



SOUTHWELL CIVIC SOCIETY

Newsletter - October 2014

SOUTHWELL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN by Brendan Haigh, Chairman

At the last General Election the devolution (where have I heard that word before ?) of more decision making to local communities was a flagship policy of both the parties which subsequently became the Coalition Government. Their ideas were embodied in the Localism Act of 2011, neighbourhood planning being one of the key provisions.

In 2013 Southwell Town Council decided to go down the Neighbourhood Plan route and a Steering Group was formed comprising some Town Councillors but mostly interested members of the public because it is an important feature of the whole process that it should not be party political but community driven.

The Plan's policies must relate to land development or use. The District Council has already adopted its Core Strategy and Site Allocation policies and the Neighbourhood Plan cannot overturn those which are designated "strategic policies". This is a mixed blessing in that the District Council in choosing to be ahead of the game has greatly inhibited what a Neighbourhood Plan can seek to do but on the other hand has prevented developers from being able to build virtually where they like which has happened elsewhere.

The Steering Group has accepted because of these constraints not to attempt to

change the sites allocated to provide by 2026 a minimum 292 new houses as required by the District Council. Having already been considered suitable for development there is the risk that upon appeal or at the inspection stage of the Plan that they could be accepted for development in addition and not in place of any newly identified sites. Further it would have been virtually impossible to find alternative sites within the urban boundary which is a strategic policy.

No doubt some aggrieved Town or Parish Council will challenge this situation in the courts one day because it does seem to contradict the principles of localism. For Southwell to have made such a challenge would have risked the whole Plan being derailed or at the very least inordinately delayed.

Much of the work is being done voluntarily but financial assistance has been obtained from national sources and the Town Council in order to pay for professional assistance and to pay printing and other costs. The Plan is expected to go to a public referendum in the autumn of next year provided it can get through all the administrative hoops in the meanwhile. If it is successful the Plan whilst regrettably not being able to determine development locations will hopefully be able to have a significant influence on such important matters as flood alleviation



measures and other environmental issues, street design and development layout and other policies designed to protect and enhance the unique character of the town. Further, Southwell will obtain 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy for improvements in the town rather than the standard 10%.

The Civic Society is not a party to the Plan but 5 or 6 of its members including myself as Deputy Convenor have been participants in a personal capacity. The Society has also, under the leadership of its Planning Secretary Mike Struggles, provided valuable advice and recommendations on individual allocated sites and design principles.

The Neighbourhood Plan should be a valuable tool for planners but we have to face the reality that with all mainstream political parties being determined to support development for various reasons we face a very challenging future for our town.

PLANNING REPORT

by Mike Struggles, Planning Secretary

In the last year the Society's planning committee has considered approximately one hundred planning applications. However, one or two come up time and time again or never seem to be resolved. These include the Minster School site in Church Street, Brackenhurst Wind Turbines, and Beckett's Field on Nottingham Road.

In the Planning Report a year ago we reported that approval had been given for nine houses on the Minster School site. This was technically incorrect. The District Planning Committee had given consent subject to various conditions including a flood alleviation scheme being met. This has yet to be resolved and awaits the report on the flood of 23 July 2013.

In November 2013 Nottingham Trent University appealed against NSDC's decision to refuse planning permission for two wind turbines at Brackenhurst College. The Society prepared a written submission to The Planning Inspectorate prior to the Appeal Hearing which took place at Kelham Hall over four days in July.

The Society, together with the Halloughton Action Group supported the District Council's defence of their decision. On the final day we were able to accompany the Inspector on a tour of strategic viewpoints around and within the town. The Inspector was very accommodating not only allowing us to make our case but also to question witnesses. We expect a decision by the Secretary of State in November.

A year ago Miller Homes applied for permission to build 40 houses on Beckett's Field at the junction of Halloughton Road and Nottingham Road. This was halted awaiting the report on the July floods. A new site layout was submitted at the end of September for 34 houses (see below). The Society's planning committee will consider this in early October.

An application to construct a pond in the grounds of "The Wilderness" on Park Lane was resubmitted to the Planning Authority. The stated objective was to slow down the flow into the Potwell Dyke. However, this was linked to the construc-

tion of two houses outside the urban edge. It was for this reason and also because it lies on the protected line of the bypass that it was turned down for a second time.

The Society not only looks at major projects but also a host of minor but none the less important applications which can have effects not only on the citizens of the town but also on the immediate residents. The committee has in the last year looked at just over one hundred applications. We had no objection to eighty percent of them and ninety five percent of the time the District planners agreed with us. When it came to those we objected to they only agreed with us on three out of sixteen cases. However, in these cases most of our objections were regarding details.

