

KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY



ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014

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Chairman's Report

by Alison Gifford

It has been a difficult year for the Executive Committee in several ways. Some committee members who decided to spend more time not thinking about buildings, plans, roads, Conservation Areas etc have been sorely missed and it has taken a few months to settle down into a different committee. Anne-Marie Sutcliffe who volunteered to be our secretary had a job offer in London and then had to commit to a long spell in Australia so reluctantly had to resign but she has put this Annual Report and Newsletter together and cajoled recalcitrant report writers to commit words to paper and send them in to her. My thanks to her for undertaking this task. Anna Gunn has now volunteered to be our secretary and that is going to work very well.

As you know many seasons of our winter lecture series have been organised by Ann Roberts with interesting and varied talks on all kinds of subjects. It has now fallen to Liz James, Herbie Knights and me to put together the lecture programme starting in October 2014 and I hope we have kept up the standard set by Ann. Please see the lecture card enclosed.

One subcommittee that continue to do professional committed work is the Planning Sub-committee consisting of Helen Russell Johnson, Ian Price, Rick Morrish, Julian Litten (co-opted) and our President, Desmond Waite. The letters sent to the planners are well written in plain English and full of common sense with enough technical knowhow to positively influence decisions by the Planning Committee. This is the main function of the Civic Society in the absence of any town or parish council to scrutinise planning developments in King's Lynn and the effect of planning policy for a wider area. However the Council have recently convened an advisory group of interested councillors which has made a report finally taking on board many of the ideas presented by this Society

over recent years and we welcome this and look forward to action in the future.

The Tuesday Market Place is now finished and John Loveless, Helen Russell-Johnson, Rick Morrish, Ann Roberts and I met Chris Bamfield, Executive Director Open Spaces several times from initial planning to execution. I know the plans were not universally popular but have always been baffled by what was wanted instead. Was the pock marked old car park to be retained? The money spent was never going to be diverted into a different project or budget. I think it looks good and I noticed Prezzos have taken their restaurant outside with a very continental feel.

We were also consulted about the Heritage Lottery bid "Townscape Heritage Initiative" which aims to improve St James Street and area. Two of the key buildings in desperate need of much improvement were the old Courts building and the old Hogges Head. Even before the bid has been approved these buildings are being tackled at long last and the team at the Borough Council should be congratulated. There was some disagreement about whether any money from the THI should go towards the Saturday Market Place plans – a difficult call that resulted in a close vote to commit such funding.

However I have to tell you that the "promise" to involve the Civic Society in the plans for the Town Hall have not been kept in that representatives of societies, down to about three, are informed about progress rather than having any opportunity to change or influence the bid and plans. We might not have wanted to but certainly the process was not consultation as I understand the term. The sub-committee Buildings at Risk has been put on the back burner. Many of the buildings we had on our list have had good outcomes even after the situation seemed impossible and some, such as Purfleet House and 11 Valingers Road, can only be solved by enforcement orders – Compulsory Purchase Orders - which this Council must surely see as a way forward. News cuttings about North and South Norfolk Councils using their powers in this way show how effective they are with neglectful owners. Another year with the boarded up windows of Purfleet House, pigeons inside and a

real eyesore in a prime tourist area. How much longer before action is taken? Instead we intend to ask Herbie Knights, Sandra Coleman, John Loveless and Ann Roberts to beef up the Visual Image sub-committee which Jean Tuck and Dennis Parsons looked after but Dennis has had a long spell of illness. It was good to see him at a lecture meeting last month.

Margaret Worledge has looked after our membership and Ian Price is always a capable treasurer and much more. Jean and Beryl and Neil Symonds and Peter and Margaret Ward have taken on the job of coffee monitors without noticeable thanks and so I do now say thank you.

Heritage Open Day was busy and packed with people and activities. Jean Tuck again matched people to buildings to enable over 40 to open.

What have we achieved over the last year? It's probably seeing the result in town projects of our ideas over the years gradually being transformed into reality. Hillington Square, Tuesday Market Place, Townscape Heritage Initiative, perhaps Saturday Market Place and the South Quay are projects that are not perfect and may need a lot of input from concerned members and your executive committee but it shows a confidence in our town and our wonderful heritage that I am sure this Society is pleased to encourage.

