



Dates for Your Diary

Saturday 6th April

A Walk Around Newtown

Michael Parrott from Newtown Community Association will lead a walk of approximately 75 minutes which includes the history of the land that is now part of the park, information about the effects of the blitz and the number of shops that were once in Newtown. **Meet at Newtown Community Hut in Belmont Park at 2pm.** Free but donations to the Community Association would be gladly accepted.

Saturday 11th May

Three Church Tour

Free afternoon walk in St. Sidwell's area, to see the interiors of three remarkable but not well-known churches, Belmont Evangelical Church, Christ Church and Methodist Church, Sidwell Street. Led by Roger Thorne FSA. Easy 20 mins. walking. **Start 2.30 at Belmont Chapel, Western Way.**

Saturday 8th June

Guided Tour of Tuckers Hall

This is a joint event with Tiverton Civic Society. With a history dating from 1471 this is one of Exeter's most significant historic buildings. **Starting at 2pm** Mike Walker will give a guided tour followed by a cup of tea or coffee. **Cost £5** each payable on the day.

Dates of Monthly Open Mornings

See back page

NEW THEATRE FOR EXETER - WORKING GROUP

The society organised a public meeting in December for a debate about the possibility of a new town centre theatre for Exeter. We had a reasonable turn-out of 52 people which enabled everybody to have their say and a debate was had about the merits of a new theatre and the impact this could have on the existing town centre theatres. You can find a summary of attendance and discussion points on the website under the new Theatre webpage. From this discussion a group of 23 people expressed a desire in forming a group to investigate the possibility of having a new theatre and another 26 asked to be kept informed and perhaps attend occasional informational meetings. Many of the attendees were from local theatres or connected with the performing arts. We organised a meeting of the working group on 16 January at Jurys Inn (sic) for them to get to know each other and have further debate about the way forward. The ECS committee agreed at its January meeting to provide support to the group if they were prepared to undertake a detailed investigation into whether Exeter could sustain a new theatre, and that members of the working group join the Society. We have made it clear that the working group is not a sub-committee of ECS but we will use the funds generated from their membership to support them with room hire and initial activities, and will develop a theatre group area on our website for them hold their own papers (this will be password protected). A ECS committee member will attend all future meetings to monitor activity. This group needs to be free to find its own way and if they do not proceed as we expect, or move to become a pressure group, we will sever our link with them. We have managed to keep the theatre debate in the Express & Echo and will keep matters updated on our website. Councillor Leadbetter has attended both meetings and is in support of continued investigation.

AGM 2012

Sadly, **President John Landers** was unable to attend what would have been his last AGM in the role, but warm tributes were paid to him in his absence. **Vice-President Hazel Harvey** kindly took charge in his stead. I am delighted to report that **Peter Wadham** was proposed and unanimously elected as the Society's **President** with immediate effect, vacating the role of **Vice-Chairman**, to which **Keith Lewis** was unanimously elected. AGM business items were followed by a tasty buffet with wine.

Programme Secretary

No volunteer for Programme Secretary came forward at the AGM, but **Ruth McLeish** is currently helping us out. Hurrah! If you have ideas for her, the Secretary will forward them to her.

Treasurer

As many of you know, we have been managing without our Treasurer **Peter Caspar** for some months. This has greatly increased Pamela Coleman's workload, and I am glad of this opportunity to put on record how grateful we all are to her. We hope that Peter will remain with us long-term but his plans are necessarily uncertain.

Open Mornings

It has been a relief to note no falling-off of support now that we are in the Hoskins Room. In December **John Landers** and his wife Stella were our guests of honour, receiving presentations and Life Membership; John spoke interestingly and amusingly about his years of involvement in Exeter life. This January Paul Osborne, Environmental Improvements Officer from the Design Team of Exeter City Council Planning Services, explained his input into local planning. He gave us a fascinating hour and said that he will gladly return later in the year. The flow of questions from members suggests that they will be delighted to hear more from him.

As you will see in the rest of this Newsletter, the Society has been busy on more than one front. My special thanks to Keith Lewis and John Monks for the time and effort that they are giving to their respective interests.

THE CIVIC SOCIETY HAS A PHONE

It has often been suggested that we need a phone number as an alternative form of contact from e-mail for the general public. We did not want to advertise the committee's private home numbers, not only as a privacy issue but because the number should remain in force even when the committee changes. Consequently a mobile phone and SIM card was purchased at minimal cost and this can be passed on to future committee members when necessary. We have had several phone enquiries from posters and flyers in the public domain so this has proved very successful. The Civic Society public phone number is **07857 599232**.

