south and west sides. Ken Hill had already suggested this as part of his input into the planning – we seemed to be singing from the same song sheet.

All changes will be pedestrian-friendly with priority given to pedestrians at crossing points. Surfaces will be setts or stone of a co-ordinated palette throughout, using the best quality materials that the budget will allow. Short-term parking will still be catered for in specific parts, but will probably be ticketed as this is the easiest way of policing it. We wanted free tickets, the council 20p tickets. I wonder who will win. There will be slightly reduced parking on the south side to provide a deeper pedestrian area with three mature trees planted. These would be of modest size to enhance but not overwhelm the TMP and its wonderful architecture. Another small-growing mature tree is planned for the north-west corner to partially obscure the unbeautiful Job Centre building. The mini roundabout will be redesigned by the highways department as part of the project. The flower 'trees' will go, as will the poor immature trees that are failing to thrive. Lots of details were discussed but only principles were agreed.

The meeting was really constructive. Let's hope that we can work with the council on other projects at an early stage. It is such a positive way to move forward.

Tuck's Tours

Jean Tuck who has organised and run the Civic Society outings for so long has now retired from the job. The service will continue, following a similar annual timetable. The outings

will now be run by Helen Russell-Johnson and Anne-Marie Sutcliffe. No firm arrangements are ready yet, but details will be publicised in the usual way.

St Nicholas Chapel and the Lottery

by Heather Bolt

Just to recap: The chapel was taken into the guardianship of the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) in 1992. The ‘parish’ felt unable to cope with the maintenance of two exceptionally large religious houses.

Since that time the CCT has spent a staggering £750,000 on restoration and maintenance. Many of you will remember that the Benefactors Board was on the verge of disintegration before the handover. Thanks to the trust, the building was restored and numerous other repairs undertaken: to the wall monuments, the floor slabs and almost continually to the roof – as seen in the recent sponge-like piece of beam replaced over the organ. In addition, repair and restoration of the west doors is estimated at some £50,000 and is expected to start in April.

The Friends of St Nicholas was formed in 2002 at the instigation of Pat Midgley and Mary Roche. The driving force at the time was the desire to bring music back into the chapel and to promote it as an exhibition space and for any other appropriate community activity. (It was used much less by the ‘Festival’ once the Corn Exchange opened, and ceased to be used at all after 2001).

The 2008 Sexennial Review revealed major and vital conservation work. It was deemed that the chapel would become unusable within ten years. The roof lead has failed (it is too thin), some roof timbers have rot and death-watch beetle, the

stonework is damaged and the windows leak. The cost of the work to the roof alone is over £600,000.

It is recognised that we need to provide better facilities in order to make the chapel a more inviting and comfortable place in which to enjoy music, art and other cultural and community events.

The Churches Conservation Trust in collaboration with the Friends submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in November 2010, to cover the cost of major elements of restoration – the provision of heating, toilets, a kitchen and visitor information.

In April last year we were informed that Stage 1 of the bid had been successful. We were promised £1.5 million towards a scheme costing £1.8m on the understanding that £300,000 would be raised in matched funding, including some £60,000 locally, and that the initial proposals would be worked up into detailed plans by the summer of 2012.

CCT was awarded £84,000 in order to carry out this work. In addition a development officer, Allyson Ingamells has been appointed. One of her tasks is to strengthen the management expertise of the Friends, by drawing in organisations and skilled people from within the community. It is of the utmost importance that once the work is complete, there will be an entrepreneurial group of local people, representing various interests, able to run St Nicholas as a viable enterprise for the local community. The chapel needs to generate income in order to be self sustaining.

An appeal committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Sir Jeremy Bagge.

Those of you who attended the December lecture on W.J.J.Bolding and the Monement Family of King's Lynn, given

by Richard Jefferson, will know that Mr Jefferson donated his fee to the appeal; a number of you made donations at the same time. The committee has decided that the society will donate £500.

