



Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting will be held on Monday 3rd March at 7.45pm at the Falcon Hotel. Do please come to the meeting to hear how your society has progressed during the year and to have your say. **Please bring the enclosed agenda and papers with you.**

New Members

Welcome to nine new members: Ms Christine Barter, Mrs C Eastwood, Mr John Hogg and Mrs Helen Hogg, Mr & Mrs R Read, Mr Matthew Smith, Mrs Clair Walton, Dr Emert White. Please introduce yourselves to a member of the committee at the next meeting you attend (we are all labelled!) or telephone the secretary, Beryl Downing, on 01789 292847 to tell us about your particular interests.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday 14th April. 6pm at The Falcon Hotel: Sarah Gaventa, director of the Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment's CABE Space will talk about the crucial role played in towns and cities by well-designed parks, streets and squares. She will show a number of successful spaces in various parts of the country and comment on the lessons learned.

Tuesday 13th May. Visit by coach to Arbury Hall, Nuneaton, the home of the Newdegate family since the 16th century. George Eliot, born on the estate in 1819, features Arbury in several of her novels. Book now on line or fill in the form included with this *Update*.

News Update is edited and produced for the Stratford Society by Beryl Downing bl Downing32@waitrose.com

THE BRIDGE SURVEY

Our survey in November produced a very definite thumbs down to the County Council's proposals for a new bridge. Of 110 responses by email and post (in many cases representing more than one person per household) 73 households were totally against the bridge, 31 would accept the proposals subject to further consideration of the traffic arrangements for Waterside and Southern Lane and six individuals were prepared to support the County's proposals, with minor modifications.

Members were particularly insistent that the County Council had failed to make a valid case for the bridge and that the suggestions for Waterside would cause more congestion in the town centre.

Many members thought that more consideration should be given to improving Lucy's Mill bridge and both cyclists and pedestrians thought that the proposed bridge would duplicate the conflict on the Tramway bridge, rather than solve it.

Your Comments

Other points made by several members were:

- Relief of traffic congestion is no argument - a new vehicular bridge elsewhere would be a better solution to traffic problems.
- The bridge would be a pleasant 'leisure' ride but is not a good route for those cycling as an alternative to using the car.
- The bridge in itself will not be a tourist attraction.
- This is a piecemeal approach and should form part of an overall traffic strategy, not a preamble to it.
- More consideration should be given to safety. Lighting will be necessary not only on the bridge but in the environs and this could cause light pollution. Without adequate lighting the bridge, could become a gathering place for anti-social elements.
- All improvements to the town should be for the benefit of local rate-payers. Such improvements would enhance the town and it would automatically become more attractive for people to visit without the need for contrived attractions.

All these points have been attached, with others, to a letter from chairman Ian Prosser to Julie Crawshaw of the County Council's Regeneration Projects.

In it he emphasises the fact that the case for the bridge has not been proved, and comments that the County's presentation did not give "any authoritative estimate or projection of the number of pedestrians and cyclists likely to use the bridge, or why the bridge might attract more visitors to the town. We certainly did not hear information or evidence of sufficient weight which people would normally expect to hear in support of a project of such importance."

Detrimental

The letter goes on to say that the Society is concerned that the building of the bridge could have a detrimental effect on the Recreation Ground.

"The encouragement of cyclists to use the bridge must result in a plethora of hard surface tracks wide enough for pedestrians and cyclists to co-exist, plus attendant litter bins, signage and lighting. This will result in a significant urbanisation of a relatively rural and informal scene.

A Fait Accompli?

"We are hopeful that the comment made by John Deegan (the then director of environment and economy) at the presentation that 'This is a genuinely consultative exercise. No decisions have been made about anything' will lead to an outcome which will prove to the people of Stratford that this is not, as they fear, a *fait accompli*."

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The full letter can be read on our website, www.stratfordsociety.co.uk. Or telephone 01789 292847 for a copy.



TOLL CALL

As reported in your October *Talk of the Town*, the District Council has asked the Society to consider possible future uses for the Toll House.