From Pamela Coleman - Publicity

The Civic Society has been getting more than its usual publicity lately, what with the public meeting for the theatre (three newspaper articles) and the seminar on 9th February, which has generated a lot of interest. If anyone missed the newspaper articles they are available on the theatre page of the website.

Barbara Looser and I are going to have a Civic Society stall in the main foyer of the Met Office on 7th February from 12.00 to 2.00. This is an exciting opportunity to reach into the workplace and make ourselves known to all the staff who pass through there during the lunch period! And thanks to my daughter, who works there, for suggesting it.

In September the first paragraph of this report began with a comment on Exeter City Council's 'Site Allocations and Development Management Plan' draft document to which Planning sub-committee had recently responded, and ended with the hopeful suggestion that some members might like to study it too. Sadly no one replied. I hope that is because you trust us to deal with such documents as we will continue to do. As you know Local Planning Authorities are now required to publicly consult on all new information they offer and two of Planning sub-committee's tasks during the Autumn were to study and make response to the drafts for two Supplementary Planning Documents, one on Affordable Housing and one on Sustainable Transport. These, and those on other topics yet to appear, will make clear to developers, including individuals, what the City Council requires from those making planning applications in the various categories, and will enable the Planners to insist that the stipulations are adhered to. In fact these documents were so well prepared that there was little extra we could add or alteration that we could suggest. Each of the Forward Planning Officers is glad to receive responses. In each case this time our response was one of 'about 20' received, some from individuals and some from other interested organisations. The final version of each SPD will be put before the Exeter City Council Executive at two dates in February.

You may recall that the second paragraph of the report concerned the fact that an acceptable conclusion had been reached for the conversion of Acacia House and Magnolia House, two listed buildings, to three dwellings and that Council had also approved the amended design for two new dwellings on the same site at the corner of Friars Gate. We hoped that this had ended the long-running saga, but the developers returned again to a new version of their original application, to build a single dwelling in the west corner. That earlier attempt had been withdrawn in the light of probable refusal but, not content with what they have with much advice achieved, they are trying again. We have, of course, objected and confidently expect the application to be refused.

By now it is clear that my line referring to the Bus Station site "Perhaps by the time of the next Newsletter our comments on the full planning application for the entire area will fill the

Planning sub-committee report." has not come true. It is a very large subject, fraught with possibilities, and they are only possibilities. The only probability is that the plans will not please everybody, or even that some aspects will not please anybody; but there will be room for negotiation, recommendations and amendments. When the plans are available Planning sub-committee will be very glad to hear any comments from Civic Society members who have spent time studying them at the Civic Centre or on line, or even from members who have gleaned information from the press and need to discuss it.

Several of the proposals we have looked at in the last four months are further attempts to gain approval following the refusal of a previous application, but one owner has made a second, and different, application after the first was approved! We had objected to the rather massive extensions of two neighbouring bungalows in Matford Road but both gained approval, and so we were quite happily surprised that the owners of the one on the corner of Matford Avenue has recently proposed demolishing the existing house and rebuilding on almost the same footprint in a much better design, having considered the objections made to the first application and the value of a new start. We have let the Area Planning Officer know that we are offering no objection.

The developers intending to replace the disused building on the corner of Queen Street and New North Road, near the Clock Tower, with a large hotel have also made amendments to the design and although the application was not renumbered and re-advertised the Planning Officer notified the many objectors to the original proposal. No doubt many of those objectors are again objecting. We certainly are, as the design is still overbearing in a prominent position deserving a building of high quality which would enhance and facilitate the intended up-grading of Queen Street. We are also concerned that the developer does not admit to a known intended user, and that the ground floor of the building is not shown as divided, or its use designated in any way, which could lead to uses unsuitable for the location. A further concern is that the area has many long established small hotels of which two have recently closed and others would be increasingly vulnerable, so altering the pleasantly welcoming locality.

Further along Queen Street you may have noticed that a new restaurant with takeaway service has

opened in the fine building at the entrance to Northernhay Gardens. On the other side of the road the premises occupied by Starbucks has applied for Change of Use from coffee shop to restaurant. Starbucks at 5 High Street has applied for the one year approval for two tables and four chairs on the pavement to be confirmed and continued. Planning sub-committee has yet again objected but as we are ever the only objectors to this obstruction of a busy pavement we are expecting that the use will continue.

