



Banbury Civic Society



CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2017

Wishing all our members and supporters, old and new

A Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



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A view from the Chair

Welcome and hello

2018 is nearly upon us and I am well into the second year of chairmanship and now is the time to look forward to some interesting times and backward to a lot of hard work, some achievements and some misgivings.

Taking the last first, your Executive Committee are conscious that communication with our membership has not always been as frequent and fulsome as we might have wished.

However there are vacancies on that committee and additional pairs of hands - or even minds - could make for a more responsive link with the membership -- so if you have a mind (and a little time to spare) please step forward and 'put your shoulder to the wheel'. We do desperately need a Hon Secretary - not an onerous task - but the production of minutes for the monthly (evening) meetings would be an enormous help.

Similarly we are trying to resuscitate the website - which the more observant will know currently has whiskers and is more of an archive than a useful and current tool, so anyone with skills in that area would be welcomed.

This Newsletter has, of necessity, been assembled from contributions by a number of colleagues (you didn't really think I wrote all this, did you?) so a



variation of styles etc will be detected by those attuned to such matters. Please forgive any errors and omissions - or duplications !! PM

Helen Middleton writes :-

"A NOTE FROM A NEW MEMBER"

I am a newish member of the Civic Society Committee. I attended the AGM and asked a question about the Unicorn Public House, whereupon I was invited to join the Committee!!

The Unicorn, hosted by Frank & Joan Wills in the 1960s/70s, was full of antique furniture and pictures. In 1962, it became our "local" when we moved into Castle Street West. It was great, full of history and where Hunt Edmunds started their brewery. The pub was very popular and full of interesting customers and great conversation. (see page 4)

If you are like me - Banbury-born and bred and concerned about the continuing loss of our heritage - please come and join us!

What has Banbury Civic Society been doing in 2017?

We hope the following remarks will give you a flavour of the activities throughout the year on behalf of the Society. Most importantly this is achieved by mounting a public presence at the various Show days during the year and there was much hard work involved in achieving a presence at the Banbury & District Show Day and also, after a bit of a scramble as there was only short notice was

given this year, Canal Day. Those that visited the Show Day may remember the fight our members had in trying to stop the high winds carrying away the gazebo - the damage was irreparable!

Judging from the number visiting our gazebo and display on both days, there is no lack of interest and opinion in the future of Banbury by the public at large and wearing our 'strap line' hat (Looking after the past - looking to the future) that is encouraging. Too often though, one heard the comment 'well what can we do - they will have made up their mind anyway'. Perhaps that might be true for individual effort, but an active and vociferous Civic Society can make an impact and the more of us that there are, and the more interest we all take, the greater will be that impact.

True to form we have provided responses to a number of consultations by both Cherwell District & Oxfordshire County Councils (covered more fully in other parts of this newsletter) and members should be receiving the periodic Civic Voice bulletins, which often contain interesting items on Conservation issues but, if not, please contact Adrienne Rees-Brown to be included in the circulation list. PM

Proposed Events for 2018

Following last year's successful Black Country Museum trip (& Severn Valley &c, before that), we proposed to have another in this autumn. The cost, again, would have been about £35. The two destinations shown below were offered at the AGM. Unfortunately, despite a lot of interest in both



proposals (Quarry bank leading by a short head), we failed to get enough bookings to proceed, probably due to inconvenient dates.



Crich Tramway Village



Quarry Bank Mill

It is hoped to run a trip in 2018, either to one of these destinations or somewhere else suggested by the membership.

So far the following have been suggested:

Three Choirs Winery (Newent, Glos)
Whole Day Trip

Guildhall with Mansion House (London)
Whole Day Trip

Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum & Boat Trip
(Northants) *Whole Day Trip*

WW1 Training area
(RKS to complete)

Royal Shakespeare Theatre (behind the Scenes!)
Half Day

Hook Norton Brewery
Half Day

...and any others you may like to suggest and visit.

For any more information about the above or,

indeed, anything else, please feel free to get in touch with me:
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Tel: 01295 780334

The Society's day trip to the Viridor Recycling Centre at Ardley

Despite it being the Summer, 26 brave members met at the Viridor Recycling Centre in Ardley in the pouring rain. It is an impressive site and an aerodynamically designed building of recent construction. We were welcomed with steel-toecap boots, hi-viz jackets, hard hats and ear plugs. The guide took us into a nice conference room where we were told EVERYTHING about the benefits of recycling, what to recycle and plus question and answers.



