



LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 106 September 2011

2011-12 session

Welcome to the 2011-12 session, which begins with the first evening lecture on **5th October**. The programme card detailing the lecture dates and speakers is enclosed with this newsletter. You will see that a Special General Meeting is scheduled on 14th December at the start of the Christmas Social. This is to allow a couple of minor amendments to the Constitution to be put to the membership (more details on page 2).

Subscriptions are due on 1st October and a renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter. As you will see, subscription rates remain unchanged this year. If you pay by standing order the payment will be taken in October and there is no need to return the form unless any of your details have changed.

This session promises to be eventful at both national and local levels. Nationally there is the Localism Bill and the debate over the draft National Planning Policy Framework. The government proposes a radical shake-up of the planning system, greatly reducing and simplifying the process to encourage economic growth and new housing provision. There would be a presumption to approve sustainable development and, given that targets for brownfield sites are to be dropped, this implies building on greenfield sites. The Framework claims that Green Belt, AONBs and biodiversity will be protected but many individuals and organisations, including the National Trust and the CPRE, have expressed grave concerns about the magnitude of the proposed changes and the potential implications for the countryside and built heritage.

At local level there are two important Development Plan Documents (part of the Local Development Framework) in progress, on Land Allocations (of particular importance given the implications of the National Planning Policy Framework) and Development Management. There is also the possibility of revised proposals for the Canal Corridor North site and a forthcoming Public

Inquiry regarding the proposal to build a large supermarket plus petrol filling station and hotel/pub/restaurant at the southern entrance to the City on land to the south of Lawsons Bridge. This application was refused planning permission in May and the developer, CEP, has gone to appeal (see also page 5). The application (outline only) is for a very large development. The proposed supermarket would have a net tradable area of 4350m² and about 400 car parking spaces. The 50-bedroom hotel would occupy 1890m² and the pub/restaurant 400m² with 99 car-parking spaces. For comparison, the Sainsbury's store in Cable Street currently has a tradable area of 2777m² and 290 car-parking spaces. Sainsbury's tradable area will increase to 4074m² (and 279 car parking spaces) when the new extension is completed.

Thankfully the proposal to move the Indoor Market into the City Museum building has been abandoned - the consultants employed to consider the feasibility of the proposal came to the conclusion, already reached by many of us, that it was a non-starter. The possibility of an extension on the Museum's New Street side remains, along with the suggestion that the Visitor Information Centre (currently based in the Storey) might then be relocated to the building. We await developments.

John Champness

We were all shocked and very saddened by the sudden and unexpected death of John Champness on 9th June.

John was a stalwart of the Society and a member of the Committee and the Planning Group for many years. His expertise, experience and wise counsel were invaluable. He is, and will continue to be, greatly missed and we extend our sympathy to his widow Doreen and his family.

An appreciation of John appears on page 6.

2011 AGM

The AGM held in June was attended by about 40 members. It was chaired by Jenny Greenhalgh and after the formal business Mark Cassidy, Assistant Head of Regeneration and Policy at Lancaster City Council, gave an excellent presentation entitled "That was the year that was: the ever-changing world of town planning". The draft minutes of the meeting are available on the Society's website (www.lancastercivicsociety.org) or can be supplied by post (contact Winnie Clark, tel. 01524 33411). Enclosed with this newsletter is the Chairman's Annual Report which was presented at the AGM.

Committee membership

Details of the current Committee are given on the back of the programme card. As there were no nominations, the membership is largely unchanged from last year, though we are sorry to report that Michael Kingston, who has given dedicated service to the Society over a number of years and was Secretary from 2005 to 2007, has decided to step down from the Committee. We will miss his enthusiasm and his hard work. Sheila Jones has agreed to act as Minutes Secretary. We would welcome more help to run the Society - if anyone is interested in joining the Committee we would be very glad to hear from them.

