



LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 112 February 2013

Lancaster Castle update

Newsletter 111 featured the proposals by the Duchy of Lancaster and Malcolm Reading Consultants for the Castle when it opens to the public, expected to be in 2017. (If you missed the exhibition held in the Castle late last year, the proposals can still be seen on the Duchy's web site www.lancastercastle.org) Surveyors have been at work recently all round the Castle; preparations are clearly in hand.

The proposals envisage a very big increase in visitor numbers to the Castle, from the present figure of around 35 000 to as many as 200 000 per year - a six-fold increase. This huge increase in visitor numbers will have major implications for the City.

It will be a commercial opportunity for local businesses, including hotels and restaurants, bus companies and taxi operators, tourist firms, and retailers.

It should bring many more visitors to other local attractions, such as the museums and galleries of Lancaster, and will raise awareness of the archaeological origins of Lancaster, from Roman times, through the Norman period, right up to the present day.

All this should bring welcome extra revenue to the City; but to bring in these large numbers of visitors the City will need to offer a portfolio of other attractions. It should also plan to improve the environment around the centre, with better paving and street furniture, and encourage owners to improve the look of their buildings.

Perhaps the biggest question is: how are all these people to travel in and out of Lancaster? Some will use public transport, but many will come by car, and there is no room for hundreds of extra cars to park anywhere in the centre. The obvious solution is a park-and-ride system from the outskirts of the City. If this is to happen, there will need to be substantial investment: in small buses that can run

frequently, in land that can be designated for car parks, and if possible in dedicated bus lanes, so that the buses don't get stuck in traffic jams.

A group called Lancaster Vision 2020 was set up in December, under the umbrella of Lancaster Civic Society, with the aim of securing the best outcome and increased prosperity for Lancaster District from the opening of the Castle. It involves local people who may not necessarily be Civic Society members, and includes residents around the Castle and members of the Chamber of Commerce. In December the group had discussions with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive of the City Council. We have been working with the Beyond the Castle group, who are interested particularly in the area to the north and west of the Priory Church and Vicarage Field.

In January, we welcomed Andrew Dobson (Head of Regeneration and Policy, Lancaster City Council) to a meeting of Lancaster Vision 2020. He said the City was working with the County and the Duchy on plans for the centre when the Castle opens to the public. He felt the Duchy's plans more or less matched the City's aspirations; but some of us thought the City was tending to wait and see what the Duchy wanted to do, rather than making plans of its own.

In March a small group from Vision 2020 will be travelling to the Duchy's offices in London for discussions about developments in preparation for the opening of the Castle. Plans for that meeting will be discussed at 6.00 pm on 25 February at the Friends' Meeting House in Lancaster.

We all know that times are very difficult for local government under the funding restrictions imposed by the centre. Nonetheless, we hope that the aims of the City can be raised to a more ambitious level, so that it can reap the full benefit from the opening of the Castle to the public.

Martin Widden

Towards a Local Heritage List

Civic societies up and down the country are rising to the challenge of preparing a '*Local List*'.

This isn't a new concept; Local Lists have been around for many years and nearly half of the Local Planning Authorities in England already have one. What is new is that Local Lists are being promoted in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and English Heritage is encouraging all local authorities to compile one. Good practice guidance notes have been issued by English Heritage and there is a (welcome) strong emphasis on working in partnership with community groups such as civic societies.

In fact, following a vote at the *Civic Voice* convention in Coventry last October, this is now a national campaign championed by Civic Voice with the endorsement of English Heritage.

So, what is a Local List, and does Lancaster already have one?

More properly called a 'Local Heritage List', these documents identify buildings, structures and features which have local architectural, historical or curiosity value but are NOT already designated as Listed Buildings and/or Scheduled Ancient Monuments. In other words, Local Heritage Lists are supplementary registers, managed and held by the local authority, which complement the existing Statutory designations.

..... and 'No', Lancaster hasn't already got one!

In the Introduction to the *Good Practice Guide*, Baroness Andrews (Chair of English Heritage) writes "*At its heart local heritage listing provides a much needed opportunity for communities to have their views on local heritage heard. It recognises that the importance we place on the historic environment should extend beyond the confines of the planning system to recognise those community-based values that contribute to our sense of place*".

Over the coming months Lancaster Civic Society will be discussing the criteria and methodology with the conservation team at the city council. We very much hope that a constructive partnership will be developed and that our members will have ample opportunity to participate. If you would be interested in participating in such a project please get in touch with Winnie Clark (tel: (01524) 33411; email: clark4be@btinternet.com).

