



Pickering & District Civic Society

Reg. Charity 502630

Newsletter

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Recent Developments

The acquisition of the old Golden Living site on Eastgate by McCarthy and Stone, which is a property development company based in Bournemouth, brought overtures to the society from their representatives. They wanted to have our blessing to their revised plans for the site. This reduced the density slightly overall. We took the view that unless what they proposed was so radically different from the existing plans, won on appeal, that it would be a waste of time and effort to get too involved. In the end the revised plans were passed and they will now build the three-storey flats complex for retired people.

The second big development is that by Methodist Homes on Malton Road. We took a big interest in this and raised multiple objections. Our chairman attended the planning meetings and raised those objections in person. A whole host of others objected as well but the plans were recently passed. For which see more detailed comments below.
SH

Mickle Hill Retirement Complex- Methodist Homes

P&DCS formally opposed the 168 unit MHA development on Malton Rd. Although we would certainly be in favour of a reasonably sized 'extra care unit' for the town, this one was deemed to be gross over development that would have a significant landscape and traffic impact and encourage in-migration of elderly people into a town with an already disproportionate level of older residents.

I was asked by a number of people to speak on behalf of the 'opposition' at the planning committee meeting. With 3 mins allowed, it's astounding how much time it takes to prepare a speech honed to precisely that length. It's vital that the key issues are stressed and only those based strictly on planning criteria. As the first meeting only agreed to a site visit, a second 3 min speech was prepared for the following month. Would you believe that around 15 hours were spent preparing 6 mins of speech! After due deliberation of the merits of this development in all quarters, Pickering's mayor, district and county councillors all spoke in opposition, although about 20 letters of support had been sent by people keen for a facility like this to be built. Ironically, the high cost of living there (including purchase, maintenance and care costs) will be beyond the means of the majority of townfolk.

It came as no great surprise that the plans were

passed, with only John Clark and Tommy Woodward voting against, plus one abstention. This was despite the development being contrary to the new LPS. At the same meeting, a 210 unit housing estate and large care home for Kirkbymoorside was passed, which contravened the LPS in every aspect. My interpretation is that strategic planning for sustainable development in Ryedale is only to be paid lip service. Local opinion even less so, whether well informed and rational, or merely NIMBY. Any reasonably large scheme backed by a large developer (i.e. with financial clout) will be approved by the planners and passed by the committee, as they are now too scared of the cost of an appeal inquiry. Not an unreasonable approach, since the planning inspectorate appear to be anything but independent from government influence. It rather begs the question why we pay good money for a toothless planning process and rubber stamping exercise. The system reminds me of a small time school bully hanging around with and kowtowing to all the big boys, but taking delight in terrifying little infants. Of course, it doesn't mean certain trouble makers won't keep making trouble, as one day things may change. In the meantime, when you hear people grumbling about the ribbon development along the Malton Rd, suggest they join the civic society. **MP**

Confidence in the Planning System

Over the years my confidence in the planning system has gradually declined and possibly turned me into a somewhat embittered cynic. Recent government relaxations in the planning rules have added to my sense of inevitable gloom over what those who develop buildings will manage to foist on the rest of us next. Even before the recent changes it was odds on that a refused application would be passed on appeal and we have seen some nonsensical decisions from planning inspectors. Ryedale has also suffered in recent years because the replacement of the existing Local Plan was long overdue with the result that developers were able to push schemes forward that would probably have not been allowed under a current plan. The Methodist Homes development that has just been given consent will see 168 units built on Malton Road on greenfield land is typical of this situation. Under the old lapsed local plan the policy was not to build such developments on the approaches to Pickering because of the high visual impact on the environment. This does not seem to have figured in the considerations any more. Moreover this precedent has now opened the floodgates and there will be

