



# SOUTHWELL CIVIC SOCIETY

## Newsletter - October 2012



I make no apology for featuring photographs of the ex-Minster School site on Church Street, once again on the front of the Newsletter. The future of the site remains unresolved. Hopefully the Planning Inspector reviewing the District Council's Allocations and Development Management Options Report will agree with the Society and the Town Council not to allow any housing on the site (see feature article). Providing evidence to the District Council on their ADMOR proposal has occupied a considerable amount of time this year for a dedicated group on the committee.

The AGM will see many changes on the committee, notably Betty Arundel who is resigning as planning secretary having served in the post for thirty years. Martin Duffy, a founder of the Society, is stepping down from the committee. His depth of knowledge of the developments and personalities in Southwell over the last forty years together with his incisive wit will be sorely missed. Norma Blamey, publicity secretary, is also not seeking re-election and we thank her for all her contributions to The Bramley.

I will be stepping down as your chairman. I have thoroughly enjoyed my eight years but think it is now time for a fresh face in the chair. I will continue to take an active part in the Society. I would like to thank all the committee members both past and present who have supported me in my period of office. However in particular I would like to thank Margaret Austen and Peter Somerville who have been outstanding secretaries, Betty Arundel our stalwart planning secretary, Barry Austen for transforming the social activities and Bar Masters our conscientious treasurer and custodian of the Archive.

Mike Struggles  
Chairman

## **Allocations and Development Management Options Report (ADMOR)**

This mouthful is the NSDC Document which prescribes the locations of new housing and employment allocated to Southwell up to the year 2026. The issue has been exercising your Committee over the last few months as we formulated our comments to the Council on their draft. Disappointingly the final document, although taking into account some of our comments and those of the Town Council, ignored other concerns, including the allocation of 13 houses to the former Minster School Site in Church Street.

In general we were concerned about the number of houses allocated to sites on the outskirts of the town, encroaching on the countryside. Some of these have now been removed from the proposals, but others remain. NSDC seem to have calculated housing numbers on a blanket density of 30 per hectare whereas another of their policies identifies the need for smaller and more affordable dwellings in Southwell, reversing the trend of recent years. This implies a need for much higher densities in some locations, particularly appropriate for sites closer to the town centre which are within walking distance, such as Rainbows Yard.

We argued that higher densities on the more central sites would relieve the need for housing in Church Street and also some of the more contentious sites on the perimeter. The lower density proposed would mean more car journeys, leading to increased carbon emissions and pressure on town centre parking. In summary, higher housing density in the centre would result in more sustainable development; another of the Council's stated policies.

Many of our arguments fell on deaf ears at Kelham Hall and there are still sites in the Final Allocation document about which we are unhappy. This document now goes to the Government Planning Inspectorate for review, together with any representations from the public. These will be considered at a public meeting to be held in the late autumn where we hope to make an oral presentation to the Inspector.

The Society reiterated several of its comments in its representation. We are particularly concerned about the Church Street Site and expanded our objections with an analysis to show that permitting housing on the site would contravene several of the policies within the

Options Report and supporting documents. These concern the type and density of housing and the preservation of views of the Minster. Also, the site is part of the Archbishop's Deer Park and within the "Green Wedge" allocated by the Council itself! We prepared images to show what the views would be like in the winter without leaves on the trees (see below) compared to the developer's images which obscure much of the Minster and the proposed houses!



**Summer view produced by the Developer**



**Winter view produced by Peter Scorer**

Finally, we are supporting the Heritage Park Campaign in its aspirations to promote education and tourism by incorporating the site into the Historic Core of the town, and Committee members have helped with the planning application to turn the site into a Heritage Park.  
**Peter Scorer.**

### **Minster School - Church Street**

Another year has gone by and the future of this most important site still remains unresolved. The original planning permission granted to the Minster School for thirteen houses has now run out and the application for thirty-seven dwellings was refused. The next stage is to await the decision of the Planning Inspector to confirm NSDC's proposal that the site should be of mixed use with an allocation of thirteen dwellings. The large piles of building rubble that have arisen high above the surrounding fence have been a cause for serious concern as they are situated above known Roman archaeology. These heaps are associated with an extensive and somewhat secretive archaeological excavation. The interested community groups continue to attempt to monitor the activities on the site.

On the positive side the Town Council, with the assistance of a donation from this society, is about to purchase the western end of the site known as the Orchard land. The already protracted negotiations were further extended by the discovery that the Minster School did not own the site after all. It is owned by Nottinghamshire County Council. The Southwell Heritage Trust on behalf of the community groups has applied for planning permission to develop the whole site into a Heritage Park. The proposal was to cover the whole site with 150mm of top soil and provide information boards. The application was submitted almost a year ago and since then we have been made to jump through several hoops including preparing an extensive flood report for the Environment Agency. Now we are told the owners of some of the land never received notification of our application. Once planning permission is granted and the land finally conveyed, then a start can be made on the park within the Orchard land.

## **Betty Arundel**

Betty has been a cornerstone of the Society, and for over thirty years has served as Planning Secretary. Although this has been a labour of love, it has nevertheless required a tremendous amount of time and dedication.

