

Chairman's Report—September 2009

It is some time since the last Newsletter so an update is very timely - if not overdue. Particularly since we have a busy period coming up.

The Society will be installing a number of commemorative plaques on significant buildings around the town over the next few months. The first two of these, commemorating the homes of Richard Ellis and Bernard Evans RA will take place later this month. Both will be unveiled by the Mayor and the Society is organising short lectures on these eminent Harrogate people followed by refreshments. Members are very welcome at both ceremonies but the number of places is limited so please let the Secretary know if you would like to attend.

The Society's initiative to resurrect the Design Awards scheme is coming to fruition with judging taking place later this month and the formal Award Ceremony scheduled for late-October. Judging will be by an independent panel consisting of the Council's Head of Planning Services; the Council Member for Planning, Councillor Don Mackenzie; a prominent architect and a lay member selected from the Society's membership.

Committee members Stuart Holland, Susan Amaku and Mike Burke have worked hard on this project and we all owe them a considerable debt of gratitude for their sterling effort.

Heritage Open days are upon us again and there should be some interesting buildings open to the public for the occasion. Mike Burke has led the way on this project in his capacity as the Society's member on the Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Civic Societies (YHACS). Many thanks, Mike

Details of this and the other events are shown on the back page.



You will remember that I reported in the last Newsletter about the latest situation regarding the national Civic Trust. The loss of this central body has prompted a groundswell of support for the civic society movement. Messages of support and practical offers of help have been received from a large number of professional bodies; local authorities; voluntary and charitable organisations and many others. The National Trust, English Heritage, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, and the Royal Institute of British Architects are just some of those who have come to the rescue. Our own regional body, YHACS has been heavily involved in supporting the replacement body known as the *Civic Society Initiative*.

A full range of options is being investigated but three things are already clear:

- ◆ The civic society movement needs an independent champion
- ◆ The movement needs to be supported as a network where the voice of individual societies and local groups can be articulated and strengthened
- ◆ The future needs to be rooted in what the societies want and need to drive the way forward

The role of civic societies and local community action is as important now as it was when the Civic Trust was set up. This is the sentiment at the heart of the package of measures now being put in place so that a range of options for the future health of the civic society movement can be explored and assessed.

So we all need to continue keeping our fingers crossed!

Howard Hughes

PLANNING MATTER



Again a fairly heavy list of plans to choose from - we looked at 87 applications and responded to 39 - a response rate of 45%. Those included in the May Newsletter amounted to a response rate of 37%.

I can't think of any planning policy matters that I should be writing about this time, so you will have to be content with Development Control items! By the way, I expect it is likely that many of you know that Council Planning used to be under the heading of Technical Services, but nowadays it is called 'Department of Development Services'.



SIGNS SHOPFRONTS & ADVERTISEMENTS

A high proportion of our representations have come under this heading lately, but firstly I bring you up to date on two items from the previous newsletter.

A second shopfront application for 46-48 Parliament Street which we had not seen at the time of writing the May newsletter was also unacceptable because of the facility to fold back the whole frontage. It seemed a pointless application as a similar frontage had previously been refused, which happily



(and rightly) was the decision on this second try. The shopfront has actually been put in place without permission.

As predicted, Oakdale Golf Club were not allowed their large sign on Penny Pot Lane near the Queen Ethelburga's Estate.

An application for enlarged and additional internally illuminated signs at No 36 Parliament Street (Peter Gottards) was unacceptable and was refused. The Council's reasons were that 'The proposed internally illuminated box signs are considered inappropriate in terms of their design and illumination....' Also that the resulting visual clutter would detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area.

A shop at 44B Cold Bath Road, which has an attractive canopy, requested three hanging signs. One was to be central to the canopy and one at each end of the canopy. We were content with the central one, but the end signs were large and hanging rather low. They would have detracted from the canopy and the conservation area. The planners took the same view and made a split decision - refusing the end signs and approving the central one.

Out of our usual geographic area of concern is the Mother Shipton Inn at Knaresborough. With agreement from the Knaresborough Civic Society we sent a letter complimenting the new signage proposal. The signs are simple, sensitive and appropriate for the building and were approved. Also out of our locality is the BP Petrol Station at North Street, Ripon. Again I contacted the local Ripon Civic Society for their blessing on our involve-

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ment. There is a fairly long history of inappropriate applications for advertising at this site, dating back to 2004 and I wanted to be consistent and follow the latest one. The applications have been for advertisement hoardings for renting out - not directly for the business of the garage. The most recent one was for four internally illuminated display units and has been refused because of a build up of advertisement clutter detrimental to the Ripon conservation area. An appeal has been lodged. Over the last decade, many such proposals for illuminated hoardings have come forward, mostly in Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon, and as far as I am aware, we have sent objections to all of them. I did not want to break the habit regarding the latest one in Ripon. Almost all have been refused permission and have been taken to appeal. The vast majority have also failed to gain approval on appeal.