If you would like to join the Friends of St Nicholas Chapel or help with fundraising please contact the Hon Secretary, Adrian Parker on King's Lynn 675574, or email him at aparker33@btinternet.com

Proposed automatic ticket gates at railway station

During the autumn First Capital Connect (FCC) announced its intention to install automatic ticket gates (ATGs) at King's Lynn railway station. These will be similar to those installed at many other stations. They 'read' passengers' tickets and, if valid, the gate opens to allow access to or from the platform. In principle our society is supportive, since it will reduce the amount of fare evasion that goes on at present.

However the plan involves the permanent closure of the side entrance leading out towards the taxi rank (except in an emergency). We were very concerned at this part of the proposal. Passengers using the taxi rank or being set down or picked up by car will have to use the front entrance. This is much further and involves the use of the heavy swing doors, one pair of which is permanently locked. This will be very onerous for the disabled, the elderly and those with heavy luggage.

We wrote to FCC with our concerns and pointed out that the side entrance could be left open if the ATGs were moved slightly further to the east. We made this point when we objected to the listed building planning application for the ATGs. Feeling that other passengers should be made aware of the proposal we also took the matter to the local press and

achieved publicity in the local press. At first we were encouraged by a letter from FCC which said that it had decided to review the project in view of our concerns. However we have just heard that the listed building application has been approved by the planners and that the scheme will go ahead without modification. Our suggestion to move the ATGs further east has been rejected 'for safety reasons' but no-one has yet explained what these are.

Although the automatic gates have not yet been installed, the side entrance is now permanently closed and frequently there are ticket inspectors where the gates will be sited. So the disabled and those with heavy luggage are already suffering the disadvantages of the proposal.

Happily when the Queen travelled by train for her Christmas sojourn at Sandringham, a side entrance was opened for her.

CJ

Loss of 'listed' sycamore tree at Crossbank Road

by Herbert Knights

Following the refusal of planning permission to demolish the Lodge (formerly St Edmund's Chapel) to erect three houses, a further application was lodged proposing a large warehouse for this sensitive site.

A sycamore tree just outside the boundary of the site – with a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on it – and adjoining the county council footpath, was seen as a barrier to development. The tree preservation officer Tom Thompson was working on a scheme to conserve the 150 year old tree for the rest of its natural life. He asked for a variety of measures to be put into place, and wanted additional information about the construction methods of the proposed warehouse. He clearly felt the tree

could and should be retained. It was graded at A2 as a high quality tree of particular visual importance. Also he seemed to doubt whether the proposed development was achievable while retaining the tree in good order.

However no time was given to put these measures into place, as at a site meeting, while the officer was on leave, an extraordinary proposal was suggested by Councillor Geoffrey Wareham (Downham Market), that it could be decided the TPO could be lifted there and then, effectively by-passing the officer's recommendations.

Further it was said that the tree was rotten, which apparently seemed to sway the vote and any objections. There being no objections the proposal was adopted. It transpired later that the developer's own report by former borough tree officer Mike Houldsworth clearly claimed that the tree was healthy.

We know that the planning process is changing, but if this is an example of how sustainable development is decided we must express our grave concerns. We must also conclude that this decision undermines the borough's own expert and the work he was actively pursuing. It points to a future where there is little value in a TPO and where this precedent weakens protection for other trees in the area.

Although the sycamore may not be our favourite tree it is a true survivor and stands up to pollution and climate change very well. In this case a strong argument could be made that the recently listed Grade II Coastguard Cottages (1882), the earlier Lodge and the tree formed a desirable residential enclave that should have been retained as a whole.

We have written to Cllr Vivienne Spikings, chairman of the planning committee, with our concerns about this TPO and

the implications for other TPOs in future. She replied that the decision had followed a site visit. 'As in any democracy and a long debate it went to a vote and the decision was made to not have the tree remain.

'I do not feel that it is correct to state that developers believe that the planning committee will not stand behind officers, as the planning committee, when making decisions, has only an officer recommendation before them and not a decision, which is why they are contentious, have wider issues and need further debate.