Special General Meeting, 14th December

Those members who attended the AGM in June (or who have viewed the draft minutes on the Society's website, www.lancastercivicsociety.org) will recollect that the Treasurer, when presenting the accounts for 2010-11, suggested that the Society should consider the arrangements for the auditing of the accounts. There is no legal requirement for societies with a turnover of under £10k p.a. to have their accounts formally audited, although they must be available for inspection. Our Society has an annual turnover of approximately £2k. To have accounts professionally audited costs in the region of £750. To ask a lay person to inspect them *gratis* is onerous and possibly unwise given the complexities of the regulations. Under the circumstances it is proposed that the Society's Constitution be amended, dropping the word "audited" from the section on meetings (page 2 item 5) and substituting "accounts scrutinised and approved by the Committee".

Any amendment to the Constitution must be agreed by the membership at the Annual General Meeting or at a Special General Meeting (Constitution, page 3 item 12). Given that the accounts need to be presented at the AGM we propose that a short, Special General Meeting be held on 14th December before the Christmas Social, so that the proposed amendment can be put to the membership. A formal notification will appear in the November newsletter, ensuring the requisite period of notice. If agreed, it would allow the amended constitution to be in place in time for the AGM in June 2012, allowing the new procedure of scrutiny and approval of the accounts by the Committee to be implemented, avoiding the need for the expense of a formal audit procedure.

We appreciate that not all members attend the Christmas Social, so we would encourage members to express their views (for or against the proposal) by post (to 36 Hall Park, Lancaster, LA1 4SH) or via the Society's website (www.lancastercivicsociety.org). If any members would like to join the Committee in scrutinising the accounts (which are usually available for inspection by the end of May) we would be delighted to have them on board. The Society's Constitution is available on the Society's website but if anyone would like a printed copy please contact the Secretary, Winnie Clark, tel. 01524 33411 or email clark4be@btinternet.com.

We would also like to take the opportunity of the Special General Meeting to make one further, minor modification to the Constitution, to the last line of the final section "Winding Up" (page 3 item 14). Currently this states that, in the event of the dissolution of the Society, its records should be deposited with the Civic Trust. This organisation no longer exists so we propose that the phrase "an appropriate agency" be substituted. Once again comments from members are welcome.

Northern Architectural History Group visit

Members of the Northern Architectural History Group (based in Newcastle) visited Lancaster in July. They were particularly interested in the works of Austin and Paley and Jim Price, along with Jenny Greenhalgh and Roger Frankland, were on hand to provide a guided tour of the City with special reference to the work of the practice. Arrangements were also made for the group to visit Ripley Chapel and Dolphinholme Church.

Summer Outing 2011



The trip to Barnsley proved a most interesting day out. On arrival we received a very warm welcome from members of the Barnsley Civic Society followed by a tour of the town centre which revealed an interesting mix of historic buildings and public art. The life-size statue of Dickie Bird in characteristic pose was especially popular. This is the work of Graham Ibbeson (born and still resident in Barnsley) who also created the Eric Morecambe statue on Morecambe Promenade. There was also a thought-provoking piece of sculpture (also by Graham Ibbeson) of a miner and his family outside the NUM building.

It was interesting to see Barnsley's large and thriving market, one of the largest in the country and one of which the locals are justifiably proud. It is located in an ugly 1960s building and the site is scheduled for redevelopment. We can only hope that the process does not result in the market traders losing custom, as happened in Lancaster after the fire of 1986. After lunch at the imposing Civic Centre it was on to Cannon Hall Museum Park and Gardens - previously the home of the Stanhope-Spencer family but now owned by Barnsley Council. This was an unexpected gem - a beautiful Georgian house packed with wonderful artefacts, including a stunning collection of Moorcroft pottery. The house is surrounded by attractive grounds and an extensive walled kitchen garden though we did not have enough time to explore the grounds in detail.

It was a splendid day out and Roger Frankland is to be congratulated for such an imaginative choice of venue and for all his hard work in making the arrangements which ensured that the visit ran smoothly. We are also grateful to the members of Barnsley Civic Society who looked after us so well

and we look forward to returning the hospitality when they visit Lancaster at a future date.

Summer Walk



The summer walk in Silverdale was led by Barry Aire who provided a most comprehensive and interesting tour. The highlight was ascending Lindeth Tower from which we enjoyed panoramic views over Morecambe Bay and the surrounding countryside. Our thanks go to Barry for sharing his knowledge of Silverdale with us and to Anne Stelfox for organising the event so efficiently.