I now have five items, all referring to local *Co-op Stores*. Three of them involve signs and two of them were proposals for shutters. The three signage ones were at *St. Winifreds Avenue, Knaresborough Road, & 119 Otley Road* (on the left going out of Harrogate). Each one was for a new fascia sign and a projecting sign in the new Co-op colour of bright green, plus a replacement forecourt sign at Knaresborough Road. They have largely gained approval from the Council, except that the projecting signs at 119 Otley Road and Knaresborough Road were refused, and the St. Winifreds Avenue signs must be illuminated only during shop opening hours. The two proposals for shutters were at the *Leeds Road Co-op and High Street Starbeck Co-op*. Both were for the whole shopfronts to be covered by standard solid steel shutters. As you may

know, the Starbeck store has a long frontage. Both have been refused because they would be visually intrusive. Neither is in a conservation area, but the Leeds Road parade of shops is opposite the Harrogate conservation area, and this is taken into account in decisions. Proposals can be judged to have an effect on a conservation area even when they are outside of it.

The 'Next' store at *10-14 James Street* is changing its signage for what I judge to be no particularly good reason. It is no doubt a 'corporate image' decision. The proposal was for internally illuminated signs and I am pleased to say that the Council case officer, Mr. Mike Parkes, quickly wrote to the applicant saying that the proposal needed to be modified to gain approval. In a modified form, the signs have been approved. I very much doubt that the company will do more business as a result of their new signs!

A dreadful example of a garish sign has been fixed to *159B Skipton Road - Topps Tiles* without planning consent, which was refused on 22nd June. The background colour is bright yellow, it is large at 8.71m x 1.8m (about 28ft x 6ft) and mounted partly above eaves height! Did it need any more justification for refusal?

A proposal for comprehensive new signage came forward for the *St. George Hotel* on Ripon Road. There were four parts to the application. Two sets of letters were proposed for the tower to which we did not have any strong feelings. A set of letters above the entrance were acceptable. We suggested some modification to a sign on two poles that faced south including a reduction in size. The fourth part of the application was for a sign fixed to the wall facing north, to which we asked for a small modification. The application was passed, but I believe that there were some amendments.

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LARGER HOUSING SITES

I have only one entry under this heading this time and even that is not in Harrogate! The site is the former *Advanced Technology Park* at Boroughbridge. The reason for our interest was that the housing element could provide ten or eleven years of housing provision for the Boroughbridge housing sub-area in a short space of time. This would impact upon not only provision for the sub-area but possibly Core Strategy policy and Allocations for the whole District. An element of phasing has been introduced which helps allay our fears regarding the overall strategy to some degree. Other parts of the proposal were concerned with employment uses - office space and light industry.



SMALLER HOUSING SITES

The C.K.Batchelor proposal for *Cold Bath Place* for four town houses and offices has not gone smoothly for them. The Council have allowed demolition of the existing buildings, but not before an approved replacement scheme has been agreed. The new-build proposal was not granted permission and C.K. Batchelors have appealed against this decision. Since then an application for a terrace of six houses and two apartments has come forward which was recommended for refusal by officers. The reasons were that no justification for losing an employment site was put forward, that the redevelopment would be

overbearing and overlooking and that the design of the proposals was not appropriate to the area and would not preserve or enhance the conservation area. The application was refused unanimously with further reasons that car parking and manoeuvring space was inadequate and that proper provision for pedestrians was lacking etc.

