Chairman's Miscellany - TrustNews March 2006

To start the first newsletter of 2006 on a positive note, I wonder how many members have noticed the activity on the corner of Eastgate Street, adjacent to the Broadway? If so, you will be pleased to know that it results from a Trust initiative to restore the railings removed during WW 2. Thanks to the design work done by Huw Thomas and organisational skills contributed by Nick Bourne and Michael Carden, grant funding from Hampshire County Council, Winchester City Council and English Heritage plus a sum from the Trust, the project should soon be completed. All the houses involved belong to the City Council, except for one in private ownership.

About 30 members came to the meeting held on February 1st. It was a useful forum for the informal exchange of views and information. Starting with an explanation by Shione Carden of how the Trust's Planning Appraisal panels operate, topics raised ranged over problems encountered in the planning system, the effects of high density development on the character of Winchester's suburbs, and the need for a considered vision for the city backed up by a masterplan. The progress of Neighbourhood Design Statements for Fulflood and Teg Down and the need for a similar initiative to cover the area of Weeke that includes the development site at Chimneys and Stoney Lane were also discussed.

We have recently consulted the Hampshire and I.O.W. Wildlife Trust for advice on the feasibility of restoring the land at Bushfield to downland and how it might be managed in future. Once we have this information, we hope to discuss the possibilities with the landowners.

Both Thornfields and London & Henley have made presentations of their developing plans for Silver Hill. It is likely that they will both be submitting their plans to the City Council in April and the Trust has asked for copies of the plans to be sent to members so that you can see them at leisure and make your views known to the Trust Council as well as to the City Council thereafter. The exhibition will be in the Heritage Centre over the weekend of Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th April between 10am and 4 pm.

Winchester Local Plan Review - TrustNews Mar 06

Members may know that in December the City Council decided to accept the Inspectors' modification of the Local Plan to allocate additional reserve sites for development. These are proposed to compensate for any shortfall of land allocated in the plan to provide the requisite number of houses during the plan period. This requirement is monitored regularly and there is no indication of a likely deficit in Winchester, where the original housing land allocation has been augmented by additional 'windfall' sites becoming available and thus making any need for reserve sites highly improbable. However, it is in Winchester that the Inspectors have seen fit to allocate the largest site at Pitt Manor Farm to provide in excess of 200 houses. The site was considered during the formative stage of the plan but, for many good reasons, it was rejected. These reasons included its location on the urban fringe and the consequent erosion of Winchester's setting as well as the traffic implications for

the local road network. The only location, where there might be a shortfall of housing land during the period of this plan, is in the major development area West of Waterlooville. City Officers consider that Winchester is the only sustainable location for dumping the deficit.

The Trust Council has considered the implications of objecting to this modification but believes that there are sound reasons for the City Council to reject it. We urge Trust members to register their objections in support of this view. Even if the Pitt Manor Farm site is not required at this stage, once it is included as suitable for development, it will be vulnerable in future.

Comment Forms entitled Implementation of Local (Housing)Reserve Sites Policy are available from: Winchester City Council, Avalon House, Chesil Street, Winchester SO23 0HU 8am - 6pm Mon - Fri. or by telephone to Strategic Planning 01962 848193, also from County Libraries or on line at the Council's website:www.Winchester.gov.uk from which you can download copies of the form and see the supporting papers. Comments must be returned to: Head of Strategic Planning at Avalon House (address above) or on line by 6 pm on March 9th.