Planning sub-committee is more confident that the application to site a temporary structure at the entrance to the Bishop Blackall building from November-March each year may not be approved. It is intended as a booking office for student accommodation there and in others owned by the firm and we feel that such an office should have been provided within the building at the design stage or created later by loss of a student room or two. We particularly object to the addition of an unsightly structure to the street scene and to the front of Bishop Blackall which the developers had successfully rescued from its dilapidated appearance

A hundred yards away the Mosque, a building which has definitely enhanced the street scene, has applied to create four flats in one of the adjacent houses which it owns and which it has used as offices. Presumably these are now located in the new(ish) building so freeing 15 York Road for other use, which seems entirely satisfactory.

One other development which we discussed and thought well of was the application to create a first school, pre-school and nursery in Iddesleigh

House, the large empty property near the corner of Polsloe Road and Heavitree Road. The proposal seems well thought out with arrangements to drop and collect children safely at an off-road point and a flat on the top floor ensuring that the building is fully occupied. Work has already started to rescue it from the poor condition into which it was visibly falling and at last the 'For Sale' sign has been removed.

Planning sub-committee found an application for a low-cost food retail store to replace the public house at 270 Pinhoe Road very far from satisfactory. Members may have seen in the press that a vigorous campaign to retain and rejuvenate the pub is in progress, and although that is not directly a planning issue, our letter to the City council deplores the loss of a valuable local facility, as well as objecting to the metal-clad industrial appearance of the store, the bleakness of its intended surroundings and the inadequacy of safe access and parking arrangements.

This time the tailpiece will detail two unusual applications in rural situations. On the east side of Exeter the owners of The Paddocks, Harts Lane have requested that the condition requiring the house to be an agricultural dwelling only should be removed, which is understandable considering the fact that the surrounding area is soon likely to be full of new houses. Recently a retrospective application was submitted to add two mobile stable units on land at the junction of Belle Vue Road and Wrefords Lane. Often we are critical of retrospective applications but in this weather we, and the horses, can only be thankful that the structures were in place before the application was made.

From Keith Lewis - Planning Sub-Committee - Exeter's expansion



Planning applications for residential developments continue to be submitted and approved by the City Council, and by East Devon. There are now five active housing developments of reasonable sizes under construction which compares to just four smaller developments this time last year. Sites are now active at Harrington Lane (250 homes), Main Road Pinhoe for 450 homes (East Devon), Hill Barton for 130 homes, Royal Naval Stores site near Tesco for 250 homes, and just off Topsham Road on the former Royal Naval Stores site for about 450. Approval has been granted for a further 350 homes off main Road Pinhoe in East Devon and for nearly 900 homes straddling the M5 at Monkerton and Clyst Honiton.

TEA AND COFFEE HELPERS

Many thanks to all those who put their names forward to provide help at events serving tea and coffee. You are invaluable!

Also, many thanks also to **Ann Corbin** who has agreed to be our Tea and Coffee Co-ordinator, organising who will be helping at forthcoming events. If you would like to add your name to the list of helpers please contact her on CorbinPFCORBIN@aol.com or phone her on **01392 256887**

The more people who offer to help the less often they will be called upon.

EXETER'S ELIZABETHAN BUILDINGS AND ITS ORPHANS' COURT

As you know from the last newsletter (and subsequent e-mails) this is a big event for us on 9th February. Despite being fairly costly to run, tickets started selling like hot cakes and we were sold out by the end of January. If any member would have liked to attend but couldn't get tickets then please contact the Secretary (details below) to let us know. If we have enough people interested then we may try and run the event again. This is especially relevant to members who do not have e-mail and therefore received no reminders that this event was being held.

From Keith Lewis - Planning Sub-Committee

Exeter's City Centre Strategy 2013-2022

The City Council and local businesses have developed a new strategy for the town centre. It is in a draft format and will soon be consulted on. This is mainly about economic development but also about leisure and cultural activity. We will let you know more when it is published but we would encourage your responses to the council. Without public responses the Council will go their own way so it is important they have a good response from the public.

Monthly Open Mornings

Saturday 16th February

Saturday 16th March

Saturday 20th April

Saturday 18th May

Hoskins Room, Central Library

Castle Street, Exeter

10.30am to 12.00pm

Open Mornings have a 10-minute speaker at 11.00am, and sometimes a discussion on current issues.

Visitors and guests are welcome and refreshments provided.

Blue Plaques

Thanks to John Monks' diligence, the Society will be unveiling its first new-style commemorative plaque this year. The design will include the wyvern logo and website address as an added attraction as we celebrate the connection with Exeter of the famous or possibly infamous. No further details at present but you will receive full information when we have finalised our plans for the unveiling ceremony.

John is also working hard to get the Blue Plaque page on our website up and running, and we will let you know when it is.

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