

Chairman's Report—December 2008

You may have seen recent reports about the new Chinese restaurant that has just opened in the Royal Baths - Malcolm Neesam's article in the *Harrogate Advertiser* was typically thoughtful and comprehensive.

This is a development that concerned us greatly when the initial application first came before the Planning Department almost two years ago when it proposed obscuring the fine interior of the Grand Hall behind a mass of inappropriate *chinoiserie*. However, the final end-result is quite superb - largely thanks to the persistence of the Council's planning officers and the cooperation of the leaseholder. The interior of the restaurant now provides a stunning, historical backdrop which is tailor-made for a top quality dining experience. This is the sort of tasteful development that Harrogate needs if it is to remain at the forefront of the business and cultural tourism market, and we wish the new owner - Mr Hak Ng - every success. This is a venture that deserves to do well, so do go along, enjoy the amazing ambience and sample the first-class Chinese cuisine.

Enclosed are questionnaires on the upcoming Conservation Area Appraisal and the Valley Gardens Play Area. The Committee will, of course, make its response on behalf of the Society, but if you would like to submit your individual views, the Council would be delighted to receive as much input from the public as possible.

The Committee is reviving the Design Award scheme that was run in the town until about five years ago. Both Ripon and Knaresborough Civic Societies have such schemes already in existence. We have spoken to the Council who are very much in favour and have pledged their full support.



Committee members Stuart Holland, Susan Amaku and Mike Burke are developing the scheme which will have four categories - new buildings; altered buildings; conserved buildings and landscaping schemes. A small grant towards administering the scheme has also been given by the Department of Community Service. Further grants are being sought as well as support from local businesses who would like to be associated with this important recognition of quality in design.

The entry period will run from Easter with judging taking place over the summer months culminating in a prestigious awards evening for all members in October 2009.

A couple of events are publicised on the back page.

The YHACS AGM is again being held in Harrogate and all members are very welcome to attend what is invariably an interesting meeting.

Do come along to the Royal Hall for the New Year Concert on Friday 2nd January. This glittering event will feature the Manchester Camerata, the world-renowned cellist Natalie Klein and a cast of Viennese waltzers. 2009 is going to be a difficult year so why not start it off with a little *gaieté de coeur*?

Howard Hughes

PLANNING MATTER



It is not long since the last Newsletter, hence a small number of planning applications studied - 54. From these we responded to 22.



Signs, Shopfronts and Advertisements

To begin with, the ongoing case of the treatment of the shopfront retrospectively refused at *9 Royal Parade*. This property features elsewhere in the Newsletter in my report of our meeting with Tim Richards (Head of Planning Services). The planning enforcement department has been working on the case. An application has now come forward for the ATM but not including the internally illuminated advertisement above, which I believe has now been removed. The application also promises removal of the laminate panel and its replacement with clear glazing. This is all to the good, but I am sceptical about the shopfront looking pretty, even so. We have never objected in principle to the shop having an ATM.

We were consulted on another application at *4 Royal Parade (St Julien)*. This was to remove the wonderful, very rare and

complete chemists shop fittings, dating from 1913. Have you seen them? If not, do go and look. The premises have recently been occupied by an antiques dealer and the applicant is now trying to re-let the shop and claims to be having difficulty with the existing shop fittings in place. The interior is listed and we believe it should be protected and left as originally fitted. The applicant says that if allowed to remove it, they would carefully restore it and keep it stored on the premises so that it was capable of being put back one day. Do you believe that it would ever be re-fitted? We say, once removed, always hidden in a store room in pieces! This is not what a listed building is about.

Going back to ATM's for a moment, we note that the application at *Muckles on West Park* was withdrawn. Curiously, we saw another application for an ATM there in September that was also withdrawn - what is going on?

We have also seen a further application for a totem style sign at *Oak Beck Park*. The proposed sign is much smaller at 3.5m tall, against the refused one that was almost 7m tall. The recently proposed sign is also a lot narrower.