Stephen Langtree

Info boards to be placed in City pay-and-display car parks?

The Civic Society is keen for the City to make the most of The Duchy of Lancaster's plans to open and develop the castle. Many historic towns and cities help to encourage the exploration of their tourist sites by providing illustrated maps of the "you are here" variety adjacent to pay and display car park machines. It would seem that none of Lancaster's main car parks has such signs, and it is has been suggested that we push for their provision. We hope that the costs of such signs would be modest and could be partly funded by private enterprise, by the City Council or indeed perhaps by the Civic Society. We would welcome opinions from Society members regarding this suggestion and also any other ideas which may be helpful.

Paul Hutchence

The Standfast Clock

Many of us, when travelling along Caton Road, will have passed the clock tower of the Standfast works. Have you noticed that, after 20 years of inactivity, the clock is now going?

Achieving this was a Civic Society initiative, carried out with the support of Standfast staff (especially their Chief Engineer, Ken Gregory) and the expert work of Jim Newton. A technician in the Engineering Department of Lancaster University until he retired a few years ago, Jim was trained as a horologist with Bradford City Council, in the days when this entailed looking after and winding the many clocks in the Council's buildings. We found that the Standfast clock had been given an electric movement, but this appears not to have been up to the job of driving the hands on all four faces, and it had given up the ghost. A couple of small parts had to be replaced to get the pendulum clock going again, but it is now being wound once a week by one of the Standfast people and it seems to be keeping reasonable time.

Unfortunately the hands on the face that looks directly on to Caton Road are not properly fixed to their shafts, so they don't move: fortunately this face is not one most people see. And sticklers may notice that the hands on the faces you do see as you travel out of or into town on Caton Road don't show exactly the same time - but luckily it's not possible to see them both at once. We hope to fix these problems later in the year. Meanwhile, at least the clock is going again.

Martin Widden

Reports on meetings

Christmas Social

Over 40 members braved cold weather to enjoy a very entertaining social on 10th December. John and Judi Surridge provided a musical start to the evening with "Music is Fun," performing on eight different instruments including the little known psaltery, and encouraging audience participation on a variety of percussion instruments. Mulled wine and mince pies followed, and the evening concluded with another excellent quiz compiled by Gillian Sheath, which tested our local and general knowledge. Our thanks go to all who made the evening such a successful and convivial occasion, and especially to Anne Stelfox who organised everything with such efficiency.

Winnie Clark

2013 Ugly Walk

Roger Frankland and ten members walked round parts of King Street, Queen Street, High Street, Middle Street, Fenton Street, Blades Street and Dallas Road on the 2013 Ugly Walk on 6th January. We noted a number of problems, including blocked gutters (causing drainage problems) and a number of buildings in need of some tlc or more major repair. There were some eyesores, such as the old garage at the top of King Street (now a snooker hall), with its especially ugly rear, and the KFC building at the junction of Penny Street and King Street, looking rather dilapidated - particularly unfortunate at such a prominent entry point to the city centre. The new City Block (previously Victoria Court) also raised a number of comments. There were unexpected gems however, such as the topiary number cut into a hedge on Blades Street and the facades of two houses which originally faced towards Dallas Road, but are now totally hidden from view, at the back of Meeting House Lane. These were drawn to our attention by Colin Stansfield, who also provided much information about the architects and previous owners of many of the houses we passed. We are grateful to Roger for leading the walk and for undertaking the follow-up work.

Winnie Clark

January Meeting

In their talk to Lancaster Civic Society on 9 January, Stephen Gardner and Ron Sands showed how much has been achieved in Morecambe and Heysham in terms of conservation and tourism development. Stephen's well illustrated talk focused

on the conservation of the town's built heritage. The triumph of the Midland Hotel's renaissance reminds us of the Victoria Pavilion's weather-proofed limbo. Less well known are the many smaller projects in the Poulton area where modest terraces and cottages have been revived splendidly. Even less often seen are the Art Deco gems further out from central Morecambe. The public



Ten Ugly-Walkers, 6 January 2013



Handsome topiary at Number 42 Blades Street

sector refurbished the Stone Jetty and the Promenade and gave us excellent public art (the Tern project, the Flock of Words and Eric's statue), but did so in the days before austerity. The credit crunch has curtailed the private sector too. The funding for future conservation projects is less obvious. Ron Sands used the new Morecambe Area Action Plan to remind us of the many green shoots in the revival of the town's visitor economy. He bemoaned the moaners who disparage what has been achieved. Can Morecambe and Heysham continue revitalising themselves even in these difficult times?

