



LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 117 May 2014

Forthcoming events: for your diary

Saturday 7th June Annual Summer Outing

This year we will be visiting Nantwich and Beeston Castle. Further details and booking form are included.

Wednesday 11th June 7.30pm AGM

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held at St John's Church, North Road, Lancaster at 7.30 pm Wednesday 11th June. After the formal business, Mark Cassidy (Assistant Head Regeneration and Planning, Lancaster City Council), will update us on developments in the Lancaster District. Refreshments will be served after the meeting.

Summer Evening Walk, Wednesday 18th June

Geoff Pegg will lead us on a guided walk around Holme village, on Wednesday 18th June. Meet by the Lime Street stores in the square opposite Holme church at 7 pm. Parking is available in the square and on adjacent streets. There will be a charge of £2 per person. For further information please contact Anne Stelfox 01524 823299 or email annepstelfox218@gmail.com.

Saturday 28th June, 11 am at The Storey:

Talk on Sharpe, Paley and Austin by Geoff Brandwood plus walking tour of Historic Lancaster led by Mike Winstanley in the afternoon. Event organised by the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. Open to non-members. Cost £8 per person.

For more details see the HSLC website http://www.hslc.org.uk/text_page.php?section=16&type=text

Booking form available on our website (www.lancastercivicsociety.org under "Other local events") or contact Dr Liz Stewart Liz.Stewart@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

Summer Ugly Walk, Sunday 6th July

Following the tradition of the January Ugly Walk, we are introducing a warmer-weather version. This walk will be led by Peter Wiltshire.

Assemble at Dalton Square outside Palatine Hall at 2.00 pm, Sunday 6th July. The walk is likely to last about two hours and will probably finish somewhere where we can have a drink and a chat about any issues which may arise from the walk. For further information contact Peter Wiltshire peter.wiltshire1@btinternet.com

LANCASTER LOCAL PLAN

The new Local Plan for Lancaster District will be out for consultation in June and July. It will identify areas for development and areas that need to be protected from development, and will set out how planning applications should be decided. It will also give the proposed housing numbers for the District and for areas within it. There is information about all this on the Council's web site, www.lancaster.gov.uk.

We strongly encourage all Civic Society members to engage in this consultation - the new Local Plan will probably serve for ten years, so it will have a lasting effect on the District and how it will develop in coming years.

There is to be a drop-in event at St Nicholas Arcades on Saturday 14 June from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm, when you will be able to look at the proposals and talk to Council officers. This session is likely to be very busy - five hours seems a bit meagre for discussion of such far-reaching proposals - but shortage of people to staff these sessions is probably the chief reason. There will be drop-in sessions at other centres around the District, including one at Barton Road Community Centre, Scotforth, on Wednesday 11 June from 2.00 to 7.00.

All the drop-in sessions are listed in the Council's Local Plan Newsletter, accessible at http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/planning/local-plan/#Local_Plan_Newsletter. Paper copies of this may be obtainable at the Town Hall.

Government guidance

It is interesting to find it stated, on p 2 of this Council Newsletter, that 'the council must follow the advice on planning given by the government.' This view doesn't appear to be quite in line with a government statement of just a year ago: a press release dated March 2013 quotes the Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles as saying "This government is committed to localism and greater local decision-making in planning. The flawed top-down targets of regional planning, centrally imposing development upon communities, built nothing but resentment. They will hang over communities no more. We have secured the abolition of every single strategy. We are committed to decentralising as much power as possible and these important and popular planning reforms will bring a significant shift in power to local people."

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-step-for-localism-as-every-regional-plan-has-gone>)

Housing expansion

The Local Plan Newsletter also notes that 'an independent consultant has said that over the next 20 years the Lancaster District needs 'an additional 12,000 new homes due to an increasing population and growing economy.'

The consultants are Turley Associates, and the figures come from their report entitled 'Lancaster Housing Requirements'. The report can be viewed via a link from the page <http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/>.

Inevitably, the figure for the number of dwellings needed depends very heavily on the options which the consultants put forward about the future of Lancaster District, and the 12,000 figure is very much a topside one. The figures in the report vary from about 220 houses per year, on what may be regarded as a rather pessimistic scenario, up to just over 600 per year assuming buoyant growth in the local economy.