Civic Day



The Society marked the first national "Civic Day", on Saturday 25th June, by leading guided walks around Lancaster town centre to raise awareness of the built environment. Entitled "So you think you know Lancaster?", the walks, led by members of the Society with varying specialist interests, endeavoured to show aspects of the city of which residents may have been unaware and architectural features they may never previously have noticed.

Planning Matters

One of the Society's remits is to comment on planning applications of interest or concern. A Planning Group meets to consider relevant applications and formulate a response on behalf of the Society. Given the size of the Society's membership there will be many differing views and we are conscious that the Society's response may be at variance with the opinions of some members. Given the time constraints (for most applications comments need to be made within 3 weeks) extensive consultation is not feasible. We therefore encourage members to submit personal responses to applications of interest and copy them to us (email: rjw.stelfox@virgin.net). These will be considered if the Group also debates the application.

If you are interested in planning issues please consider joining the Planning Group - new members are always welcome (contact Anne Stelfox as above or via tel. 01524 823299).

The following representations have recently been submitted to the City Council:

Application No. 11/00210/CU
Change of Use of part of Former Masonic Hall, Church Street, Lancaster to 16 bed student accommodation

The Civic Society has no concerns with the proposed change of use of the building. The proposed use is appropriate in the city centre and the proposed insertion of additional windows, amongst other things, will improve the external appearance of this somewhat dull modern building.

Update: Application permitted June 2011

Application No. 11/00218/LB
Nawaab Restaurant, Parliament Street, Lancaster
Refurbishment of existing vacant restaurant

The Civic Society welcomes the proposed refurbishment of the restaurant which is currently in a dilapidated condition. The society recommends that listed building consent is granted so that the building can be brought back into active use.

Listed building consent should be granted, however, subject to conditions. It will be these conditions

that will ensure that the refurbishment works are sensitive and respect the architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

Conditions should cover all aspects of work that will affect the external character and appearance of the building. The most important conditions will be those which cover the materials, detailing and finish of external joinery.

No works to the building should be carried out until listed building consent has been granted and until all information required by the conditions has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

The Applicant should be encouraged to engage the services of an architect with conservation expertise to submit the necessary information. This architect should also be engaged to project manage and supervise the works to the listed building.

The Civic Society recommends that listed building consent is granted subject to conditions.

Update: Application permitted with detailed conditions, May 2011

Application No. 11/00224/LB
Jamea Al Kauthar College, Ashton Road, Lancaster
Demolition of existing boiler house and workshop building and construction of 2 detached dwellings

The Civic Society has no concerns about the proposed demolition of the boiler house and workshop building. The Society has, however, serious concerns about the design of the proposed detached dwellings. These concerns are largely the same as those that were expressed for the previous scheme (Appl. No. 10/00390/FUL).

The proposed dwellings would be within the setting of, and in close proximity to ex-hospital buildings that are Grade II* and Grade II listed. The dwellings have been designed with no regard to the historic setting of the listed buildings or to their distinctive architectural character.

One of the principal features of the main ex-hospital building is its very steep pitched roof. The roof pitch of the dwellings has been increased from the previous scheme but not significantly so. Furthermore, the roofs would have incongruous

Dutch gables and low pitched central sections. These and other features of each dwelling illustrate the lack of design knowledge displayed in the proposed development.

The proposed dwellings would have a significant adverse effect on the architectural and historic interest and character of the Royal Albert Hospital listed buildings and would detract from the setting of this group of buildings. The Civic Society recommends that the application be refused.

Update: Application refused August 2011

Application no 11/00350/CU Change of use of 11 and 12 King's Arcade from café and offices to student accommodation

The Civic Society has no objections to the principle of the proposed change of use and notes that no external alterations are proposed. The Society therefore has no adverse comments to make on the proposed change of use.

Scotforth Supermarket Appeal

Members may recollect that in May 2011 the City Council's Planning Committee considered applications for two supermarkets to the south of Lancaster on the Lawsons Bridge site. One was a full application from Booths for a replacement store of 3230m² (gross) and the other an outline application by Commercial Estates Projects for a large foodstore (7250m² gross) plus petrol filling station and a hotel/pub/restaurant complex (1890m² plus 400m²). Officer recommendation was to approve the Booths application and refuse the CEP application. The Planning Committee agreed with the recommendation and voted accordingly. The Society had previously submitted a representation in support of the Booths application and we sent a note in support of the officer recommendation to the Planning Committee. CEP has appealed against the decision of the Planning Committee and the outline application will now be the subject of a Public Inquiry.