Alison Gifford
Chairman

Planning

by Helen Russell-Johnson

The planning team has been as busy as usual in 2013 – 2014. We have looked at about ninety planning proposals and commented on about fifty of these. We look at all planning applications within and adjacent to the Conservation Areas of the town. The Civic Society letters are the result of teamwork with all members of the team contributing to the content and defining the tone of our responses.

There has been the usual crop of applications for large illuminated shop / business signs in the town centre, all of which we have opposed. Some signs appear without any planning application and these are brought to the attention of the planning department.

Anyone can alert the authorities to violations of planning control through the Borough Council website. Go to the Planning and Building Control section. At the top of the page is a window with five options. Click on the fourth 'Report a Suspected Breach of Planning Control'. This takes you to a form to fill in. If you don't know the name of the owner of the property or the post code, just fill in as much information as you have and Building Control will still be able to find it.

Another old favourite is the replacement of wooden framed windows with uPVC. If the window is easily visible we oppose the plans as replacement uPVC windows detract from the original setting. The glazing bars and frames are never the same size as the wooden ones, always too thin and mean-looking, and however much they can be proportioned to look like sash windows they simply look less good. However we do not object to rear windows being replaced with more modern, but less sustainable, materials. Some uPVC windows only have a life of 15-20 years compared to over 200 for wooden windows well looked after. There is no way of recycling uPVC windows yet, so they go to landfill. Modern finishes like Sandolin are available for wooden framed windows and produce an attractive wipe clean surface that is very easy to maintain.

The planning team's major effort last year went into writing a response to the consultation on the 'Detailed Policies and Sites Plan 'Preferred Options'' volume 1, which referred to King's Lynn but not the rest of the Borough. Other council and national documents had to be read in conjunction with the consultation document resulting in a huge amount of work for those who were brave enough to take it on. Wading through warm words to find meaning was a challenge and one quickly realised that it was concerned with sites only and not with the people who live or may in the future live in the area. It was a sad publication. The Civic Society response ran to ten pages – I just hope that it was read.

Membership

by Margaret Worledge

We are fortunate in having a loyal group of members, many of whom cannot get to meetings but are still interested in keeping up to date

with the work of the Civic Society in King's Lynn and their support is very much appreciated. As many people belong to several groups each with different methods and times of paying subscriptions I felt it may be helpful to remind our members that subscriptions are due in April and most Standing Orders are paid at the beginning of April. The current fees are £11 single and £18 for a couple. If you have any queries regarding membership please do not hesitate to contact me. My email address is Margaret.worledge@teco.net and my telephone number is 01553 764579.

Our committee works very hard to monitor any developments and changes in our town and it is very rewarding when we are able to support them in their work and for anyone who visits the town for Heritage Day the results of their hard work are very evident.

King's Lynn Draft Local List Update by Elizabeth James

The day spent by the panel of experts in May 2013 in assessing the results of our four-year survey was covered very fully in the last newsletter so I will only summarise and update progress here:

- The three very broad criteria we had used for the survey process were refined by the panel into those recommended by English Heritage's official Guidance on Local Listing
- 258 buildings or significant features were studied
- 205 of these were confirmed as meriting a place on the List
- 41 were felt not to merit inclusion
- 12 were assigned a "maybe" position and recommended for further study
- Three Areas of Overall Significance, where the whole was deemed important as well as the individual 'star' buildings, were also recommended for writing up, containing in all 35 of the confirmed buildings:
 - Western end Gayton Road/surroundings of Gaywood Hall (potentially fragile historic landscape containing features of old Manor estate);
 - Western end of Loke Road and tributary terraces (late Victorian housing development);

- Saddle Bow Road/Wisbech Road “Triangle” (early 1900s industrial and housing area).
- Records have been updated in the light of the panel’s findings and research carried out on the three areas detailed above
- The “maybe” entries have been looked at more closely and circulated to the panel by email; inclusion decided by responses of 50% or more in favour (not quite finalised).
- We have begun recent correspondence with the planning authority regarding the future of the List but have been told discussions must await the outcome of that department’s current work on the Local Plan; official in depth discussion of the List not likely before 2015.
- Our own Committee is awaiting with interest the report to Cabinet on the Local Plan due in July

ANNUAL REPORT (2014) – CONSERVATION AREAS ADVISORY PANEL (CAAP)

by CS Representative Ian Price

CAAP is a body that meets monthly under the chairmanship of the Borough Council’s Conservation Officer (Pam Lynn) to discuss and advise on Planning Applications within any Conservation Area within the Borough which have been referred by Planning Officers. The Panel may also be invited to discuss pre-applications where developers are seeking advice prior to making a formal application.