The optimistic assumptions about Lancaster's future were to be found in a recent report by the consultants Experian. As reported a few months ago, they found that Lancaster scored highly on 'vibrancy'. As a measure to apply to a city, this is remarkably vague. It doesn't seem to be at all certain from Turley, or Experian, that Lancaster will really need as many as 600 new homes per year, nor that there will be local jobs for all these

people. We may not feel that such high numbers of new houses should be planned for, on the basis of what appear to be rather flimsy forecasts.

Martin Widden

MEETING REPORTS

Report on March meeting

How did Victorian Manchester get enough clean water to let its growing population and industries thrive? Expanding Thirlmere and piping its water by gravity alone to the city was the solution. John Butcher from United Utilities explained how the 120-year-old scheme was built in just 8 years, opened in 1894 and is still in great condition. Major tunnels, buried culverts, inverted siphons and pipelines convey 11% of the North West's water supply for 83 miles to near Bolton. This masterpiece of Victorian engineering let Manchester expand and yet it also produced the earliest serious environmental protest group in Britain, from which came the National Trust. Water supply is still controversial. Should it be paid for by metered usage, like electricity? But what if some cannot afford it? Can our supply still be relied on with erratic rainfall and extreme weather? Does all our water need to be supplied at drinking-water quality? These and other issues intrigued the large audience who were fascinated by the intricacies behind the mundane and critical need for a safe, reliable supply of water.

Gordon Clark

Report on April meeting

Martin Stockley, Chair of Places Matter, posed the question "What are streets for?" when he addressed the Society on 9 April. In folk memory they were where kids played and adults met as well as the realm of drivers. Recently the crush of cars has pushed aside other uses, corralling pedestrians on the pavements. Road congestion has traditionally been tackled through road building, traffic restrictions, signs and surveillance linked to 'traffic management' from a control room. Stockley proposes a different approach, not unlike the 'Shared Space' ideas in The Netherlands. Remove the distinction between pavement and road; encourage pedestrians, non-car users and drivers to use all the space; remove nearly all traffic signs and rules. Chaos? No, he argued. People themselves would sort out the traffic flows. The lack of rules would make them

drive differently - more slowly, much more cautiously, more courteously. Responsibility for road safety would be partly transferred from the highway authority to the road user. He showed examples of the successful use of this approach in Ancoats, Poynton and Brighton. The current refurbishment of Fishergate in Preston incorporates these ideas. If you're sceptical, go and have a look, or view a short (15 minute) film "Poynton Regenerated" at <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-services/what-we-do/route-design-and-construction/shared-space-busy-intersection-poynton>

Gordon Clark

Castle Study Day, 26th April

The Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain held a Study Day at Lancaster Castle on 26 April. The Day was led by Peter de Figueiredo (formerly of English Heritage), Colin Penny (Lancashire Museums Service) and Alan Davies of BDP. The focus was on the many recent findings about the Castle's complex history over nine centuries. During the last two years the accretions of the centuries have been stripped away - recent partitions, plasterboard and the twentieth-century prison buildings. This has revealed rooms, windows and doors that were unknown. New access to wooden beams has allowed their more accurate dating using dendrochronology. Careful study of the stonework has shown how older structures have been reworked, sometimes several times. Much remains to be done in terms of our understanding of the Castle's evolution, particularly for the Keep. But progress is being made. The bigger task is to find new uses for at least some of the 19 buildings that comprise the Castle. Preferably they should be uses that will generate an income sufficient for the Duchy to meet the heavy costs of their continuing responsibilities for the proper maintenance of this Grade I listed building, which is so important for Lancaster.

Winnie and Gordon Clark

HELP NEEDED AT ST JOHN'S CHURCH

The railings at St John' Church (North Road) are in need of re-painting. If you are willing to help, please contact the custodian, Mandy Holten: mandyholten@rocketmail.com

PLEASE HELP US TO RUN THE CIVIC SOCIETY

Enclosed with your newsletter is the AGM notification and the NOMINATION FORM.