The committee's function is not only to review individual planning applications but also to assist the District Council in developing policy. We have recently commented on the new draft Supplementary Planning Policies for "Householder Development", "Conversion of Traditional Rural Buildings" and "Shop Fronts and Advertisements"

Finally I would like to thank the members of the planning committee for their time and careful consideration of the applications ensuring that our decisions are transparent and fair to all parties. I would also like to thank Canon John Toy and Bar Masters who have retired from the committee for all their contributions over many years. If any member would like to join the planning committee please contact the Chairman Brendan Haigh or myself.



EVENTS REPORT

by Katy Todd, Events Organiser

The Society organised a varied programme of events during the year which were supported by a total of 224 members and their guests.

In March there was a visit to Bromley House Library, formally the Georgian home of the Smith family, the bankers, on Angel Row in Nottingham. Demand for the visit was such that a further visit a week later was arranged. The tour of the library was followed by tea and biscuits provided by the library's volunteers.

In April a visit to the National Grid Training Academy at Eakring, kindly organised by Bill Wilson, was very well supported. It was particularly interesting to see the methods used to train the overhead power line workers.

On a very wet day in June a visit by coach to the private home of the Fitz-Herbert family, Tissington Hall near Ash-



Bill Wilson arrives at the Summer Party with urgent replacements for the missing wine after his trolley dash from the Co-op.

bourne in Derbyshire, took place during their well-dressing week. An informal tour of the house, which is being lovingly restored and maintained by Sir Richard Fitz-Herbert, was followed after lunch by a walk round the village to see the traditional well-dressings, which this year were on a theme of World War I. One benefit of going on a rainy day was that we did not compete with crowds of visitors.

An evening visit in July to the "Flower Pod" run by Reach, formally Southwell Care Project, was also well supported. We were given a tour of this innovative social enterprise where adults with learning disabilities are supported by volunteers to grow and sell beautiful British cut flowers. Our visit contributed £240 in donations to Reach. Also in July, Brendan Haigh organised a visit to Jubilee House, the

sustainable building that is the new home of the diocesan offices on Westgate.

The social event this year was a summer lunch party at Hardwick House, home of Barry Austen. The weather was perfect, the magnificent lunch was planned and prepared by the volunteer catering corps lead by Vanessa Johnston. Due to a discrepancy with the date, the wine did not materialise, however, an impromptu trip to the Co-op ensured an adequate supply was procured and rattled up the Ropewalk in a shopping trolley.

The empties and trolley were duly returned to the bottle-bank and Co-op respectively. The event raised over £1,150 which was donated to the Southwell Flood Fund to help raise the community contribution to the cost of flood mitigation measures for the town.



Brendan Haigh presents the Society's donation to Rob Jordan, the Chairman of the Southwell Flood Forum.

THE SARACENS HEAD MILESTONE

The Society has attempted for many years to obtain planning permission to replace the now disintegrated milestone outside the Saracen's Head with an exact replica.

English Heritage has been, and still is, against the "demolition" of the existing stone as it is "a listed building". Nevertheless the District Council's Conservation Officer supported our view that it is meaningless to conserve a piece of stone that will have completely disappeared in less than ten years.



The milestone about 30 years ago when the inscription was still visible.

The Society submitted a planning application, which included a Design and Access statement with a detailed Heritage Assessment Report.

The District Council Planning Committee gave its consent, providing we make a legal undertaking not to remove the existing stone until the new one is ready for installation. We are waiting for this agreement to be prepared. Once signed, the application will have to be approved by the Secretary of State as the District Council



The milestone in January 2014 showing that the inscription has completely disappeared.

has gone against English Heritage's advice.

We will then be able to commission Richard Morley a local stonemason who has worked on many English Heritage and National Trust properties to carve and install the replacement stone.



The Saracens Head in 1974 showing the milestone to the left of the arch.

N&SDC PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Members may like to know that they can access information about current and past (from April 2008) planning applications on the Planning and Building Control section of website newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/planning-applications

If the Society has made representations these would normally be included as a document relating to the application.

You may also view the Society's comments on the latest applications in our Planning Committee Minutes on our own website which is southwellcivicsociety.com



The national charity for the civic movement in England

The Society is a member of this national umbrella group for conservation societies. It promotes conservation issues in the press, and as a pressure group makes representations to the Government and parliamentarians.

It publishes a regular newsletter called "Civic Update". If you would like to receive an electronic version, this is available by contacting info@civicvoice.org.uk, saying that you are a member of our Society and wish to be included on their emailing list.