A group of general committee members has been examining the possibilities, including those gathered at the Heritage Open days last summer.

Many interesting and original ideas (hairdressing salon, artist's studio, bijou residence) had to be discounted on the grounds of lack of mains services, access, lack of space and natural light or high cost of maintenance.

Four suggestions are being examined, including the restoration of the building as a toll house for the Upper Navigation Trust. Peter Burgess, who is investigating possibilities, is taking advice on the permitted uses of ancient monuments and on the building's commercial viability.

RAPID RESPONSE

Many members receive Society information via email - faster and less expensive than the post and an instant way of expressing your views. We want to hear what you think about major issues in the town, so if you have an email address which you have not yet told us about, do please contact membership@stratfordsociety.co.uk This information is data protected and will not be passed on to anyone else.

NOT IN OUR MANOR

Four separate but interdependent applications relating to KES, on their school site in the town centre and on playing fields in Manor Road are causing confusion and strong opposition among residents.

Three of the applications depend on the acceptance of the first - to build a care home with 111 beds in Manor Road. Because the complex will have provision for communal eating, rather than independent kitchens, it side-steps the moratorium on housing as it is not classified as dwellings.

The second application is for the erection of a heritage study centre, school library and observatory on Chapel Lane, which the planning group feels could be an interesting and promising proposal if carried out to a high standard. The third is for an expansion of the pavilion on the playing fields.

The group has objected to the initial proposals on which the others depend for finance. Its chairman, Leon Tanner, has written to the District Council saying that the site is not designated for development in the Local Plan and the existing open space in the middle of an expanding part of town gives it a particular significance.

BROUGHT TO BOOK

Following the runaway success of Robert Bearman's book, *Stratford-upon-Avon - a History of Its Streets and Buildings*, bookworms and local history enthusiasts may like to know of other Stratford Society publications, issued some time ago but still fascinating:

The Market House, by Robert Bearman, (booklet) published 1990
Shakespeare's Countryside, edited by John Holliday including contributions by Robert Bearman, Roger Pringle, Della Hooke and Moira Benton. (with map) 1988.

Cause for Concern - Some Stratford Buildings with introduction by Robert Bearman. (booklet) 1977.

The Shrieve's House by Peta Ree with Richard Harris. (booklet) 1987

Lord Ronald Gower's Monument to Shakespeare by Michael Kimberley. (booklet) 1989.

All will be available for £1 each at the AGM or contact Beryl Downing on 01789 292847.

"Although there have been references to support for the project from Sport England," he says, "the full comments have not been presented and a 'trade-off' between loss of space against proposed improvements (not even covered by this application) does not constitute a valid planning argument."

The letter adds that the proposed development will be more like an hotel than a care home and will generate a considerable increase in service traffic as well as in residents' and visitors' cars both on Banbury Road and Manor Road. Moreover, the building itself is unacceptable as it is designed as one block, more than 70 metres long, and rising to four storeys at the entrance.

"Virtually all the buildings in this area date from the 19th century or later. To claim that this building would 'respect and enhance the quality and character of the area' is absurd. We feel that the style only underlines the incongruity of the project for the site."

LONG MARSTON FRENZY

The possible eco-town at Long Marston is causing a frenzied response, says Brian Wright, chairman of the strategy group. While supporting most residents in wishing new housing developments would go away, he acknowledges that this is not possible.

"The UK has failed to build the necessary number of new houses for over twelve years," he says. "The result is a major backlog. If it were not for the many new houses planned for the Thames Gateway, the situation in South Warwickshire would be even worse.

"As a Society we will make the case that the environs of Stratford are as important as other parts of the district. A perfectly valid case can be made that Shuttery is of greater importance than Long Marston or Mickleton.

"Equally, if we have to have some of the new housing, there is no reason why the design of the new developments should not be of a far higher standard. In East Anglia housing design has been incorporated into planning guidance. We will continue to press for that to happen here."