It is hopefully a sign of an improving economic climate that in the last year (to March 2014) there were 61 referrals to the panel, compared with 38 in 2012/13. Of these 14 (previous 13) referred to the King’s Lynn Conservation Area. As ever some applications were referred more than once, so in fact 11 sites were considered, as listed below.

New house on PURFLEET QUAY (adjacent to OUSE HOUSE), also reviewed in 2012/13. This application was finally refused permission but has now been approved following an appeal.

Houses and Flats behind 97 NORFOLK STREET (also reviewed 2012/13). The final submission retaining the Victorian Gatehouse was approved.

The conversion to houses of the old THORNALLY SITE in ST JAMES’ STREET. This was referred as a pre-application twice. At the time of writing no formal application has been submitted.

The conversion to shops and apartments of THE OLD POST OFFICE on BAXTER’S PLAIN. This was much welcomed by the panel, although along with our Planning Group it hoped that the wood panelling would be re-used. The application has been approved.

Development of 25 flats and houses on former ZOOTS NIGHT CLUB site. This was a revision to plans rejected 2012/13 and was subsequently passed. Demolition of the old building (Pilot Cinema) progresses as of the end of March.

A new block of 6 flats on the old HOLBORN TYRES site, off Railway Road which is seen as a welcome use of a derelict ‘Brown Field’ site. This has been approved but work has yet to commence.

One of our more unusual reviews was to comment on the formal change of use for the TUESDAY MARKET PLACE to officially remove highway rights for the East and South side. The panel was basically content although it was a bit of a mystery as the work was already complete at the time.

Refurbishment of WENN’S (SATURDAY MARKET PLACE) and the creation of 8 flats/bedsits above. This application is still in progress.

The building of 2 retail units and 4 flats in PURFLEET STREET (to west of Lynn News block). The panel has suggested that another block infill is not suitable and that the design should better reflect the surrounding street scene.

A new 14 bed hotel with restaurant following the demolition of the GLENDEVON HOTEL (alleged to be structurally unsound). The panel requested that the structure should be checked to see if demolition was really necessary - a view not shared by our Planning Group.

Finally, following a 2012/13 application for 25 flats on the old COGGLES site at 44 LONDON ROAD which was viewed as far too intensive a revised scheme for 6 flats and 9 mews cottages has been put forward as a pre-application. The panel was much more in favour of this version.

It is helpful that in many cases the opinions of the other panel members are the same as or similar to the views expressed by The Society's Planning Group as this can add weight to the final decision made by the Planners in determining the final outcome of the application.

Lecture Programme 2014 -2015

2nd October

Passivhaus: Inside the Green Energy House of the Future
Chris Parsons of Parsons Whitley – Swaffham.

6th November

The Archaeology of Tattoos
Dr Ken Hamilton of the Norfolk Museum Service

4th December

Long Gone Lynn: Desmond and Richard Waite

5th February

Pathways to History: Footpaths and Green Lanes in Norfolk
Tom Williamson

5th March

W J J Bolding Revisited: Richard Jefferson

2nd April

The Story of G.M. Bridge & Son: Scenic Artists George Bridge

21st May AGM

King's Lynn Civic Society

Registered charity 298916

President: Desmond K Waite MVO

Vice Presidents:

Heather Bolt, John Van Dyke

Chairman: Alison Gifford

Vice Chairman: Jean Tuck

Secretary: Anne-Marie Sutcliffe

Treasurer: Ian Price

Membership Secretary: Margaret Worledge

Principal address:

19B Queen Street, King's Lynn, PE30 1HT