overwhelming pressure to develop the site on the opposite side of Malton Road. That site, currently agricultural land, was put into the new plan for consideration as housing development. Now it is very likely that soon we will see another application to build a substantial number of houses on that site. Cumulatively this will have pushed the boundary of Pickering's built environment out to the entrance of Haygate Lane on the busiest road in Pickering. There are also other side effects of these developments such as the pressure on local services. In the case of Methodist Homes it will inevitably be increased pressure on the medical service with more older people in the town - not a factor it seems taken into consideration at all despite the doctors raising concerns regarding resources. The developers, no doubt, think that local people will flock in droves to move into their development, a key point in their argument was that Pickering already has an above average over 65 population. Yet local experience shows that this is unlikely to happen and uptake is likely to come from people migrating into Pickering. Even then I believe that it will be a long time before they can fill the development, especially as another one for older people of 42 flats is to be built on Eastgate.

What transpired at the planning meeting was that Ryedale has actually been assessed as needing 160 such old people places in the current planning phase to be spread over the whole district. Pickering is now going to get 210 such units! Despite this the planning officers recommended the committee approve the application. NYCC Highways were equally happy for the entrance to be directly onto Malton Road despite the fact it could have been more sensibly and safely made into Crossgate Lane. Common sense seems to fly out of the window and our planners hardly seem able to influence the developers at all to modify their plans for a better result. It should also be said that there was considerable vocal local opposition, including the Town Council, to this development but it seems that the much-vaunted localism so trumpeted by the government counts for nought.

Part way through the planning application I was contacted by one of the objectors and had the dismal task of bringing her down to earth on this one, pointing out all the valid objections etc but advising that it would likely be passed. With reflection I must have sounded rather fatalistic about the whole thing but that is exactly what many years of detailed involvement with planning in Pickering does to you. In fact the very description planning is in itself a misnomer as the Planning Dept. doesn't do any, as far as I can see, apart from the Local Plan and the inability to get that done on time has not produced good results for Pickering.

Methodist Homes success will also have another side effect and that is because it pushes a finger of development out into the open countryside the land to the east side will now surely be open for development up to the new town boundary. Just watch developments over the next twenty years and you will see what I mean.

This is not just happening in Pickering because at the same meeting plans were approved for 200 houses on a greenfield site in Kirkby Moorside and 70 more oldie units as well. All these applications have been approved before the new Local Plan comes into effect and will be ignored

and not considered in that plan as if they never existed. Such is the state of our planning system- no wonder I'm getting more cynical with every new application I see. **SH**

Local Planning Strategy (LPS)

After about 8 years of trying, Ryedale DC planners have finally implemented a new LPS. It is the tome which should inform, guide and maybe even dictate what gets built over the next 15 years and where. P&DCS pointed out that the plan was seriously flawed by using inaccurate estimated data for population growth to justify the number of new houses needed. Accurate figures from the 2011 census were conveniently ignored. The figures used were justified in an indecipherable document that not one of the committee was able to translate (not in polite company anyway). Flaws apart, it is marginally better to have a legally accepted strategic plan than yet more years of uncertainty and lack of formal guidance. The next part of the whole ghastly process is to assess which parts of our green and pleasant land are deemed suitable to be destroyed by large developers. **MP**

Proposed New Planning Guidance

Not content with changing all the planning regulations the government now has in draft proposals to substantially modify the planning guidance that governs the interpretation of those regulations. Consultation documents are now being published and can be seen at- <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk> This is the Beta version and feedback can be submitted until 9 October. **SH**

Fracking has generated a lot of debate and interest recently and Pickering is one of the areas designated for exploration. Below Judy Dixon has gathered some of the recent press comments on the history of fracking and what is now happening in the UK.

The history of fracking...