Exterior of Ardley

Actually recycle is probably not the right word. Rubbish which would otherwise go to landfill, is burnt in very high temperature furnaces and the results are not wasted at all. Various important chemicals are recovered from the solid matter and

more from the gases, leaving only clean exhaust and inert aggregate used for Road construction etc. The furnaces also provide steam to drive the turbines for generators putting electricity into the grid in a useful quantity.



Turbines at Ardley



Extractor fans at Ardley

We saw the vast concrete hoppers which are perpetually being added to by a queue of tip-up lorries. Hovering over these are huge crane grabs constantly turning all the rubbish (everything from nappies to baked bean cans and more!!). These grabs then lift all the muck onto conveyor belts feeding the furnaces which we saw through a big glass window. Amazing – it was white hot. We were then led through the plant listening to her through head phones as she explained all the recovery processes. Somewhere were vast, shiny, big superclean tankers collecting “Carbon8” via enormous flexible “tubes” – most impressive.

For those of you who didn't go it is well worth a visit.

AR-B



The Town Centre and Commercial Core

The Castle Quay development is dealt with more fully on page 6 but the impact that the uncertainty has had on the general commercial health of the town centre causes concern. We welcome the initiative that Cherwell DC is showing and wish them well, but remain to be convinced that they can do what an experienced property developer / manager seemingly cannot.

Too many shops in the core of the town lie empty for too long despite the efforts of the Cherwell's Town Centre Co-ordinators. Hopefully the Chamber of Commerce's BID project will contribute to rectifying this as will the Society's efforts regarding the environment of the Town Centre (see more elsewhere).

Regarding the High Street and Old Town, members may be aware of the current tendency for property owners to convert the upper parts of shops, and some vacant premises into flats of varying sizes. We welcome that as it could have the potential to 're-populate' the Centre, but we do worry about such mundane things as servicing, cycle storage and where are the refuse bins to be stored? We would not wish to see a rash on multi-coloured bins, say, along Parsons Street – that would be counter productive so far as the ambience and historic image of the area is concerned – **and trees** – is there a tree expert amongst our membership who might volunteer to keep an eye on TPOs etc for us? We wish to retain the tree cover throughout the town and do NOT wish to see the town denuded through apathy or lack of effort.

PM

Town Centre Partnership Committee

Your Society has been represented at the Town Centre Partnership throughout 2017. We've taken a close interest and, where appropriate, lobbied on three areas;

1. Brick Paving Reinstatement where works have been carried out in the Town Centre
2. The Business Improvement District proposals
3. The re- invigoration of the Charter Market

1. Many people passing through the Town Centre will have noticed the patches of quite unsightly black tarmac replacing the original block paving where areas have been dug up. A particularly large patch is located just outside Debenhams. The Civic Society has pressed both the Town and the County Council (Highways) to review the use of black tarmac and instead apply less unsightly dressings more in keeping with block paving.

Oxfordshire Highways has proposed that, where block paving was removed, this could be replaced by "Flex-Paving". The re-instatement of block paving on such sites could, due to tree root movement become a trip hazard. Oxfordshire Highways suggested that a "Flex paving" could offer a less unsightly solution. This solution might be applied when a new programme of works will be introduced after April 2018. This matter will be raised again in 2018, and will also be discussed at the County Council's "Locality Forum".

2. The Business Improvement District Plan (BID) is a proposal under which local Town Centre businesses plan how to improve the trading environment (which could, to a degree, effect

Banbury's townscape) around their premises.

This BID process is managed by the specialist Consultants - Messrs Heartflood Ltd and has the strong support of the Chamber of Commerce and the Town Council. The area that the BID will cover is the Town Centre including the Market Square and the Old Town. As Town Centre businesses will be asked to contribute (according to Rateable Value) the BID will only go ahead following a ballot held in November; if successful, the BID will begin in April 2018 and will run for five years.

3 The of ownership Banbury Charter Market was handed over to Cherwell District Council from a private contractor on August 1st. A new, online booking system for stall owners had proved a success. One key objective is to re- invigorate the Charter Market so that more stall holders would be attracted and thereby create a larger offering to customers. A survey in mid-October indicated that there were 28 unique traders on site; however Cherwell D C is hopeful that more traders will be attracted.