'Trees are a very important amenity, especially now there are so many getting diseases. I thank you and will seek to speak to the TPO Officer to see if there is anything else that can be done to preserve our important natural assets.'

Had the English Heritage officer have been able to gain access to the Lodge when listing St Edmund's Terrace two years ago we might have seen a much better outcome.

The recent suggestion of Tudor foundations by a former resident makes for interesting speculation, added to the fact that this was all on the west side of the River Great Ouse before it was diverted through the new cut.

Railings improve our townscape

Your committee found it very heartening, not only to see plans to restore 89 London Road – an interesting but fairly derelict early 19th century house – to its former glory, but also to replace the missing railings to the property. This house adjoins no. 90, the property currently being restored by the King's Lynn Preservation Trust. We feel they will make a handsome pair.

No. 90 featured on a past cover of the SPAB magazine, *Cornerstone*, as a prime example of decay and neglect in every respect possible. The work now being carried out here will

continue the excellent example of the restoration of Merchant`s Terrace, where the railings were also restored.

It is our hope that 89 will inspire a new wave of railing enhancement after a dormant period. It is ironic that most of the railings taken for the war effort turned out to be the wrong kind of metal for munitions and war machinery.

We saw a very good scheme of subsidised railing restoration in the 1980s by the Manpower Services Team, when whole terraces of railings were replaced. Each household or landlord paid a nominal fee. Although this is unlikely to happen during our financial squeeze, there is no doubt that properly installed authentic railings enhance the value of a period property by showing it to its best advantage as well as making an enormous contribution to the street scene.

Further good practice took place recently when The Walks and St James Park restoration re-made missing railings, seats and gates on a large scale. This made a big contribution to the award-winning scheme, especially as the new works were based on old photographs and designs.

By alerting the borough council to the plight of the vandalised and damaged tombstone – legerstone – adjoining St John`s Church and working together, we aided the restoration of the railings which afforded the tomb its previous protection.

Railings damaged by traffic accidents in conservation areas as at St John`s Terrace and London Road need to be restored as soon as is feasible. But when after five years nothing has happened, something is clearly wrong with our enforcement system in taking owners to task.

If you know where railings are crying out to be restored or replaced, or have recently been removed, Herbert Knights would be pleased to hear from you on King`s Lynn 776139 or at herbieknights@gmail.com

Olympic marathon of roadworks ahead for Lynn

by Rick Morrish

Some of you may already know – but a major round of roadworks starts in Lynn this month and is likely to affect the town for at least 18 months. Most of the works relate to the development of the new Sainsbury and Tesco sites at Hardwick.

From January, works will affect the Hardwick roundabout, then Scania Way and then during the summer Hardwick Road – as all these roads are widened. The A149 (bypass) will also be widened and a roundabout constructed to create a new access road into Scania Way. Towards the end of the year and into 2013 the A149/B1145 (Hospital) roundabout will also be altered and widened.

Norfolk County Council will be coordinating the works – which we understand will be paid for by the supermarkets. We are told that week-by-week announcements of works and traffic management provision will be available for us to read at www.norfolk.gov.uk/kingslynndevelopments

Just to add to the mayhem, London Road will also be re-surfaced this year – which is expected to require two weeks of single lane access into the town.

Spring Lectures – there are changes

by Anne Roberts

In February our first lecture sees a welcome return of the distinguished Norwich architect Michael Innes, who spoke to us about his designs for the Castle Mall, when it had first opened. A founder partner of the LSI Architects company, he is President of the Norfolk Association of Architects, and has more recently been responsible for the redesign and refurbishment of Norwich Market.