Re-development of the *Duchy Cottage* site near to St.Wilfrid's Church is a planning case that seems set to run and run. Demolition of the row of dilapidated garages has been given permission but the proposal I noted in the last newsletter to convert the existing building into two dwellings and build a further two dwellings on the site was withdrawn shortly before the planning committee meeting of 9th June. The officer recommendation was for refusal because of the condition of the access roads, density, harm to residential amenity and the health of a copper beech tree. We were pleased that the application was off the table because our two main objections were to the over-intensive use of the site and the state of the access roads. Having withdrawn this proposal, the developer was sure to come back with an alternative. The density of the withdrawn proposal had worked out at 33 dwellings per hectare. This was despite the fact that, although Government guidance suggests generally a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare, the Duchy area of the conservation area is built at a much lower density and this can be taken into account. We were surprised to see that the replacement scheme was to make Duchy Cottage into two dwellings **BUT** on less than half the site. We thought that this would naturally lead to a refusal because the density had now risen to 38 dwellings per hectare! two dwellings **BUT** on less than half the site. We thought that this would naturally lead to a refusal because the density had now risen to 38 dwellings per hectare! Worse was to come though. Against all logic, the case officer recommended approval, giving

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the density as 17 dwellings per hectare in his report and suggesting that the applicant may come back with a proposal for a house on the remainder of the site.

He must have mistakenly used the **whole** site for his 17 dwellings per hectare calculation. Another worrying aspect of the officer's report was that it seems to have been written in undue haste, because he did not have comments from the Highways Department or the opinions of the Conservation & Design Section. I would have thought this information was absolutely necessary to make a valid recommendation on this contentious application. Perhaps targets are to blame for the premature and unsatisfactory nature of the report. I am pleased to say that the committee refused permission, but strangely did not give density as one of the reasons.

We saw (and objected to) an application to demolish *102 Pannal Ash Road*, and replace the large bungalow with two pairs of semi-detached houses. There is no planning policy that can prevent the demolition, but we were not at all happy about the layout of the replacement houses. The houses would have looked cramped and one of the garages was in an odd position and partly underground. The planners refused permission and an appeal has been lodged. Since then the application has come forward with a revised proposal for two pairs of semis, which was much improved and we did not feel the need to comment. The development has now also found favour with the planners and the appeal has been withdrawn. An interesting application to build a house behind the Council offices in Crescent Gardens came forward. Its address is actually to the rear of *27 & 29 Swan Road*. It is of an imaginative modern design and very ingenious in the use of a difficult plot. Well done to the architect!

I wrote about the Pannal Ash Road bungalow above, where the applicant had a second

go at a scheme and found a good solution and a similar thing happened at *177 Leeds Road*.

Some outbuildings were to be demolished between 175 & 177 Leeds Road and two detached houses constructed. I say detached, but the gap between was only about .4m (16 inches) and it would have been an un-neighbourly development for Number 175 - a typical example of cramming. However, this plan was withdrawn and quickly followed by a proposal to demolish the outbuildings as before and insert just one house with a garage this time - a great improvement to which we did not feel the need to respond.

Another example of cramming that would offer a poor degree of residential amenity was the proposal to erect a two-storey apartment at the rear of *38 Parliament Street*. A large extension has already been built to the rear of number 40, which would result in a very poor outlook for the new property. There were also several air conditioning units close by that may have been a noise nuisance, but the application was withdrawn. I can bring you up to date on the proposals for *27-28 Park Parade* - currently a doctor's surgery. Having withdrawn the application for conversion of the building to six flats and erecting a block of three apartments at the rear, the developers came back with almost the same scheme, but with only two apartments to the rear. Once again, we did not like the block at the rear but were content with the adaptation of the main building. I am pleased to report that they finally decided to delete this contentious part of the application and have achieved an approval from the Council.

My last entry under the 'smaller housing sites' is as big as they come without falling into the larger category - which I class for the purposes of this Newsletter as ten or more dwellings. The plan is to demolish number *48 Wetherby Road* to make way for a block of nine apartments. Early this year, I received a consultation from the architect, but the application has been along time

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coming. We made quite a few comments to the architect and were concerned about several important issues - loss of trees, traffic, residential amenity and the scale of the building, etc.. When the application came in a few weeks ago, we could not see that any changes had been made as a result of Civic Society remarks, so we copied these to the Council as our representation.



PROPOSALS AFFECTING CHURCHES

I have never used this heading before, but there are three applications that you may find interesting - or even alarming!

St. Peters Church on Cambridge Street are proposing extensions on the north, east and south sides to provide more and better space for church and community use. It is a very confined site, which leads to one minus aspect and a plus aspect. Little space around the church means of course that there is no great area on which to build, but it also means that building on the north and east sides will not be highly visible and so perhaps less contentious. The south side though is a different matter, as it is totally visible and needs very careful treatment. In general,

we are happy to see the extensions and alterations, which I am sure will be of great community benefit. The main work will be the extension on the north side with an entrance around the east end, where there is just room to provide a passageway. The plans include a glazed foyer between this passageway and the south transept through which a new doorway and lobby will be provided, thus giving a brand new entrance to the church. Unfortunately, this glazed foyer on the outside of the south side is a feature that we do not like - at least in its presently proposed form. This foyer cuts across the arch of the south window of the Lady Chapel. The roofing to the passageway around the Apse is also ungainly, as it cuts across two windows. More thought needs to be given to this aspect of the design.