The Planners at Kelham Hall in the past sent her all the documents and drawings affecting Southwell. When sufficient applications were accumulated she prepared an agenda and come rain or shine delivered them by hand. Prior to the meeting she would visit all the sites with her late husband Gerry acting as chauffeur. Following the meeting she would type up the responses to the District Council and prepare a set of minutes for the members. The documents and drawings were filed and stored in her garage. This resource has been invaluable when new applications came in for the same property many years later. The introduction of home computers for word processing and the advent of the Internet were enthusiastically taken on board despite some hesitation at the outset. Today, copies of the documents and drawings have to be retrieved from the District Council's website.



Betty Arundel at the Society's Stall at the Sealed Knot battle on Southwell Racecourse

Betty's other major contribution to the Society and in some ways her lasting legacy is her book, "Southwell - A History Walk". It remains the best and most comprehensive walking guide around the historic sites in the centre of Southwell. The book is still in print and continues to provide the Society with a modest income. The Southwell Civic Society owes Betty a great debt of gratitude.

## **Planning Report**

The result of the continuing financial situation means that once again we have not had to consider any major housing developments. This lack of movement in the housing market has resulted in more extensions being proposed. What is worrying is not the appearance of these schemes but that our stock of two-bed affordable homes is being eroded as more and more are converted into three- and four-bed houses.

The planning committee has considered just over one hundred applications in the last twelve months. Seventy-five percent were deemed to be either welcome or perfectly satisfactory and no objection was raised. In the remainder of cases we either gave a qualified approval or outright objection. Since the beginning of 2012 we have compared our decisions with those of the District Council. In three-quarters of the applications we were in complete agreement. In twenty percent of cases the Council approved the application where we had recommended refusal or some modification. In the remaining five percent of cases planning permission was refused whereas we had recorded no objection.

Of particular interest was an application for a new library at Brackenhurst. The design submitted was a rectangular box. We objected and suggested that the appearance would be improved if the line of the flat roof could be livened up and that the concrete wall be replaced by brick. NSDC approved the application. However, a new application has recently been submitted by Nottingham Trent University incorporating our comments. We made no objection to the installation of photovoltaic panels on the Equestrian Centre roof but are continuing to strongly object to the application for two wind turbines. We have just commented on newly submitted Heritage and Visibility reports which have not allayed our fears of the potential damage that these turbines will cause to our heritage assets.

An example of where we had no objection and the NSDC thought otherwise was the application to convert the unoccupied office block alongside the care home on Racecourse Road (BP garage) to apartments. The refusal was based on safeguarding employment land, flood risk and lack of 30% affordable housing being included. The applicant has since reapplied.

The Sue Ryder charity applied for listed building consent for new signage to the old Mills shop which they were proposing to occupy. The signs were large, brash and in bright plastic materials. The Society rang up Sue Ryder's property manager to discuss the application. It was obvious that they had no idea about the character of the town but they agreed to look at it again. The application was turned down by the District Council as being "Incongruous & detrimental to a listed building and contrary to the Shop Fronts Design Guide". A new application has been submitted this month to re-brand the existing shop in Queen Street.

## **Social Events 2012-13**

On 21<sup>st</sup> March Colin Walker, Director of Growth for Newark & Sherwood District Council, spoke to a large audience of members at the Minster Centre about the recently adopted Local Development Framework and what it will mean for the area. He gave a wide ranging talk on recent planning legislation and answered a number of challenging questions. He also expressed a wish to work with the Civic Society and this has been followed up.

This event was followed on 16<sup>th</sup> May by a visit of some 47 members to Kelham Hall for a guided tour of the public rooms and a talk by Brendan Haigh on the work of the Hall's Architect, Sir George Gilbert Scott. 2012 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the completion of his work on the building and there was a rare opportunity to examine a selection of his original drawings kindly provided by the Council's Museum service. A visit was also made to Kelham Parish Church which houses the elaborate tomb of Lord and Lady Lexington who owned the earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century Kelham Hall.

In contrast, our next visit was to the neighbouring contemporary new power station at Staythorpe, which is the third to occupy the site. A talk was given on the way the energy is produced which was followed by a guided tour of the massive buildings which now dominate the skyline just outside the town. We also visited the Grade II listed pump house which had been preserved from the previous station.

Finally, on 14<sup>th</sup> October a visit was made to the Newark Air Museum on the site of RAF Winthorpe. The museum contains some 80 or so aircraft making it one of the largest collections in the country. Members were shown around the impressively presented exhibits and some climbed into the interior of a Shackleton. This aircraft monitored Soviet submarines at the height of the Cold War, always equipped with nuclear weapons ready for immediate use. At the end of the visit the only flying Vulcan bomber, precisely on cue, flew at low level over the party and gave a winged salute. The Society's treasurer was relieved to hear that this did not incur any extra expense!

Brendan Haigh, Events Organiser.



Top: Society members on the tour of Staythorpe Power Station

Lower: One of the preserved aircraft at Newark Air Museum

## **New Government Planning Proposals**

In a declared attempt to help an economic recovery the Government is suspending the policy requiring developers to include houses within their schemes for small family units and social housing. Recent schemes in Southwell have included a small number of so called "Affordable houses" but this has fallen far short of the demand for such housing. A shortfall is recognised by the District Council in their Policies.

The other Government initiative which is worrying is the proposal to allow rear extensions of up to eight metres (25ft) to be built without planning permission. If some of the extensions that have been proposed in the past are anything to go by, we run the risk of some very poor building, which unfortunately, will be with us for evermore. We trust our District Council will follow the lead of Conservative-held Richmond Council and campaign against these proposals.

For all the latest information visit our website:- [www.southwellcivicsociety.com](http://www.southwellcivicsociety.com)