RR



Pub Watch

2017 has seen satisfactory results of two campaigns to save dead pub buildings. Members may well have seen work underway after many years on the old Marlborough Arms in Gatteridge Street. Proposals for the demolition of the historic corner pub and replacement with a block of 13 flats go back to 2007, immediately prior to the building being included in the Banbury Conservation Area. Following the earlier loss of the old police station on the opposite corner in 2001, concerted opposition from the Society and Cherwell's conservation officer led to both the pub remaining open for several more years, but also a maladministration charge against the Council and accusations of the Society being a 'self-appointed quango'.



After a number of years of disuse, 2017 at last saw a sensible application for that incorporates the key corner section of the old pub in a new apartment development, with a traditional terrace of buildings alongside, in the pub car park on Newlands Road.

2017 also saw the successful completion of the conversion of the old Duke of Wellington PH on Warwick Road. A social-media campaign to have the building converted, rather than replaced with an ugly block of flats, was a particular success, as the building was only locally-listed at the time. Saving



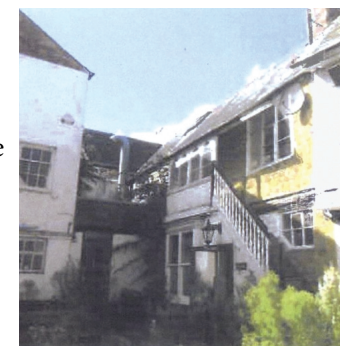
the building was a close-run thing given its lack of statutory protection, but the controversy was a key driver of the latest Banbury Conservation Area Review and proposed inclusion of the best bits of Warwick Road into the Banbury Conservation Area.

In the autumn the Society objected to an application to convert the former Britannia Inn (aka The Blarney Stone) into 6 flats. We echoed Cherwell's conservation officer's comments that the proposal for this locally-listed building was overdevelopment, as it required huge box dormer windows in the roof and the demolition of an adjoining former terraced cottage on Windsor Terrace, this being a highly



important part of this little pub as the last survivor of the tiny terraced worker's houses that once characterised the Cherwell Street area. The application (Artist's impression above right) has been withdrawn pending the resubmission of a revised proposal.

The Society continues to be deeply concerned about the fate of The Unicorn Inn on Market Place (see page 2). The alteration of this iconic historic Banbury pub to 7 flats was consented in January 2017 under officer's delegated powers, against the advice of the Council's conservation officer and this society. Historic England did not object, but required alterations to the scheme (which were not made) and an archaeological recording condition (which was not imposed). Despite the grant of consent, greatly increasing the paper value of the site, the building remains derelict and decaying behind its iconic oak gates, now economically out of reach of anyone who might wish to bring it back to public use.



RK-S



Banbury Conservation Area Review

In June 2016 Cherwell Council sought consultation comments on the revised Banbury Conservation Area Appraisal (<https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/directory-record/1783/banbury--review-in-progress>). At the request of this Society and others, the principle addition proposed to the conservation area will be what remains of the historic village of Neithrop (notably Boxhedge Road, together with the Warwick Road up to the old Duke of Wellington PH). Also proposed for inclusion in the Conservation Area for the first time will be Castle Street and Calthorpe Street, the latter filling what had been a conservation 'void' in the town centre.

A most welcome development within the Review has been the decision by Cherwell (after many years of asking by this Society) to bring in an 'Article 4 Direction' for Banbury. The effect of this is to remove normally 'permitted development rights' (e.g. replacement of windows and loss of historic signage etc) from identified buildings within the conservation area. The Article 4 Direction also requires that consent is required for the demolition of locally-listed buildings outside of the conservation area. Your Vice-Chairman is rather pleased that, having retained the sash windows and exposed historic signage on his home (the old Flowing Well pub, aka The Constitution Tavern Inn), these features will be explicitly protected under the Article 4 Direction.

The Society has expressed its approval of the changes proposed, all of which we had previously asked for. Our one request was that the Conservation Area be

extended further up Warwick Road to complete the inclusion of all of Victorian and Edwardian Banbury within the Banbury, Grimsbury or Oxford Canal Conservation Areas, although we accept that this last push may await the next Review in another 10 years.