The Society sent the following statement to the Planning Inspectorate on 26th August.

Lancaster Civic Society wishes to express its strong support for the decision of Lancaster City Council's Planning Committee to refuse the outline application by CEP for a large supermarket, petrol filling station and hotel/pub/restaurant on Scotforth Road on land to the south of Lawsons Bridge.

Our concerns about this proposal are as follows:

1. The application is in outline only so the full impact on the area, a key gateway into the city, cannot be fully assessed.
2. It is a very large development and one which would be highly visible on the southern approach to the city. The frontage would be adjacent to the A6 for some 430 metres. For this reason any development needs to be of the highest standard and appropriate to the area. This is more likely to be achieved with a full, as opposed to an outline application.
3. The proposal would duplicate facilities which already exist in the area.
4. The proposal would involve the loss of mature trees and open countryside.
5. Such a large development would add to the traffic congestion which already exists on this stretch of the A6, especially at peak commuter times.
6. Such intensive development of the site could constrain other future developments (e.g. housing and employment) in the area.

Forthcoming Events

Civic Voice is to host a workshop in Lancaster on **Saturday 8th October**, 10.30am - 1pm at the Friends' Meeting House, Meeting House Lane. This will focus on preparations for Civic Day 2012. To attend please email civicday@civicvoice.org.uk (or contact Winnie Clark, tel 33411).

The following sessions have been organised by the Centre for North-West Regional Studies, Lancaster University:

- **Saturday 15th October**, 9.30am-4pm
New light on the Roman North West
- **Saturday 26th November**, 9.30am-4pm
Mining and Quarrying in the North West

These sessions take place in the Faraday Lecture Theatre at Lancaster University and the fee is £22 (£20 for Friends of the Centre). Contact the CNWRS (01524 593770) to book a place.

John Champness



A man of broad cultural interests, John Champness's early career was as a teacher of modern languages. But he did not find school-teaching to his taste, and it is in his later calling as an architectural historian and author that he is probably best known to members of Lancaster Civic Society. His book *Thomas Harrison: Georgian Architect of Chester and Lancaster 1744-1829*, still in print, is a fascinating and very readable account of the life and work of the designer of the innovative Skerton Bridge and the Shire Hall in Lancaster, as well as of some even grander buildings in Chester. Also available is the booklet *Lancaster Castle: A Brief History*, of special interest just now, when the future of the Castle is uncertain. John convened and was very actively involved on the local working group looking at this question. The loss of his close knowledge of the Castle when he died suddenly on 9 June has left a substantial gap in local expertise on this subject.

For twenty years John was the Conservation Officer and Historic Buildings Adviser for Lancashire County Council. In this role he advised on the listing of significant buildings in the County as of special architectural interest, so he had visited many of these buildings and had gained a close knowledge of them. He made use of this in his book *Lancashire's Architectural Heritage* (unfortunately now out of print, but available in many libraries), and also in the regular courses he ran on country houses of the north-west in the Lancaster University summer programme.

A member of Lancaster Civic Society for over 35 years, John served on the Society's committee from 1977 to 1979 and again from 1987 to 1998. He was also a long standing and much valued member of the Planning Group.

In 1977 he published *A Walk around Historic Lancaster*, a booklet that has been a very useful guide to many of us as we explore our city. Unfortunately this is no longer available, but we hope that the Civic Society will publish a new guide in the near future, which may serve as a recognition of the large contribution John made to the education of local people about their city and county. He will be deeply missed by many of us.

(On 8 June, the day before he died, John delivered to the publisher the typescript of a new book, to be titled *Country Houses in Lancashire and their Builders*, which should appear in the not-too-distant future. We will keep members informed of when this new book appears.)

Martin Widdon

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*Copy for inclusion in the Newsletter such as letters, items of local interest, book reviews or notices of forthcoming events which would be of interest are always welcomed from members. Please send any copy to Winnie Clark, 36 Hall Park, Lancaster LA1 4SH*

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