Two unacceptable shopfronts at *18-20 Parliament Street* and *46-48 Parliament Street* have both been refused permission. They had one thing in common that the frontages proposed had folding panels that, when opened, would allow noise to spill out into the street. Both applications were refused with similar wording regarding this aspect - *'The shopfront, due to its folding design, would detract from the character and appearance of both the building and*

PLANNING MATTER

(continued)



the Harrogate conservation area, and would also potentially increase noise transmission from the premises to the detriment of existing and future occupants of nearby residential units'.

Unacceptable advertisements were also proposed for *Nos.18-20 Parliament Street* (on the Oxford Street corner). Three fascia signs were approved, but I am pleased to report that three large banner signs, 3m tall and mounted at high level, were refused, as was a set of externally illuminated letters to the corner of the building.

A disappointing application for signs was lodged for the *Co-op Store on Otley Road*. One aspect that we didn't like was a garage-style totem sign. A similar sign was refused in 2005. You may have seen that an attractive feature of the building is the square stone panel with 'Co-op' carved into it. The proposal was to completely cover this with what was described in the application as a 'tray panel' sign. I could not remember having heard or seen this expression before. The Council refused the totem sign because it would be overbearing and add to the clutter within the street scene and cause distraction to motorists. The tray panel sign was also refused because it would cover the existing carved stone detail which makes a positive contribution to the building. Other less obtrusive signs were approved. There is a rather unattractive shopfront at the *Victoria Gardens Shopping Centre* -namely *Sports Direct*, which faces Market Place. The proposal was for garish internally illuminated fascia signs which would only compound the poor appearance of the shop. The signs have been refused.

We may not have a definite proposal for a large Tesco, but we are to have a small one

in town at *2-3 Nidderdale House*, which is next to MacDonalds. We were not content with the signs proposed. The projecting sign was too large and the internal illumination for the fascia was unsuitable. The case officer required modifications and the projecting sign was reduced in size and the fascia sign halo illuminated instead.



Larger Housing Sites

I have no new proposals to bring to your attention under this heading but will bring you up to date in some previously reported applications. *The Schlatter Building on Station Parade* proposal, which includes 14 apartments and 4 office units, has gone to appeal by way of an exchange of written statements. We have responded. You may have seen in the Harrogate Advertiser that Ann Smith from Pannal has battled away to have the farm buildings at *Spacey Houses Farm* listed. Against the odds, she has succeeded - a fine achievement. This means of course that the Council will now have to think again about the approved planning application for fourteen houses that would have seen the buildings on the site demolished, except for the farmhouse and cottage. An almost completely new scheme will have to be devised.

The block between the Ginnel and Parliament Terrace - *17-23 Parliament Street* that is to include 13 apartments (the revised scheme) was approved. Even so, yet another proposal is on the cards, but at the time of writing we have not looked at it. The application is by the same applicant -

Montpellier Lofts. The revised application for demolition and rebuilding at *2 Dragon Road* has been refused. I reported that the new building would have contained six apartments, but having looked more closely at the application, we found that it was only for 'phase 1'. We were unhappy about the lack of detail regarding phase 2 but the Council had to go ahead and determine it as presented. We did not regard the loss of the house at No.2 as too serious as it is not a match for the bulk of the Dragon Estate, although we should not fall into the trap of automatically undervaluing anything that is different! We did however defend the small workshop buildings at the rear, as they contribute positively to the conservation area because of their visual appearance and the mixed use element of the Dragon Estate. We also had various design criticisms of the proposed new building. The Council Planning Committee refused the development because of loss of employment land, the bulk and design of the building, which would be harmful to the conservation area, and harm to residential amenity. They did not however defend the rear workshops (in use for car repairs) against demolition for their own sake - only that a suitable re-development proposal was not on the table.

The greenfield site on *Penny Pot Lane*, that gained (deservedly) a unanimous refusal for 200 dwellings, is unfortunately still in the planning news. An appeal has been lodged that will be heard at a full public inquiry. The refusal was backed by so many powerful reasons that I cannot understand why the developer thinks it is worth spending a large sum of money on the appeal. Unfortunately our Council will also need to spend a lot of our council tax to defend it. The Council is quite clear that Penny Pot Lane is not ripe for development at this time or for some years to come. Greenfield land in Harrogate is not needed and development of the site will be put back for as long as existing permissions and brownfield land holds out.