Planning Appraisal Group - TrustNews Mar 06

Having finished the last TrustNews article on a gloomy note following what the Trust felt was a bad decision (when the inspector allowed a block of flats to be built on the site of **46-48 Chilbolton Avenue**), it is good to be able to have better news to report. Two appeals relating to **1 & 3 Westley Close** have both been dismissed. The first scheme (A) proposed the demolition of both houses, which would be replaced by a block of 9 flats, while the second (B) would keep No 1 and replace No 3 with a smaller block of 5 flats. In both instances there would also be a terrace of houses (5 in scheme A, 6 in scheme B) on the boundary with Stockbridge Road.To summarise the inspector's ruling: the terrace would be unduly dominant and detract from the distinctive qualities and character of Stockbridge Road; in each scheme the blocks of flats on Westley Close would be set too far forward of the building line for the good of the street scene; and too much hard standing would be given over to car parking and manoeuvring to be characteristic of the neighbourhood. The applicants' third scheme, retaining No 1 and with a structure (described as a 2-storey terrace of 3 dwellings, but in fact an incoherently designed building with only one front door facing onto the close) in place of No 3 and a 3-storey terrace of 4 houses on the Stockbridge Road boundary, is currently in limbo while these dismissals are mulled over. Let us hope they are taken to heart, that the current application is withdrawn and a scheme more in character with the neighbourhood is proposed.

The appeal against refusal to demolish **Lang House, 27 Chilbolton Avenue** has been withdrawn, and the proposed retirement development at **Milesdown, Northbrook Avenue** has been refused on grounds including inadequate roads for the amount of traffic likely to be generated, scale and mass out of character with existing patterns of development in the vicinity, overdominanance in the street scene, unacceptable loss of trees. Two sets of signs, both installed without permission, have also been refused for the second time: for **Blonde, 5 Bridge**

Street and for the dentist at **63 High Street** which also happens to be a Listed Building. It would be good to see firm action taken against both applicants.

The residential development in place of **16 &16A City Road** has been granted, and after a long debate, members of the Planning Development Control Committee voted by 9 to 5 to allow the outline scheme for residential development on the site of the **Police HQ, Romsey Road**. The Trust continues to feel the high density proposed is bound to result in a layout with structures of a mass and scale that would be out of character with the houses in the adjacent Conservation Area, and can only hope this decision will not be regretted after the land has been sold on to a developer.

On occasions the Trust's opinion does appear to have an effect on the outcome. Recently we were consulted about changes proposed for **Pizza Express, 1 Bridge Street** prior to the application being made and, perhaps because our opinions coincided with those of the Conservation Officer, it seems that they have been taken into account - although this has still to be proved because at the time of writing the actual application has yet to be seen.

We are, however, sure that our input has had an effect on the design of the exciting scheme to extend and improve the facilities of the **Pilgrims' School, 3 The Close**. This major development includes the construction of a pre-preparatory school, a technology building and an outdoor swimming pool, plus an extension to the Stancliffe building. The overall approach was welcomed, but Trust concerns, mainly about the surroundings of the swimming pool and the treatment of the south elevation of the pre-prep school, were taken on board and included in amended plans. We understand that no local residents or councillors had shown any interest in the proposal, which seems strange in view of the size of the proposed development and the sensitivity of the site. The fact that each week the viewing panel looks at every planning application within the City boundaries has meant that the Trust has been able to participate constructively in the process and to have some in influence on the outcome of this important proposal.

The Trust has objected to two recent applications. We felt the details given in the outline application to demolish **36 Quarry Road** for a block of 10 flats were very inadequate, not least because the site can be seen from across the valley. Only a verbal description of the development was given, it was unclear how it would relate to neighbouring properties, and the layout was uninspiring, to say the least.

The proposal to demolish **Trelawney, 29 Stoney Lane** was more worrying because of the precedent that would be set by the decision made on this site. The two detached houses proposed here try to follow the mediocre design of adjoining properties, which could be disastrous for the neighbourhood as a whole. The bungalows along this road are clearly ripe for development to the higher density required by PPG3, and their lack of architectural value means their retention is of little value - except of course to their residents. The Trust has therefore urged that a pro-active approach is needed by WCC and that local studies and consultations are set up without delay. Wouldn't it be good, for once, to be ahead of the developers? *(Stop Press:The proposal has been rejected.)*

Shione Carden

Winchester City Guides - TrustNews Mar 2006

Twelve new Winchester City Guides have recently passed their exams and received their City badges from the Mayor in a ceremony at Abbey House (see picture).