Gordon Clark

February meeting

The Lake District is notable for the conservation of its buildings as well as for its landscape. Andy Lowe, formerly the Building Conservation Officer for the Lake District National Park, illustrated the highlights of his work in a talk to the Civic Society in February. Grand houses, churches, cottages and industrial buildings all bear witness to the area's rich history and, in time, all will need restoration. How can this be best achieved? Andy Lowe outlined some key principles based on his long and successful career. One principle is to involve local people to tap in to their ideas and priorities. A second is to ensure the use of traditional building materials wherever possible. A third is to keep as much as possible of the expenditure on restoration within the local area - local materials, local firms and local craftspeople. The fourth is to use volunteers and whatever philanthropy and grants are available to cut the cost of the work. There are lessons here surely for these times of austerity.

Gordon Clark

Planning Matters

The Civic Society has sent representations to the City Council on the following planning applications:

Application no 12/01052/VCN. The variation of conditions for the outline planning application for the conversion of the Annexe and Campbell House at the Lancaster Moor Hospital , Quernmore Road , Lancaster (no objection, but we asked for high standard of design and good materials; however *the application has since been withdrawn*).

Applications nos. 12/01155/FUL and 12/01156/LB

Lancaster Moor Hospital Quernmore Road Lancaster, LA1 3JR

Upgrading of east and west access junctions, including repositioning of gate posts, walls and railings, and layout of access road and footpath to serve new housing development.

(no objection. *This application was permitted February 2013.*)

Application nos. 12/01152/FUL and 12/01151/LB

Erection of a single storey professional training suite, learning resource centre and change of use of Lodge House to school reception.

Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy, Ashton Road Lancaster, LA1 4RS (no objection).

Amendments to application number

12/00632/FUL for erection of extra care apartments at the Greaves Hotel, Greaves Road, Lancaster LA1 4UW

(We were pleased to note that the developer intended to use natural stone, and also to follow the recommendations of the Conservation Team in respect of the cleaning and restoration work required for the existing building. However, *this application was discussed at the January meeting of the Council's Planning Committee: although it had officer approval, it was rejected by the members.*)

Application no. 12/01159/FUL

Damside Street; Land to the rear of 50-62 Church Street, Lancaster Student accommodation (79 rooms with external and internal communal living space) (We welcomed the re-development of this derelict site on Damside Street but we had concerns about this application:

1. This proposal is for another large, new-build student block in the city centre. There are other, similar blocks already and it is apparent that the size and number of students living in such blocks can cause problems (especially of noise) which can adversely affect other residents. This has been the case elsewhere and this block is close to residential properties on New Road and Church Street.

More specifically:

2. The proposed development (although much improved from the earlier proposal, 12/00373/FUL) still appeared to us over-intensive for the relatively small site. We believe that the scale and massing,

especially when viewed from the Bus Station and from the western end of Damside Street, will appear over-bearing. The CGI (fig 12 in the Heritage Impact Appraisal) is taken from an easterly viewpoint; the impression from further west, nearer to New Road is likely to be different.

3. We have reservations about the large windows at ground-floor level which seem at variance with the rest of the streetscape. In addition, Damside Street is a busy thoroughfare for buses and taxis, restricting the outlook for those inside the building; for those outside, the view may or may not be inviting.

4. Vehicular access, especially for service and emergency vehicles looks problematic and greater clarity of the arrangements would have been helpful. In addition, drop-off and pick-up at the beginning and end of terms when students are likely to be transporting quantities of possessions between cars and rooms could lead to traffic congestion because of the narrowness of Damside Street and lack of parking facilities.

5. The individual student rooms appear small.

6. We have concerns about the viability of the "lifestyle concept" proposed for the ground floor. We feel that individual kitchens serving about 5 student rooms provide a more workable solution (e.g. will the communal space accommodate 79 individual food lockers? Will students be tempted to prepare food in their rooms?).

We do however appreciate that the developer has considered an alternative use (hotel) for the building should the student market decline.

However our reservations about the scale and massing and vehicular access would remain in this context. *This application was discussed and approved at the Council's February Planning Committee.*

Application No.12/01184/CU

Friends' Hall Fenton Street, Lancaster, LA1 1AB

Change of use to residential accommodation as 12 self contained units for student accommodation and one residential maisonette

(no objection to the change of use of this building for student accommodation and a landlord's maisonette (and we welcome provision for a permanent tenant within the complex). We do however query the amount of natural light (and ventilation) which will be provided to the student rooms, especially those at the rear of the building, which appear to rely solely on roof-lights.)