Smaller Housing Sites

Just one item under this heading to bring up to date. The application for two flats at *Back Gladstone Street* in the old telephone exchange has been turned down at appeal. As you know, I have been trying to promote the idea that many brownfield windfall housing sites will come forward that will save the Council from using too many allocated sites, especially greenfield ones. Some detail was included in the September Newsletter. Since then we have seen several sites for Harrogate that we have looked at carefully. The ones that I note below have, in some cases, been refused or are likely to be refused. Don't let that shake your faith in windfalls, because we usually look at those that are less acceptable, and tend not to look at those outside of Harrogate. Several attempts to find an acceptable proposal for an infill house at the side of *36 Wheatlands Road East* have been made. The latest went to committee on 21st October after the committee had decided to defer it from the meeting of 7th October, to enable further consideration of the revised plans and for members to undertake a site visit. Although the case officer had just about felt able to recommend approval, the committee refused the application.

An application at *12 Duchy Road* for a coach house type of building to the rear, consisting of four garages with a flat above has been withdrawn. We did not feel that the application was particularly detrimental to the conservation area, except for cedar cladding, which seems rather fashionable at present.

The Oval contains housing from a variety of periods. There are several brick built houses from the 1960's and it was proposed to demolish one of these - Number 40, and replace it with a block of six flats. We did not have strong feelings against the design of the replacement building and it would have been difficult to defend the existing house against demolition on conservation area grounds. The neighbours, however, were unhappy about the imposition of a much larger stone building in this row of brick houses. The application was in fact refused because of its bulk, massing and intensity of use and harm to residential amenity, due to vehicle movement in close proximity to rear gardens etc. Unfortunately for nearby residents, who would wish to retain Number 40, if a more acceptable proposal comes forward for a new building, I cannot see the officers or members of the planning committee refusing consent on the grounds of the existing property making a positive contribution to the conservation area.

We have seen an application for the basement at *52 Cold Bath Road*. It is to enlarge one flat and to create another, to which we have no objection. It was our opinion, though, that rendering was not an acceptable finish, because the basement is not deep and would be readily seen. Stone to match the upper parts of the building is needed. Not far away, at *10 St.Mary's Walk*, we were pleased to see improvements proposed in conjunction with converting the property from a house in multiple occupation to eight flats. Restoration of some original external features and the creation of eight parking spaces (in an area of parking congestion) is commendable.

I expect that many of you know the *Alms-houses on Belford Road* called *Rogers Square*. It is a very attractive development with gardens at the rear and is a listed building. Apart from a pair of semi-detached bungalows at the rear, I suspect the Alms-houses are basically as originally conceived. A most unwelcome application has appeared which

involves the demolition of the bungalows and building on almost all of the rear garden, which is of course an important and attractive amenity for existing residents. It is also, including the stone boundary walls, important to the design and setting of the listed building. To allow the new buildings, consisting of a backwards 'L' shape building containing six apartments and a detached house, would be disastrous for the setting of the listed building and for the amenity of residents. The detached house and part of the apartment block would be only 2m from the Alms-houses. A great deal of the original boundary wall would also be lost along with four parking spaces. Parking and access is a problem in the area of Belford Road, Belford Place and Albert Terrace already. The proposal, apart from introducing five additional dwellings (net) and taking away the parking, would deny vehicular access to the rear of the Alms-houses for building work, future maintenance and deliveries, thus causing an impossible situation for all users of the narrow roads of Belford Place and Albert Terrace etc.. This application has to be refused!

Other Applications

The application for offices at the rear of the *Old Swan hotel* that was to consist of six detached units having demolished the old garages and gardeners cottage etc. was, as I noted in the September Newsletter, withdrawn because of lack of officer support. There is now a replacement proposal for office development, but I cannot describe it to you because at the time of writing we have not studied it.

A property known as '*The Cottage*' to the rear of *8 Leeds Road*, was at one time a stable but was converted to a dwelling. An application came forward to demolish this brick building that doesn't nowadays show much evidence of its original use. Although it seems in need of a lot of renovation, it is against conservation area policy to demolish unless there is evidence of lack of viability.