"In the twentieth century, oil and gas explorers commonly had to drill through layers of shale to reach deeper oil and gas reservoirs. As they penetrated these layers, gas sometimes leaked out of the rock into the well bore at low rates – but the yield was too low to generate a financial return. So the gas was a nuisance rather than a resource. This changed through the 1990`s, when in order to make the gas flow at rates that would turn a profit. George Mitchell and Mitchell Energy decided to `stimulate` their wells in Texas. Well –stimulation was not a new concept. In the 1940`s and 1950`s, nitroglycerine had been used down old oil wells to crack rocks and get the wells to flow again. However, by the time Mitchells was using the approach, high-pressure gels and eventually water with chemicals additives were used in a process that become known as hydraulic fracturing or `fracking` In the beginning Mitchell barely made money until it was realised that carrying out multiple fracking along operations along horizontal boreholes at sufficient rates could make profits". Prof Richard Davies. Dean of Knowledge Exchange and Impact. Durham University. Summer 2013

Effects of fracking on the environment and the economy

Letters by civic engineers to the "The New Civic Engineer" (Aug.2013) are confident of safety with best practice and robust regulations . These were not so in an incident in Indonesia which displaced 40,000 people. This was the initial trigger which caused Prof Davies to start researching . Concerns about fracking impact on water contamination, triggering of earthquakes and the burning of the methane gas have produced a moratoria in European countries although in USA hundreds of wells have been fracked and even may lead to USA exporting gas again. Following the two minor earthquakes in Lancashire – Durham university has put together a team of British and Norwegians to investigate. The first paper "Hydraulic fractures: how far can they go" published in the spring of 2012 was picked up by the government and quoted by the previous Energy Minister John Hayes to lift the ban around fracking although around the country groups have used the same paper to oppose fracking! Work so far has shown that seismic movement is not the major worry but that the more important issue is that the fluids used may contaminate water supplies or the trucking of hundreds of loads of the fracking fluids are a greater risk to the environment. Prof. Davies is determined that the outcome (which ever way it falls) of the Durham led research cannot be influenced by the industry.

*Much it seems will depend on the local geological structures –John Vidal after much research and reporting in the Guardian 20.08.13 says as a large amount of water is needed in the process , water companies and the environmental agency must be wary.(Parts of Texas have a water shortage from both shortage of rain and use of water for this industry. The chalklands of SE England have cause to be cautious) On economics Vidal also says that whilst fracking has produced cheaper bills in the US, it is impossible to predict what will happen in Europe as our gas prices depend on the global market. More jobs have been predicted but actually once the wells are in place it will only need a minimum staff to check the automated process. Finally John Vidal says that the resources of the industry and establishment have greater PR resources to outdo those of the protesters but they could well hurt the government politically. **J Dixon** (to read the original articles contact 473488)*

Pickering Flood Protection Scheme

Description of Pickering Beck: *'renning thorough the toun and standith on a great slaty hille and symtyme ragith, but it suagith shortely again....'* (sometimes rages, but assuages shortly). The funny spelling is the hint. It's a quote from a renowned 16th century traveller, John Leland around 1508, but around 2013 still holds true.

Work on the Newbridge bund had been expected to start in late August. However, with budgets fixed and very tight, it is dependent on a free supply of clay being dug out of another flood scheme in Northallerton. The Nov 2012 floods there have meant some recalculation and delay, which is having a knock on effect for us, so clay movement is now expected to begin in Spring 2014. Very frustrating as ground conditions are currently ideal.

Access agreements with landowners have been finalised with just some legal agreements with NYMR to be thrashed out. Preparatory work is expected to begin this autumn to improve

Blansby Park Lane for lorry access and to beef up the crossing at Low Hunters Bridge (LHB). Even with good ground and weather conditions, construction will continue well into 2014.

There will be a clay bund across Newtondale just below LHB, tied into both valley sides, plus a lateral bund alongside the railway to protect the trackbed from flood water. The control structure to limit the flow of Pickering Beck will be a concrete culvert, mostly underground and not visible. The spillway on the surface will be an interlocking concrete mesh, covered with vegetation (similar to the stuff used to form overflow car parking in many places). This will stop any scouring in the event of the bund overtopping, which of course it eventually will, whenever we get the next major flood like 2007 or worse.

