



Newsletter – number 46 – new year 2023/2024



From our chairman – Howard Borrell.

Firstly, my thanks to our committee and members for the warm welcome you have given me.

I am pleased that, generally, the newsletter design and its concentration on more ‘newsy’ events, has been well-received.

From this issue we will not necessarily be producing a newsletter every month. We will prefer to let the news dictate its content and how often we produce an edition – as opposed to making a commitment to publish a monthly issue. Though, as you will see from within, there has been plenty of news since our last edition. Don’t forget that you can also keep up with events by following our Facebook page and keeping an eye on our website.

It has been a busy time for the Civic Society with, in particular, your committee spending some time on the Borough Council’s plans for service reductions and alterations. In our comments on this we aimed to identify the issues that mattered in what we termed providing overall ‘civic good’. We also acknowledged the extreme difficulties that the Borough Council faces. You can read a little more about our response in this newsletter. There’s also a link to our website from which our full response document to the council’s consultation ‘conversation’ can be downloaded.

Despite all the doom and gloom there are some issues that are making progress – you can read about these inside this newsletter. We have also received some useful coverage in the Derbyshire Times on-line edition about both our budget stance and issues around Hurst House.

I want to keep my chairman’s introduction as a regular feature of this newsletter. Over the coming months I’ll use it to share some of my thoughts with you on how I think we might develop the society, what it does and how we can work better with others. And I’m looking forward to receiving your thoughts too.

As this newsletter will be reaching you during the Christmas and the new year period, I would like to take this opportunity of wishing you the compliments of the season – with all the best for 2024. And, of course, grateful thanks for continuing to support the Chesterfield and District Civic Society in ‘Campaigning to make Chesterfield a better place to live’.



Chesterfield & District Civic Society is a registered charity – number 507548

Website - www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100079777451157>

June Beckingham

We are very sorry to report that long-standing society member June Beckingham died at the end of November. A resident of the Chesterfield area for many years, she was well-known particularly as a Chesterfield Borough Councillor (for the Liberal Democrats), where she also served with her husband – Roland, who predeceased her. She was Mayor of Chesterfield in 2003 and had been associated with many voluntary groups in the town, especially the Town Women’s Guild. Our condolences and thoughts are with June’s family and friends.

Constitution

As a charity it is important that we periodically review our constitution to make sure it is fit-for-purpose. Consequently, we will be taking a look at our current (2016 adopted) constitution at a future committee meeting. Our current constitution can be downloaded from our website – <http://www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk/about-us/>

Your help is still needed in revising our buildings at risk list

As mentioned in our last newsletter suggestions are still welcomed for additions to our buildings at risk and unloved buildings list. Maintained for some years, we think that it is time for a review. We will be looking at this list at our next committee meeting in January. The existing list, together with descriptions of the buildings, can be found on our website. The buildings were also listed in our last newsletter.

We are particularly grateful to a member from Staveley who has sent a list of buildings potentially at risk in that area. Let us know your thoughts by contacting our Secretary or Chairman – details at the end of this newsletter.

Our response to the Borough Council’s service cuts ‘conversation’



As mentioned in our last newsletter, the society contributed to Chesterfield Borough Council’s ‘conversation’ on its budget cuts and changes service delivery proposals, which closed on 16 December.

The council needs to make service cuts - predicting a £4million budget shortfall. This is mainly the result central government funding reductions and other factors such as the lingering negative impact of Covid. Our main objective has been trying to preserve as much quality as possible in everyday civic life.

We have now made our written submissions to the council and have published these on our website. You can access the document by following this link – <http://www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk/2023/12/society-responds-to-boroughs-budget-conversation/>

We received some coverage in the Derbyshire Times on our early stance over the visitor centre issue (that ideally it should not close). One of the suggestions we made in our final response was that if the visitor centre were to close the council should work jointly with Derbyshire County Council to provide some form of information facility at Chesterfield Library.

A petition against closure of the visitor centre was submitted to the council’s cabinet meeting on 13 December. We supported this petition but were not the organisers of it. By that time the combined on-line and paper petition had some 4,248 signatures. On 18 December a note was posted via the on-line petition website, amongst other things, it stated; ‘The Council noted the petition and the matters raised in the debate, and it agreed that these be taken into

account by the Council's Cabinet when making a final decision on the future of the Visitor Information Centre (due in February 2024).’