Demolition could be allowed if there was an acceptable replacement proposal with planning consent and a contract for the building had been signed. It is very unusual for a demolition application to be approved in any other circumstances, so refusal was the Council's obvious decision.

I began this section with *Swan Road* and shall end there also, at *Number 17*. An application for various works came forward including a replacement garage at the rear and at the front, railings, french doors, a

sunken patio and steps down. The aspect that we found unacceptable was the digging out of most of the front garden for the patio and steps down from near the footway. The application was approved, but this is not as bad as it sounds, as one of the conditions says that the planning permission excludes works forwards of the existing dwelling house, including the excavation of the area and the creation of a 'seat area' and stone steps shown on the plans.

Henry Pankhurst

A MEETING WITH TIM RICHARDS - HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES AT HBC

From time to time a few of us meet at Tim's office at Knapping Mount. Our recent meeting was on 11th September 2008. When we have a number of topics to discuss, I contact Knapping Mount with an agenda. The agenda is always ours with no input from Tim. I have never known him suggest that he didn't wish to discuss one of our items! If there are particular officers that can help with a topic, he will try to bring them in for that item. We had seven items on our agenda -

Windfall housing

The officers are clear that, according to Government Advice, windfall housing developments can usually only be taken into account in the housing supply figures as and when they are built, even though they expect windfall sites to come forward. Availability of land would have to be exceptionally tight for an allowance for the future to be made, along with site allocations, and this is not the case in the Harrogate District.

Appeal Decision on Car Parking at the Old Spacey Houses Site

The planning officers are asking for a Judicial Review because the Inspector's comments substantially weakened Local Plan Policy CFX, which supports the retention of land and buildings in community use. Obviously the officers were as disturbed (as we were) at the implications for this policy, which is, in fact, one that we suggested. It was incorporated into the Local Plan some years ago having been adopted after the Selective Alterations Inquiry.

Last Minute Alterations to Plans Shortly Before a Planning Committee

We occasionally have concerns that the public may not have time to respond to amendments to applications. If the amendments are very minor, we would not wish to hold up a decision, but a fairly recent case - The Schlatter Building on Station Parade - involved many changes to the drawings at the last minute. There is (perhaps understandably) no clear cut way in which the decision to re-consult, re-advertise or require a new application is made. It is

really up to the case officer initially. If revisions are very minor, he/she will have no strong reason to discuss it further, especially if the changes are for the better. If the changes are of more importance, officers would consult with colleagues and superiors to a lesser or greater degree depending on the scale and nature of the revisions. It will remain a somewhat 'grey area' as every case will be different.

Follow up by the Council on Retrospective Applications that are Refused

A case that we brought to the attention of the officers was the treatment of the shopfront at 9 Royal Parade (McColls). I think it is fair to say that the planners realised that action should and could be taken sooner in such cases, initiated by the case officer. We believe that in future, action will follow such refusals more effectively, but it is evident that the planning enforcement section is always under pressure. The planners are hoping to keep a register of retrospective refusals in order to deal with them more quickly and efficiently.

Availability of Plans both Electronic and on Paper

The Planning Enquiries Department no longer have separate paper copies of applications available for public viewing. They tell us that only about 10% of the files were ever inspected by the public and a lot of time and money was expended duplicating the plans and information. Therefore the usual way is now to search the Council website for application information. It is still possible to see the officers working files on request but it is wise to give notice because obviously a file may be being worked on or out of the office. We are still able to ask for a batch of working files when we visit Knapping Mount, but the planning department is looking to the future when perhaps we may have to view on a large screen from which scale measurements can be taken. It may be a case of self-service enquiries one day. The electronic route is being pursued all the time!

Stray Cycle Routes

We were shown possible routes on a map which the public will be consulted upon. The routes were mostly on existing footpaths with no major widening. We were told that some paths were actually wider than they seemed because they had become partly grassed over and could be cleared to reveal their real width. The only actual new route shown (with compensating grassing over of tarmac) was between Skipton Road and Park Parade. The paths are proposed to be shared between pedestrians and cyclists, but we are told it is not necessary for them to be 3m wide, as we had thought, and only minor widening is likely. No division or markings would be introduced nor any additional lighting.