Last time progress stopped, I had distinct worries, which proved to be well founded. This time, I'm confident that it's just an unavoidable delay, as virtually all plans, funding and permissions are firmly in place. You would be amazed at the level of interest **worldwide** in Pickering's Slowing the Flow project. I regularly hear from flood experts and academics that many others are keeping a very close watch on progress. Add to that the number of politicians and senior civil servants that have nailed their colours to our mast and let's just say that the thought of failure at this stage doesn't bear thinking about. **MP**

Civic Society Visits – I have been asked previously to arrange a trip to Renishaw Hall the home of the Sitwell family near Sheffield. There are beautiful gardens and in the house are pictures by John Piper, Rex Whistler and I believe photographs by Cecil Beaton. And much about the trio Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell who spent their childhood at Woodend in Scarborough. This would be next summer – let me know if this is of interest to you **JD**

Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Civic Societies.

This body meets quarterly in a different place and is a great way to explore new places with the people who are passionate about their area. The usual pattern is a visit during the morning, find a place for lunch or take a picnic then an afternoon session 1 – 4pm to hear a talk and have a discussion about the issue of the time. I attended the last meeting in Scarborough and heard about two of their projects – restoring in conjunction with borough council - the Dean Road Cemetery and the seating shelters in the Gardens beyond the Spa.- neither place I have visited! I also met some enthusiastic members from Hull who are regulars at these events. Our chairman from Wakefield is a bundle of ideas and he with others under the Civic Society aegis have started a Sunday weekly craft market in a quiet street in the centre of the town. If this is a success, it will become a separate organisation from Wakefield Civic Society next year. Each society is so individual and is totally different and inspirational.

The next quarterly meeting is at Fountains Abbey hosted by Ripon Civic Society 12 October – would you be interested in going? Be in touch. **JD**

Transport Cuts

North Yorkshire County Council are consulting on their proposals to cut their local bus funding by 25%. The services under threat are costing £1.3 million, and they are trying to save £1.1 million, so it looks as if most will go.

The three remaining local village services are being halved to one day a week, and the town services are to become "Demand Responsive", meaning that they will only run if they are pre-booked. Yet how it can be cheaper to pay for a bus, driver, *and* someone sitting by a telephone than for just a bus and a driver escapes me..... let alone how an elderly person is supposed to know how long their appointment at, say, the doctors', is going to take, so that they can pre-book the bus trip home. One almost suspects that those consulting never use buses.

This comes in the same year that Moorsbus services are killed off by the North York Moors National Parks Authority, leaving no Sunday or Bank Holiday buses running west of the town, and less than three years after NYCC removed nearly all the rest of the Sunday services, and stopped funding all our evening ones.

I wonder if those who talk glibly of the rural hardship caused by high petrol prices can imagine what it will be like to be an elderly person without a car, living at Newton on Rawcliffe, Cropton or Marton after these buses disappear?

You can object to NYCC's proposals at www.northyorks.gov.uk or 0845 8 72 73 74, and discuss a possible way forward for the Moorsbus with the Friends of Moorsbus on friendsofmoorsbus@outlook.com or with me on 01751 477216 or with Helen Gundry on 01751 432447. **EB**

Forthcoming Events

Sunday 22 September 2pm Memorial Hall

Seeing and Believing the Wall Paintings in Pickering Parish Church. Speaker Dr. Kate Giles Dept. of Archaeology University of York. Dr Giles has done extensive research on the history and meaning of the medieval wall paintings that has revealed much new information. This is certain to be an interesting and exciting account of these remarkable paintings.

Fracking

Local opposition to Fracking has organised a film screening and discussion at the Quaker Meeting House on the 24 September at 6.30pm. They point out that a company called Viking have permits to explore for shale gas in the general region around and in Pickering.

YHACS

Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Civic Societies. Quarterly meeting at Fountains Abbey October 12th in association with Ripon Civic Society. For details contact

Judy 473488

Give and Take Day

Lions and Civic Society

Memorial Hall 2 November 9-12

Yorkshire Film Archive

12 March Methodist Church

Requests please for suitable subjects, places and themes for films to **Judy 473488**.

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letters, notes or articles for
the next newsletter is 20th
December**

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