These guides have completed a very rigorous training course. They took a 12-week background knowledge course at the University of Winchester, and were examined in all aspects of English life and culture - history, constitution, architecture, art, literature etc. After that they did their Winchester training, which lasted for six months. They had lectures about the City beginning with Graham Scobie on the pre-history of our area, and ending with a talk from a member of the City Council planning team about Winchester's future. They also did practical training, which included presentational skills and public speaking. Their final exam was in four parts: two written and two practical. The course cost each of them £500. It was extremely hard work, but I think they enjoyed it. They are now all excellent guides and a great asset to Winchester. I hope members of the Trust will go on some of our walks.

The Winchester and Area Tourist Guides Association was founded in 1978, and there are now 36 guides. We offer tours in 6 foreign languages, and have teachers, bell-ringers and railway buffs as well as historians and naturalists among our members.

The recently qualified guides received Green Badges from the Institute of Tourist Guiding. Some of the Winchester City Guides have ITG Blue Badges, which means that they are qualified to guide over a wider region.

Guided tours are run throughout the year from the Tourist Information Centre. We do regular tours twice a day in the tourist season, and guides can be booked for special tours or illustrated talks at any time.

The downside to being a guide is that the pay is low. But we find the work rewarding. We meet a lot of interesting people, and as we show visitors round and they comment about the beauty of the City we never cease to appreciate how lucky we are to live and work in such a very special place.

Elizabeth Proudman

New Library & Cultural Centre - TrustNews Mar 06

Hampshire County Council in partnership with Winchester City Council is developing the existing lending library site at the Corn Exchange building in Jewry Street into a "cultural centre" to include a new lending and reference library, a small art gallery, a museum, coffee shop and meeting rooms. The expected cost of the development is £7.25 million.

The architectural plans for the new centre and library have been widely welcomed as has been the objective to widen public access to both the library and other facilities. However,there has been considerable local concern about the level of book stocks and study facilities in the new library. This concern has been heightened by more than a 20% reduction in the number of books in the lending library over the past five years, and no indication that stock levels will be re-instated in the new library.

If you have views on the new library and its book stocks, please write to Cllr Ken Thornber CBE, the Leader of Hampshire County Council, The Castle, Winchester SO23 8UJ (ken.thornber@hants.gov.uk)and also to your local county and city councillors.

Desmond Clarke

Gorilla on the Lipstick No.1
Silver Hill Renaissance? - TrustNews Mar 2006

The original planning brief for Broadway Friarsgate area of Winchester City was adopted by the full council in 2003. It is an excellent guide to the redevelopment of this muddled and generally ugly part of the city.

The new proposals by Thornfield Properties, in some critical aspects, appears to ignore some of the ground rules set down in this brief.

To get an idea of the scale of development the proposal is about as long as the Cathedral. The Cathedral is unusual in that it sits in a bowl and is viewed from surrounding high ground. For this reason, such a high development so close to the cathedral could be disastrous.

Imagine a six storey building roughly where the Wykhem Arms sits (this is equidistant from the proposal) and about 12 foot lower then the cathedral parapet. The original 2003 brief describes the recommended heights of the buildings clearly and simply by using the Woolstaplers Hall as the benchmark.



While it says heights should vary, the High Street end should generally be limited to four storeys. Block A in the Thornfield Proposal shows a building of no less then six storeys.

The Broadway end, says the 2003 brief, should be limited to generally three storeys "to reflect the scale of the majority of buildings in this area and will allow the Woolstaplers Hall to dominate". The Thornfield proposal shows another six storey building, block B, albeit slightly smaller than block A. Either the brief has to be rewritten or Woolstaplers Hall has to be built higher to conform with the new proposal to ensure its dominance as stated in the brief. Here is a doctored photograph, tongue in cheek, correcting this anomaly.



Winchester has diversity and variety that makes it the beautiful city that it is. Everyone has different views on architecture. However the elevations I have seen of the proposed scheme have none of the character found in Winchester street scenes. The test is this: if you showed this scheme, in isolation, to someone who had never seen it before and asked them which town, in this country, would it belong, my guess is they would never dream it was Winchester.

If any members should agree with my views it is imperative they make this known to our chairman, Pat Edwards.

Huw Thomas