The Committee has responded to the Council's consultation by writing that we are unable to support the proposal to authorise cycling on the Stray. Our letter is included separately.

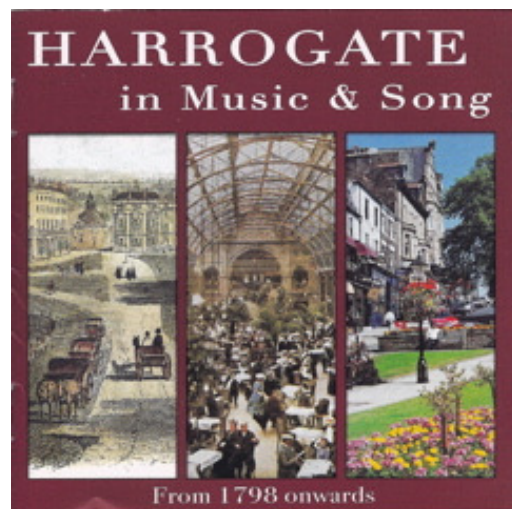
An Awards Scheme for Good Development and Design

The planning department is happy and keen to work with the Civic Society to implement an Awards Scheme (Ripon Civic Society has a very well established, well organised scheme with many different categories). Since our meeting with Tim Richards on 11th September 2008 a sub-committee from our society has had a meeting with Tim and arrangements are progressing well. Further details are included elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Henry Pankhurst

ROYAL HALL - HISTORIC CDS

Mike Hine who is a member of the Civic Society and is also on the board of the Royal Hall Restoration Trust has produced 2 CDs to raise funds for the restoration of the Royal Hall as the Trust is continuing to make further improvements to this magnificent building. His first CD, 'Royal Hall Memories - Vintage Dance Bands' features recordings by eleven vintage dance bands who all appeared at the Royal Hall in the 1930's, 40's and 50's. Each of the bands perform two numbers and they include some amusing novelty items. The cover design is based on the typography and colour schemes used on the band on the stage. The bands include Jack Hylton, Joe Loss, Billy Cotton, Henry Hall, Jack Payne etc. Through sales of this CD so far Mike has bought five new seats for the Royal Hall.



The second CD is titled 'Harrogate in Music & Song' and contains 21 tracks with the word Harrogate in the title. Most people do not know of any music or songs written about Harrogate. Over the last twenty years or so Mike has either collected or noted the different pieces of music he came across and then when he retired he set about researching all these numbers and finding original recordings or arranging to record them with appropriate performers. The result is a unique collection of different styles of music ranging from folk, classical, dance, brass band, barber-shop, cabaret to dialect and humorous numbers. The earliest dating from 1798 and leading up to the latest piece in 2000. Mike is indebted to the many performers who kindly gave of their time to make these recordings in aid of the Royal Hall. Titles include 'A Trip to Harrogate', 'The Harrogate Polka', 'Reminiscences of Harrogate', 'I Like to Go to Harrogate', 'What has Happened to Harrogate', 'Let's Go Down To Harrogate', 'Greetings to Harrogate' etc.

Both CDs are limited editions, only 500 of each have been produced. They would make an ideal gift or Christmas present. They cost just £10 each and are available from the Tourist Information Centre, Royal Baths, Crescent Road, Harrogate and at Pomp & Circumstance, Commercial Street, Harrogate. Should you have any difficulty in obtaining either CD then contact Mike on Tel 01423 880505.

Howard Hughes

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE ASSOCIATION
OF CIVIC SOCIETIES

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 31st January 2009 at 1pm

White Hart Hotel

Guest Speaker **Ms Harvey Dowdy** CTNE, Regeneration Manager Durham City

“Renewal and Regeneration”



ROYAL HALL

FRIDAY 2ND JANUARY
2009

7.30PM

New Year Concert

Starring

Manchester Camerata with
world famous cellist **Natalie Clein**
and the
Nonsuch Viennese Dancers

Tickets £25 (concessions £17.50) from HIC Box Office
(01423) 537230