We will be continuing to monitor the budget situation and that at Derbyshire County Council, who are also in financial difficulties.

Work stopped on ‘regeneration’ route



Derbyshire County Council’s financial difficulties have resulted in work being ‘paused’ on the £166m Chesterfield-Steveley regeneration route. The council has recently revised its budget deficit down from £46.4m to £33m – the suspension of planning work on the 3.7-mile route being, it said, one of the contributors to this.

The route was formerly regarded as the Brimington-Steveley bypass, but as we have explained in a previous newsletter article, it has been downgraded to a single carriageway with cycle-tracks, linking various developments in the Rother valley. Included are those on the former Steveley works site.

Just how long work will be suspended is not known as is the impact on the various developments the road was supposed to enable. Local politicians have expressed their concern over the delay.

Station link road planning application made



There is better news on plans to construct a new link road to Chesterfield railway station from Hollis Lane, as the County Council applied for planning permission in late November. Construction of this link road is an important part of the station master-plan. Fortunately, the overall plan is not, apparently, dependant on the now cancelled HS2.

Anyone recently using the railway station might now appreciate the need for the masterplan. Since the welcome introduction of new bus-links and the return of rail travellers there are more conflicting movements between pedestrians, passenger drop-off and pick-ups, buses and taxis at what is a very tight station frontage.

Historic England’s ‘Heritage at Risk’ list published

Historic England (HE) published their Heritage at Risk list in November. This only includes places of worship, Grade I or Grade II* buildings – therefore many ‘at risk’ listed buildings are not in the HE list. Consequently, anyone relying on the list to give anything like an overview on the state of our listed buildings might be somewhat misled. The four buildings listed in the Civic Society’s area of interest are all in Chesterfield borough:

- Church of St Thomas, Chatsworth Road, Chesterfield.
- Gazebo at Brampton Manor and the Brampton Manor Barn, both at Old Hall Road, Brampton.
- Walton Works, Walton Fields Road, Brampton.

Further details can be found on HE’s dedicated heritage at risk website – <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/>.

Buildings and sites update

Chesterfield Borough Council regularly asks us to comment on significant planning applications or those involving listed buildings (this also happens, to a much lesser extent from North East Derbyshire District Council). The committee normally deals with these via internal email circulation, with our chairman then summarising our committee's views. In this section we take a look at some of the more significant applications that we have commented on. There is also an update on buildings and sites we are currently interested in. This is not, though, a complete list.

1 – Former Robinsons site developments



Part of site for development? But does it fit in with an overall view of the land?

An application for development of a 79-bed care home on land between the surviving Grade II* listed former Walton Works and west of Factory Street was made at the end of October. Torsion Care Limited are the applicants. The site is illustrated *left*.

For too long the land formerly the site of the various works of Robinsons, has lain derelict. The significant area of land has been the subject of attempts over the years to form various schemes for its development including a mix of residential and retail. Whilst attempts to address the apparent failure of these schemes to address this continued dereliction might be welcomed, we currently have a number of reservations over the scheme.

These reservations chiefly concern whether or not the proposed development fits into an overall plan for the area. We do not want to see piecemeal development preclude what might be a much better future for the site. There is also a detailed issue regarding the site's boundary with land fronting Factory Street – of which the submitted plans show no details. It is also unclear whether archaeological excavations are included. These were proposed as part of an original survey undertaken of the wider area in 2012 – which we would like to see pursued. We have also made comments about that survey, which appears to have missed out some important details about the area's history. Finally, there may well be questions raised about the development's resilience following the recent floods.

There are no proposals in this application to undertake any works at Walton Mill. The property is also adjacent to the Chatsworth Road conservation area.

The plans and related documents can be found on the Borough Council's on-line planning application site. The reference is CHE/23/00701/FUL – 'development of a 72-bedroom care home with associated car parking, landscaping and infrastructure, land to the west of Factory Street, Chesterfield.'

Members may be aware of other possible plans to bring the police station from New Beetwell Street to a new facility on the same general site area, but closer to the eastern edge of this large plot of land on which Robinson's buildings once stood. This is not, however, part of the nursing home application.

2 – Dunston Hall news

Our Chairman has recently been discussing some issues about the parcel of land to the east of Dunston Hall – known as the 'Deer Park' - with the Dunston Estate. This followed some concerns over the future of this area of land – owned by Chesterfield Borough Council. It is perhaps worth briefly setting out what the owners of Dunston Hall envisage could happen with this land.