Michael's recent pamphlet, *Do different, and do better – debating Norfolk's future*, has been published in the hope it will stimulate debate on Norfolk's current housing policy. He said: 'We have a planning system that is not pro-active and isn't interested in true debate on alternative choices and options.' Rather than spread a top-down government figure of 33,000 homes around the Greater Norwich area, he maintains it would make far more sense to focus development in a small number of locations, where infrastructure, jobs and amenities keep pace with longer term building of homes. In his lecture he will be addressing the subject **Conspiracy Theories and Planning: Ideals or Economics – A necessary Conflict?**

There is a change to our lecture programme in March, when Robert Bilbie will be speaking to us on the work of The Robert Bilbie Consultancy. This energy and environmental practice aims to reduce the carbon footprint for both new and existing buildings of all kinds; it has just celebrated its first 20 years, having been established in Norwich in 1991. Robert will be showing us case studies of historic and contemporary buildings, which will include the Hanse House.

In April we look forward to a special visit from Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of the Prince's Regeneration Trust. Her subject will be **What role does Heritage Play in Place-Making in the 21st Century?** Ros joined the trust from RegenCo Sandwell where she was chief executive of the Urban Regeneration Company, leading the regeneration of a highly deprived industrial area centred on Smethwick and West Bromwich in the Midlands. Originally trained as a lawyer, Ros began her career in the oil industry, initially as an in-house lawyer with the UK board of Gulf Oil, before moving into management and finally becoming its director of business services. She has wide experience in the restructuring of

business, serving as property director for Network Rail (then Railtrack) before being appointed to her present post in 2006. This promises to be a particularly interesting finale to our winter season of lectures, and an excellent opportunity to invite friends from other organisations.

Buildings at risk – some progress

by Ken Hill

Committee members met enforcement officers of the borough council in October with a view to putting together an article on the use of compulsory purchase powers to tackle the – far too many – buildings in King's Lynn and the wider borough which are causing concern for the borough and ourselves.

The council is clearly wanting to show that it is actively looking at the large number of buildings in its area that have been empty for years, need basic maintenance or are a blight on their locality. Or, as in many cases, all three.

The economic climate is clearly a hindrance for the council in tackling them all, just as it is for the owners. So priorities have been decided. It seems possible that a compulsory purchase order (CPO) may have been issued by the time you read this. This should mean the council buying the property from the current owner and negotiating with a willing new owner about its renovation and re-use. It is not an easy process, nor fast. But it does not involve much council money. Just commitment.

Other local authorities have been employing CPOs successfully, and we hope that our council will catch the habit and use it over time to bring back into use many of the properties in the town about which we are concerned.

Lynn has examples of houses, shops or wasted land empty for 20, 30 and 40 years. It should be a crime.

Ferry deserves our support

by Sally Smith

As we must have expected Norfolk County Council duly axed its subsidy to the King's Lynn ferry as part of its programme of transport spending cuts. This was despite huge support expressed during the consultation – so-called – that took place last autumn. There was also a large petition and many letters, including one from our society.

Of the total £45,000 subsidy our own borough council supplies £20,000 and at a full council meeting in October agreed not only to continue this payment, but to make it direct to the ferry and as an up-front sum rather than paying it over to NCC which then doled it out in arrears. At that meeting it was heartening to hear huge support for our ferry from all sides, and, from leader Nick Daubney, a commitment to look at ways to promote the ferry and possibly assist with some infrastructure such as the boarding areas – another element which we understand is also under threat by the county.

When I met Steve and Gail Kingston, the ferry operators, researching an article for Lynn News, they said that whatever happened they intended to continue the service, although it was inevitable that prices would have to rise and that it will not be possible to continue to plough back investment into the service – the costly boards which they use to cross the river bed at low tides, for example. They have not been altogether surprised that the cut will go ahead as they consider it has been NCC's goal for the past few years to rid itself of this turbulent commitment.

Why NCC should wish to withdraw support for a transport system, which ticks so many environmental boxes, reducing as it does vehicle journeys into the town, is very hard to understand.

The civic society has a particular regard for our ferry, and has long advocated promotion and marketing, especially to tourists who not only get a sea trip but a superb view of the waterfront. How many other towns have a ferry which runs six days a week with a continuous service early morning and evening and a regular twenty minute sailing for the rest of the day? And on a river with one of the highest rises and falls of tide in the country?