We must recruit new members to the Committee. Three members are standing down in June: Rodney Ward (Treasurer); Sheila Jones (Minutes Secretary) and Rosemary Anderson. In addition Stephen Langtree will in future serve as a co-opted rather than a full member. Jenny Greenhalgh (Chair) and Winnie Clark (Secretary) are also standing down from their respective offices, having served the constitutional maximum (or more!) in those roles. This means that **all** the office holders must be replaced for the 2014-15 session.

We know that the Society's membership encompasses many talents. Do not hide your lights under bushels, but please be willing to come forward and offer your services. Without new Committee members the Society's future is in serious doubt.

If you are prepared to help the Society, please get in touch. Contact details of current Committee members are on the programme card and on the Society's website (www.lancastercivicsociety.org)

LANCASTER VISION

Following the successful seminar held at The Storey on 6 February (reported in the last newsletter), we have set up a number of working groups within Lancaster Vision to look at particular areas of Lancaster's future, including Public Realm, Housing and Transport.

We have also produced a short (one-page) statement of our Vision of Lancaster's future, which has been circulated within the Lancaster Vision group and to everyone who attended the February seminar. A copy of the statement is included with this newsletter. This is a working document, likely to evolve with time - this is certainly not the final word on the subject.

Planning Representations

Below are representations that have been sent to the City Council recently.

Planning Application responses

14/00324/FUL Erection of 23 new dwellings with associated parking and landscaping, Lancaster Moor Hospital Annex Quernmore Road ,Lancaster, LA1 3JR

Lancaster Civic Society has no objections to this application which will facilitate the further re-development of the Annexe building.

We are happy with the overall design of the 23 new build houses and especially like the design and proportions of the windows and doors. We trust these will be executed as drawn.

We hope that a ground management strategy will be put in place for the overall maintenance of the site (especially the trees) and suggest that, in addition to the trees proposed for the garden areas, small trees also be planted at the end of the car parking bays to screen the cars from views from the playing fields. There seems to be sufficient space for this at the boundary with the playing field.

14/00319/FUL Demolition of garages and erection of three dwellings with integral garages, Garages Opposite Kids Club, Dallas Road, Lancaster.

Lancaster Civic Society welcomes the re-development of this site and is generally in favour of the overall design of the houses.

We do however question the amount of space provided in the garage - it appears very limited for an average-size car.

We are also concerned about the arrangements for wheelie bins. If they are stored at the rear of the properties, they will need to be wheeled through the utility room and garage for collection. The end houses might manage to manoeuvre the bins round the side of their houses, but this is not an option for the centre house. We suspect that for convenience, bins may be left at the front of the properties where they will look unsightly and may be messy. We suggest consideration be given to designing individual bin stores as part of the front elevation of the houses.

We would welcome clarification about the narrow ginnel-like area (currently very overgrown) which lies between the most northerly garage and the boundary wall of Dallas Road Gardens. We are not sure from the plans what has happened to this.

14/00430/PAD Prior approval for demolition of former offices and warehouse (not the dwelling) Television House Parliament Street Lancaster, LA1 1DQ.

Lancaster Civic Society is concerned at the lack of clarity and information provided with this application and we would have welcomed evidence that demolition was needed.

The site lies between two listed buildings (The Nawaab restaurant and Bridge House) and post-demolition it seems the site will be used for carparking. It is not clear if this is for public or customer use, nor is there any indication of traffic flows to and from the parking area. Given the prominence of this site on the gyratory system, we trust that carparking (if approved), will be for limited duration until a more active use can be found for the site. Also, whilst it is used for parking we hope some temporary landscaping can be introduced to soften the area and make it more attractive.

14/00330/CU Change of use of part dry cleaners (Use Class A1) and part restaurant (Use Class A3) to create additional four en-suite hotel rooms at ground floor level (Use Class C1). 10 King Street Lancaster, LA1 1JN

Lancaster Civic Society welcomes the additional bed and breakfast accommodation to be provided by this application and the improvements to the rear elevation of the building. We have no objections.

LANCASTER DISTRICT DESIGN AWARDS

Once again everyone is invited to nominate for a Design Award any building or scheme whose external design and appearance add to the attractiveness of Lancaster District. The Civic Society is running the 2014 Design Award Scheme in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, the Lancaster Guardian and Lancaster University. Details on the Society's web site, <http://www.lancastercivicsociety.org/>



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