RK-S

Bon Voyage Rose Todd



In August 2017 Cherwell Council conservation officer, Dr. Rose Todd, set off from Liverpool, crewing on Qingdao in the Clipper Round the World Race 2017-18, and raising money for UNICEF and Helen and Douglas House in the process. Having given Rose a sabbatical to take part in Legs 7 and 8 of the

2013-14 race, Cherwell has unfortunately been unable to hold open Rose's job for a whole year this time around.

Rose joined Cherwell Council in 2003, at a time when the Society was still routinely fire-fighting on the conservation front, when events such as the loss of the old police station and partial demolition of Neithrop House were too depressingly the norm.

Alongside raising a family of four children, including a very poorly son who died tragically young, Rose was never afraid to put her head firmly above the parapet for the cause of conservation in Cherwell or for Banbury's built heritage.

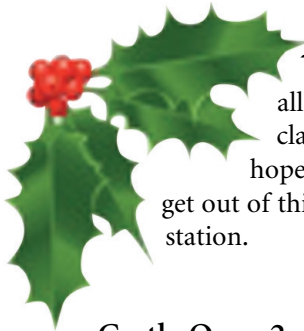
Initially a lone voice in the planning department, Rose found common cause with the Society and leaves Cherwell with a solid Design & Conservation team, backed up by improved policy, a 'local list', enhanced conservation areas and a planning team that is far more understanding of conservation than was the case 14 years ago.

As a parting gesture, Rose was determined to complete the revision and extension of the Banbury Conservation Area, with its attendant Article 4 Direction. She has done us proud. Thank you Rose and Bon Voyage.

Oxford's Unmet Housing Need

Members may recall that the Cherwell Local Plan Inquiry was 'paused' for many months to accommodate a challenge from Oxford City Council, requiring Cherwell to allocate further sites to meet Oxford's un-met housing need. Despite having added several thousand additional homes in Banbury and Bicester to those originally proposed, in September 2016, the Oxfordshire Growth Board agreed an apportionment of a further 4,400 homes to Cherwell District, following public consultation.

In its consultation response, the Society expressed a view of CPRE and others that required housing figures in the Oxford Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) appeared to be unduly inflated, but if they were genuinely needed, the most sustainable location in Cherwell for new homes for Oxford would be in Kidlington / Yarnton area, notwithstanding Oxford's Green Belt. This view appears to have prevailed, with all 4,400 additional homes now proposed for the southernmost parts of the district that had previously had no homes



allocated, on account of Kidlington's claimed 'village' status. It is to be hoped that the least Kidlington may get out of this will be a long-overdue railway station.
RK-S

Castle Quay 2

Surprise event of 2016 was Canal Day. This was to have been suspended for a year to allow development work to get underway on the new hotel, bars and restaurants, seven screen cinema and Lidl supermarket of the Castle Quay 2 development.

Canal Day was followed in November by an announcement that Castle Quay's owners, Aberdeen Standard Investments (ASI), were abandoning all the

work done on Castle Quay 2 by previous owners, Scottish Widows, Cherwell District Council and public consultees.

At a press conference in November 2, Cllr Tony Ilott, CDC lead member for finance, Cllr Lynn Pratt, lead member for estates and the economy and Cherwell District Council leader Barry Wood, outlined the proposed purchase of Castle Quay as part of their wider vision for Banbury town centre's regeneration.

Cllr Ilott stated "If we were to purchase CQ we would be able to provide much needed investment...(and) work with existing retailers to ensure the old town and precinct work together to inject new life into the centre and increase footfall." Watch this space.
RK-S



Grand Theatre

This year plans to revive the old Grand Theatre (more recently Chicago Rock Café or Wonder Lounge) as a community performance venue took two major knocks. A revised planning application for 12 flats and two new retail units behind a retained façade were approved in the summer, notwithstanding an apparently successful application for an Asset of Community Value (ACV) designation. In the autumn it became clear that the ACV designation was likely to be revoked, following an appeal by the owner. The

Friends of the Grand Theatre decided that it would be politic to withdraw its ACV application before it was revoked, in order to maintain dialogue with the building's owner. The Friends have been considering alternative buildings for community performance use. The property remains disused, with no redevelopment yet imminent.
RK-S