The setting of our only Grade 1 listed building in the town, *St Wilfrid's Church* is set to be compromised if a proposal for a large electricity sub-station goes ahead. It is a modern, interesting, unusual, but attractive design in itself, but the location at rear of the church is unacceptable. The building is a maximum of 42m (138 ft) long and at its nearest it is only 20m from the church and only 5m from *St. Wilfrids Cottage*. The applicants, NEDL, seem to think that the site is not within the curtilage of the church! Even if this were so, the impact on the church is a serious planning consideration as noted in Government Guidance on 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (PPG15).

The third church application that we responded to was for a disabled access ramp at *Trinity Methodist Church*. We realise of course that such provision is a necessary addition to many buildings, but it is essential that it is done in a sensitive way, especially where historic buildings are concerned. Trinity Church is a listed building. We were not convinced that the double ramp as designed is the best way of doing this. It seemed rather cumbersome

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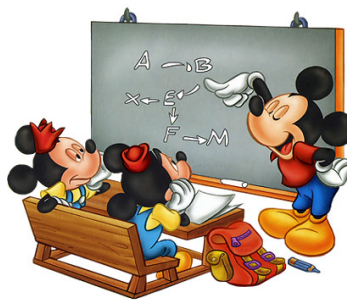
and obtrusive and this impression was magnified by its solid walls rather than railings. This application has been refused.

OTHER APPLICATIONS



An important site that has previously been in the planning news is the *Ten-pin Bowling Alley on Tower Street*. Considerably revised proposals came forward that deleted all apartments and concentrated on hotel use with (hopefully) the bowling facility reinstated in the basement. Previous designs had been dreadful but undoubted improvements were made in the latest application, especially that part of the hotel on the Tower Street frontage was set back to allow a drop-off and collection lay-by. Also space had been devoted at the rear to a delivery bay, but significant doubts arose as to the adequacy of this and the access road at the side. Traffic and parking is of prime concern to those who live and work on Tower Street and roads immediately connecting to it. Two design aspects apart from the traffic and parking issues that we commented on were the dominance of the stark lift-tower on Tower Street and the possible loss of historic stone setts on the side road (the developer was offering to re-surface it).

Although recommended for approval by officers, the planning committee refused permission due to the massing and design having an adverse impact on the conservation area and on overbearing effect on the Alderson Court flats at the rear. Interestingly though, no traffic, access or parking reasons were included in the decision notice.



At *No.1 Duchy Road*, the Harrogate Ladies College run a pre-school facility. This property is a semi-detached house, the other half of the building being *No.21 Clarence Drive*. We saw an application to expand the pre-school use into the Clarence Drive half and were concerned that the inevitable increase in traffic and parking at this junction would, at times, create a hazard and more inconvenience for local residents who already suffer from indiscriminate parking



One last item to mention, or is it the 'unmentionable' - TESCO. We are finding it difficult to come to conclusions on the revised and reduced application. No doubt I shall refer to this one in the next newsletter. You could let us have your thoughts on it - all opinions welcome!

*Henry Pankhurst,
Vice Chairman*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

HARROGATE CIVIC SOCIETY PLAQUES

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Thursday 10th to Sunday 13th September

Once again the Civic Society is participating with the Council in the Heritage Open Days scheme run by English Heritage. Buildings not generally open to the general public will be opening their doors at various times over the four days. A full programme of buildings and opening times is available on the Council website at the following website address <http://www.harrogate.gov.uk/harrogate-6020> or the Tourist Information Centre. If any member is willing to help by "building-sitting" for a short time on one of the days, Mike Burke would be delighted to hear from you.

THE TITUS SALT STORY

The next Forum will be held at **Grants Hotel at 7.30pm on Thursday 19th November** when Maria Glot will give an entertaining talk about the life and work of the extraordinary Sir Titus Salt - creator of the model town of Saltaire. This promises to be an informative but light-hearted evening.

Refreshments will be available afterwards, and, as ever, it would be useful if we could have an indication of how many members are likely to attend.

Please address any queries or information to the Secretary, Chris Holland at 103 Walton Park, Pannal, Harrogate HG3 1RJ or (01423) 541069 or e-mail Hgcivicsociety@aol.com