It transpires that Dunston Hall's owners wish to purchase the land from the council and re-integrate it with the estate. We are told by Dunston Hall that they 'have been working with the local community and resident's committees to ensure that we offer a safe and enjoyable environment promoting the Government's guidance on green spaces in accordance with the Local Council.'

Should Dunston Hall successfully purchase the 'Deer Park', their plan includes creating an ecology park on the land. This would include areas specifically planted to encourage wildlife, with, for example, outdoor learning spaces for schools. Overall, a 'much-needed recreational space to the local community' might be created. There might also be a network of pathways created including connecting nearby housing developments.

Any land sale by the council would have to be carried out in accordance with normal local authority tendering procedures with, we would think, bids placed, and presumably sale to the highest bidder.

In the recent past, it is no secret that the Society has raised some issues regarding various activities and planning applications at Dunston Hall. The work achieved so far, however, seems to have been to a good standard and has certainly revitalised the property. It has also achieved stabilisation of the cruck barn elements of the outbuilding and provided additional employment. We will be keeping a close watch on developments and letting you know as things progress.

3 – Former 'Rural Council House' Saltergate



This site, formerly the HQ of North East Derbyshire District Council (NEDDC), before that Chesterfield Rural District Council, was the subject of an outline planning application from Homes by Holmes for building a four-storey block of flats to the rear of the building. This would have been situated in the former car park. The society objected to this as being premature – no viable use for the empty (and decaying) former NEDDC building having yet been found.

The application was turned down by the borough council in November, which we welcome. There had been objections from adjacent local residents and adverse comments including from the police – the latter concerned, like the society, about the potential impact that approval would have on the viability of the remainder of the site.

Homes by Holmes apparently own the site and the building. They have previously been granted permission to convert both the 1930s and 1970s office buildings into 59 apartments in 2021. But by October of that year all work had stopped. The company cited payment of a £250,000 Community Infrastructure Levy had made the scheme unviable. At the time the society found this claim surprising as the levy is normally a required part of developments such as this. The planning application permission has only some eight months remaining.

The future of this building is still unclear. Previously we welcomed a scheme, by another developer, which would have seen both the 1930s and 1970s buildings demolished and replaced by a completely new-build apartment complex. Since that time some of our committee members have expressed a view that the 1930s building should be saved. The Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust have also highlighted the building as worthy of retention. At the time of opening, the 1930s building was certainly seen as being of sufficient architectural merit to prompt the Royal Institute of British Architects to photograph it, including elements of its interior – the pictures are available from their photographic library. Consequently, it is likely that we will be considering whether or not this building should be included on our buildings at risk list.

4 – Hurst House

There have been no developments on the future of this property since our last newsletter. We issued a press release about this building in December, which received some useful coverage in the Derbyshire Times. We will continue to monitor the situation.

5 – Brimington

An application to build two bungalows in a Grade II listed house on Station Road at Brimington (though the proposed properties would have fronted the adjacent Rother Avenue) was turned down by the Borough Council in November. We had objected to the application as it adversely affected the setting of the listed building. We are, however, concerned that the listed property might well be deteriorating, so this may well be another candidate for adding to our buildings at risk list.

6 – Woodall Homes Waterside development

Woodhall Homes recently went to planning inquiry over certain aspects of their application to build a mixed housing development on the site of what many will still remember as the old Kitchen Engineering on Brimington Road. This is essentially an extension of the greater Waterside site – which now seems to be destined for predominantly low-rise development. The planning inquiry appears to have concentrated on the contribution that Woodall Homes were being expected to make to infrastructure. The Borough Council had actually indicated that they were minded to approve the development but wanted the infrastructure contribution.

The outcome was reported in early November. This included the stipulation that various footpaths were to be improved. Contributions to renewal of a bridge over the river Rother and some other improvements were to be made if the developer had money available to do this towards the end of the development.

The development is for 83 dwellings and 41 apartments, 20 flats over garages, together with ground floor commercial units.