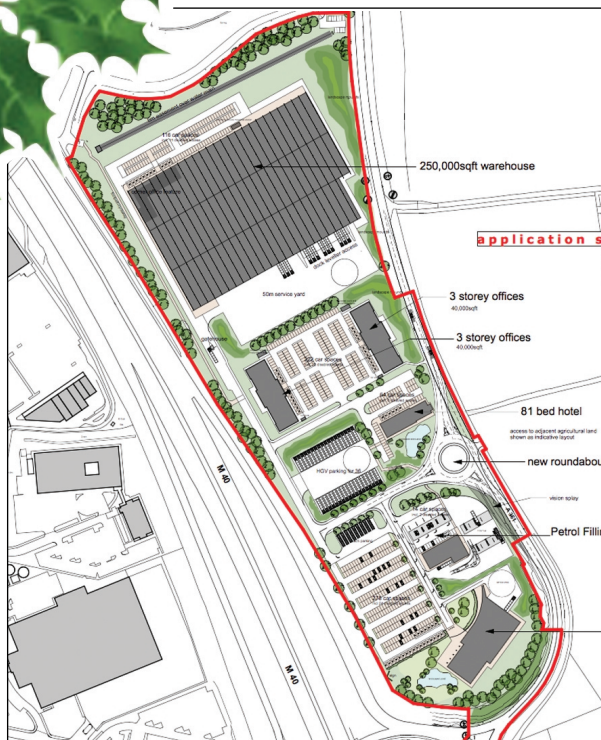
Banbury 15 Eurogarages Application

The Banbury 15 site to the east of the M40 between it, Junction 11, and the A361 Daventry Road was designated in the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-31 as a mixed employment site, Office, General Industrial, and Distribution to support 'the economic strengths of Banbury in manufacturing, high performance engineering and logistics'. Put simply and in our words:

"a high profile economic attractor... which also achieves a successful transition between town and country"

The land has been acquired by Eurogarages Ltd who seek planning permission for a 250 000 sq ft warehouse, an 80 bed hotel, and a motorway service area and filling station. Quite how these contribute to 'Banbury's economic strengths', has mystified many commenters, including the BCS.

The initial request for comments produced not one voice in favour but 70 against, including Angela Leadsome MP, and was completed by the end of August, after an extension because of the late arrival of a very lengthy traffic forecast. There was then total silence until just last week, when another massive, 300-odd page, traffic forecast, claiming to answer many previous objections on the grounds of increased traffic (one must surely assume that a



Current Proposal (November 2017)

Motorway Service Area will generate considerable traffic to and from the site) appeared out of the blue and onto the Cherwell Council site. It will take us some time to assess this monster submission, but we will try to do so fairly. Suffice it to say that the new proposal actually increases considerably, nearly doubling, the car, HGV and coach parking available, hardly likely to reassure us over worries of Junction 11 gridlock. You can see all the documents and comments on the Cherwell District Planning site, ref 17/01044/F. The new comment period expires 21st December.

AF

Movement (or should it be congestion?) in Banbury

During the year the Society has responded to various consultations by Oxfordshire County and Cherwell District Councils and we constantly urge them to bring forward schemes to alleviate the dreadful traffic situation that periodically occurs in the town. This is quite often caused by events beyond local control e.g. mishaps on the M 40, but with the impact of HS 2 imminent and the inexorable growth in 'cross-town' traffic, there is an underlying factor which needs to be grasped - and that is the very limited number of routes across the river valley on an east- west axis. This is exacerbated by the limited capacity of the roundabout over the motorway at Junction 11. The Society has been advocating solutions for this but thus far nothing concrete (excuse the pun) has come out of Oxfordshire to convince us that they are treating the matter seriously.

Also the recent re-arrangement of bus services is being watched closely. The difficulty of financial support for such services is obvious, but areas of the town are now without easy access to bus services and that has disadvantaged sections of the population. This situation is being monitored and ideas, such as bus shelters at exposed locations are being sought to mitigate the impact.

PM

End piece and thanks

In conclusion colleagues on the Executive Committee are thanked for their hard work, expertise and commitment and the help, support and advice received from Nick Poole, Laurence Carey and Michael Passmore who have left the Committee during the year for various reasons - workload, health and re-location. Their contribution to our work has been very much appreciated.

Let us look forward to a successful 2018 -- a refurbishment study for the railway station is looming, and hopefully some progress with Canalside !!

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR MEMBERS

Peter Monk (Chairman).

For more information please write to:
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