Application no. 12/01085/LB

4 Fenton Street Lancaster LA1 1TE

Change of use from offices to student

accommodation (no objection, though we regret the loss of office accommodation to yet more student accommodation.)

Application no. 12/01093/CU

23 Castle Hill, Lancaster, LA1 1YN

Change of use of ground floor restaurant to student living accommodation including installation of new timber windows and insertion of new wall and gate to the front.

(We opposed the change of use of the ground floor (from restaurant to student accommodation) given the building's proximity to the Castle for which major plans are emerging. This building is in a prime location, practically opposite the Castle gateway. Until plans for the Castle and precinct are clearer we would prefer the ground floor to remain as a restaurant.

We also opposed the installation of new ground floor windows to replace the existing large rectangular windows, one of which still contains a stained glass panel. This historic building (and its glass) is of particular significance to Lancaster's heritage being the studio and workshop of Shrigley and Hunt. The proposed new windows are of a different design (understandable given the proposed change of use) but the new design would destroy a vital part of the Lancaster's heritage, especially if the stained glass panel was lost. The student rooms, particularly bedroom 5, also look very small.)

Application No. 12/01072/CU

29 Common Garden Street Lancaster

Change of use of first and second floors to student accommodation and erection of a two storey extension to the rear. (no objection to the principle of residential accommodation over a shop, but we had concerns over the small size and partitioning of some rooms. We also supported the Conservation Officer's advice concerning the facades. *This application was permitted February 2013.*)

Application no. 13/00060/CU and 13/00061/LB

Change of use from office to eight bedroom student accommodation

26 New Street Lancaster, LA1 1EG

(Whilst we have no objection to the use of the upper floors of this property for student accommodation we do have some concerns:

1. The proposed new front door will impair the symmetry of the existing shop front.

2. The arrangements for rubbish bins seem unsatisfactory - a bin store adjacent to the kitchen/dining/living area and the expectation that rubbish will be taken onto New Street for collection on the appointed day.

3. There seems to be no provision for the storage of bicycles.

4. The kitchen/dining/living area does not appear to have much natural light (just 3 rooflights at one end).

The Society does not oppose the application but would like to see the points raised in 2-4 addressed.)

**Application no. 12/O1177/FUL
Alterations to existing shop front (Lush)
1 Penny Street, Lancaster, LA1 1UA**

It is disappointing that this is a retrospective application and that the works proposed have already been carried out. The shop is on a prominent and historic site and the strong contrasting colours on the blockwork appear to us garish rather than just eye-catching. The resulting appearance of the shop front seems at odds with the surrounding area which is mostly the sandstone, buff colours more traditionally associated with Lancaster.

We are also concerned that the white paint is already showing some signs of deterioration and all the inevitable scuff marks are very visible. If the application is granted, we would hope that there are plans for regular maintenance.

Contributions for the newsletter should be sent to Martin Widden, 12 Castle Park, Lancaster LA1 1YQ or by email to sueandmart@o2.co.uk.

For queries about distribution contact Anne Stelfox on 01524 823299

**Dates for your Diary:
Civic Society lectures, Lancaster Town Hall**

Wednesday 13th March 7.30 pm: Lancaster and Lunsdale Workhouses

Dr Andy Gritt, Director of the Institute of Local and Family History, University of Central Lancashire

Wednesday 10th April 7.30 pm: Halton Co-Housing Project

Many of the residents have now moved into Lancaster's Co-Housing project, by the River Lune at Halton. Stuart Parkinson, one of the home-owners, will speak about the planning and realisation of the project, and how it feels to live in one of the well-insulated eco-homes at the Halton project site.

**Spring talks
at Lancaster Library, Market Square**

Tuesday 5 March: 2.00-3.00 Underclass: the History of an Idea, 1880-2013 - Dr John Welshman

Tuesday 5 March: 3.00-4.00 The Carriers of Lancaster 1824-1912 - James Bowen

Tuesday 12 March: 2.00-3.00 Correcting Human Rights Myths - John Pearson

Tuesday 12 March: 3.00-4.00 Rethinking the Renaissance Body: attitudes towards disability in Tudor literature - Helen Davies

Tuesday 19 March: 2.00-3.00 Sexting: a legal or societal response - Prof Alasdair Gillespie

Tuesday 19 March: 3.00-4.00 British Governments and international kidnapping, 1800 to the present - Prof Martin Blinkhorn



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