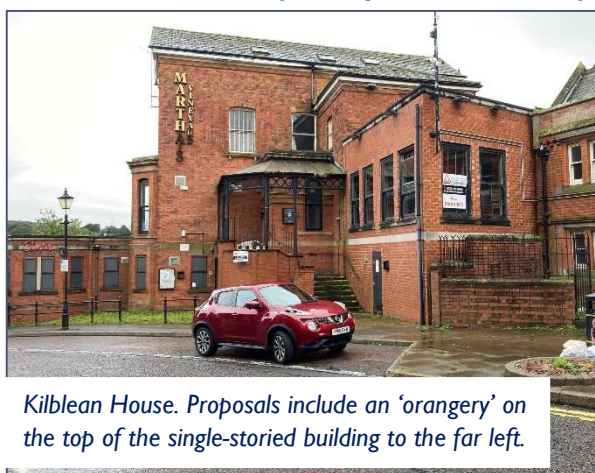
7 – Mines Rescue Station

This is one building that could very easily have succumbed – as it has no statutory listing, though is recognised on the ‘local’ list of heritage assets. The 1917 opened former Mines Rescue Station on Infirmary Road, has recently been the subject of an application (reference CHE/23/00690/FUL) comprising conversion of the existing building, with first and second floor extensions, creating 19 apartments with associated parking. The society have generally welcomed this application, though the tower to the rear of the building will be lost. The training galleries still remain in the basement and are not affected by the application.

The ‘statement of significance’, prepared by consultants to the applicants, contains a major error in stating that the ‘coal board’ built the facility which, of course it did not. This was down to a grouping of local mine owners. The mines were not nationalised until 1947 – creating the National Coal Board. This mistake is particularly strange as the owners have an interesting website on the property and its history at <http://chesterfieldminerescue.co.uk/about/#chesterfieldstation>

The building and its neighbouring staff houses are situated in a perhaps little-known area of Chesterfield, but the work of the mines rescue service was an important part of the area’s coal mining history. It is pleasing, therefore, that this building looks to have an assured future.

8 – Kilblean House (3 Corporation Street)



Many will remember this property as the ‘Clifton Hotel’ – latterly ‘Marthas Vineyard’.

We included it on our buildings at risk list, as it has been empty for some time, an eyesore on the principal pedestrian route from the railway station and is next to the theatre and museum. It was latterly a public house-come nightclub.

A recently submitted planning application has been made by Triwood Holdings Ltd of the Isle of Man (reference CHE/23/00383/FUL) to convert the building into a public house/restaurant, more on the lines of a real-ale house as opposed to a ‘fun-type’ club affair.

Our early comments are that we would generally welcome the application, which would see renovation and a new build ‘glazed orangery’ to the north east facing single story extension. We have, however, expressed some reservations about aspects of the beer garden renovation – which would see the siting of two stacked container units within it – the use of which is now fairly popular elsewhere. Admittedly the area in which they would be situated is a not very attractive back street.

Visitor information standards

Committee member Janet Murphy has a particular interest in the standard of information available to the town's visitors. Her interest in this prompted the publication of two trails – 'Chesterfield's Black and White Buildings' and 'Explore Chesterfield'. Both are aimed at encouraging townspeople and visitors to spend more time in the town centre.

Janet is critical of what she sees as some of the visitor information produced by the Borough Council. One example cited is the town centre art trail (available via the council's website). Janet comments; 'Unfortunately, the trail mentions only two of the many attractive art works to be found there and largely ignores the work done in photographs and information describing them'.

It is likely that the committee will discuss how we might be able to work with the council to improve information, at a future meeting. In the meantime, we would be interested to know our member's views and suggestions on how things could be improved.

Janet's trails can be found at the Chesterfield and District Local History Society's website – <https://www.cadlhs.org.uk/town-walking-trails/>.

Eyre Chapel thoughts



One of our committee members – Darrell Clark – has expressed concerns about the future of the Eyre Chapel at Newbold. The Civic Society were instrumental its restoration in 1986.

According to the latest Pevsner Architectural Guide (2016) the Eyre Chapel is of 'ancient origins ...' and incorporates 'an almost completely defaced Norman tympanum and another Tudor-arched doorway'.

The building, which is sound, is still owned by the Catholic Church, but running it is divested into trustees, of which Darrell is one. Unfortunately, most of the trustees are becoming 'of a certain age' and there is a need to address this.

Should the society become much more involved again and perhaps use it as our base? Just what are the pros and cons of any such arrangements? The committee will be discussing this in the coming months, but we would welcome your views in the interim. Changes, if any, in our relationship with Eyre Chapel, would have to be agreed at our AGM.

Contact us

Please get in touch with us if you have any news to share, want to comment on the Civic Society's activities or have any concerns that you think we should be pursuing.

Email

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Write to us

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