

SOUTHWELL CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER - October 2009



Aerial view of Church Street site showing proposed landscaped strip with Roman remains

This year the economic situation has resulted in no new major housing schemes being submitted for planning permission. Nevertheless there have been several significant proposals put forward; both in terms of specific proposals and long term planning.

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has moved to the next stage. The District Council put forward their proposals for Southwell earlier in the year. They did not include the land from Brackenhurst alongside the A612 or the proposal to build part of the by-pass and several hundred houses uphill from the Minster School. It did include extending housing in the fields along the Halam Road and adjacent to Kirklington Road opposite Norwood Park. The Society submitted its comments, and we are still awaiting the District Council to publish the next phase.

The SHLAA will form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) which is the long term plan for the District up to 2026. An important part of this has just been released for public comment. This document is called "Core Strategy Options Report" which covers a whole range of planning issues such as industrial development, environmental issues, flooding, tourism and housing. It is housing which will have the biggest impact on Southwell. It is recognised that Newark is to be a growth point and that the character of Southwell is to be maintained. Nevertheless, depending on which scenario is adopted, the number of new houses proposed is between 390 and 800. It is recommended that 35% should be "affordable". These proposals will increase the size of the town by at least 15 percent. The Society will be making its own submission but individuals are encouraged by the District Council to make their own comments. This has to be done on the official form obtainable from Kelham Hall or on the website found at http://newark.limehouse.co.uk/portal/core_strategy_options_report Closing date is 7th December 2009.

A year ago a planning application was put forward to develop 37 dwellings on the old Minster School site in Church Street. The archaeological excavations, as is widely known, have revealed significant Roman finds. A report is being prepared by the developer's archaeologist in conjunction with the County Archaeologist Ursilla Spence. The current planning application is in abeyance. It is anticipated a revised scheme will be put forward in due course.

The Society, with the Local History Society, the Southwell Community Archaeology group and the Southwell Heritage Trust have worked together campaigning to create a strip of land free from development and in public ownership. The strip would have the virtues of protecting the remains in perpetuity, allow full interpretation and signage with the remains "marked" in the landscape, and would enable visitors to get the sense of the sheer scale of Roman building activity. It would also have the added and important bonus of connecting, both physically and visually, important open spaces north and south of the site. It is hoped a heritage area will be developed including the Minster and the remains of the Archbishop's Palace.

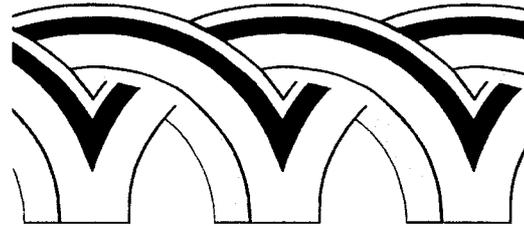
OUR NEW CIVIC SOCIETY LOGO

Members may have noticed that the Society has adopted a new logo. Some months ago the committee decided that the image of the Society needed updating, and the old logo with the image of the Minster should be replaced. The problem with using the image of the Minster is that it is not unique to the Society as it is now used as a logo by several local companies, and it did not have any specific connection with the Society. A sub-committee of David Willetts, Bar Masters and Peter Somerville was established to come up with some ideas for a new image, and a number of designs were considered.

One of many ideas put forward by David Willetts was based on the double blind-arcading on the side of the towers of the Minster. (See photo, and look for yourselves next time you pass the Minster). This architectural feature was converted into a design to demonstrate the concepts of tradition, integration and continuity which reflect some of the objectives of the Society. The design was modified to make it suitable for any likely form of printing or photocopying and incorporated into the Society's letter headings and other stationery, including the new recruitment leaflets that have recently been produced.



Part of the Minster tower



The new Society logo

PLANNING REPORT by Betty Arundel

The economic downturn has not particularly affected the total number of planning applications but it has changed the mix of applications. We are now seeing more extensions and less new houses. During the year the Civic Society's Planning Committee considered 102 Planning submissions to the Newark & Sherwood District Council. Our comments are then forwarded to the District Council to be taken into account when the Council considers the application.

There was a retrospective application for works already carried out at The Old Vicarage on Westgate now called The Vicarage Boutique Hotel. These included use of part of the hotel as a restaurant/coffee shop, car parking areas (where trees were removed), a decking area including a hot tub, and the re-roofing of the conservatory with slate. The hotel is being advertised for functions and weddings and our main concerns were noise and nuisance to neighbours during the daytime and late evening and also with parking over spilling onto Westgate. The District Council approved the application with Conditions attached but did not appear to address our concerns regarding parking in Westgate or take any action regarding damage to the trees.

An application was submitted for Lloyds Pharmacy in King Street for two illuminated fascia signs and a hanging sign. The fascia signs and the hanging sign are already in place. We had no alternative but to oppose this application because the materials used are not in accordance with District Council policy that only traditional materials should be used on shopfronts on Listed Buildings in Conservation Areas. There has been no decision as yet on this application.

There was an application for an ATM unit to be installed at the Post Office in Queen Street. We did not accept there was a need for another such unit in the town and it would add to the present clutter on the front of this Listed Building. Also, Post Office vans are often unable to park or have difficulty parking next to the Post Office and an ATM unit would encourage even more drivers to park irresponsibly. The application was refused by the District Council and was taken to Appeal by the applicant. The Appeal Inspector dismissed the Appeal, his main reasons being that the installation of a standard Post Office fascia display and menu board constructed with modern materials would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic character of the Post Office, a Listed Building, and also of Southwell's Conservation Area. A further application which was refused and went to Appeal was for No. 78 Westhorpe where it was proposed to install two solar collectors on the south-west facing section of roof. The Inspector surmised that the two collectors would appear quite out of place because of their combined size and form, and would cause harm to the appearance of the Conservation Area,

We were pleased to support an application for iron railings to be restored to the front elevation of Burgage Manor. The railings will be mounted on the existing dwarf walls to front of the house. The Manor lost its original railings during the Second World War as did so many of our buildings in Southwell.

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THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE by Bar Masters

The photographic archive has been used by a steady stream of visitors during the year, several of whom travelled some distance to view it. However, this resource is still rather underused, and members are encouraged to make more use of it, and also to publicise it to non-members who might be interested.

At the Heritage Open Day, held on 12th September, a small selection of photos from the archive, including the book that was compiled in 1974 by P Cartwright, G Cellarelli and D Measures for the European Architectural Heritage Year competition in 1975, attracted the attention of many visitors. The book was put together as an improvement scheme for the central conservation area of Southwell. We are most grateful to Betty Arundel and Sue Summers, who played an important role on the day in pointing out features of the display and answering visitors' questions.

An important recent addition to the archive has been generously donated by Society member Eric Ritchie. This consists of over 200 contemporary photos of the town and its surrounding area, which provide a valuable record of the way the town has developed. The photos below compare views of the cinema in Westgate from the time it was a brewery to the present day. We are most grateful to Eric for this interesting resource, which will doubtless be much appreciated by future generations of residents.

In a few months' time, the archive will be moved from its current location in 'Cell 3' to a new room within the Council Office building. Under these new arrangements we shall have a room to ourselves, rather than, as currently, share a room with the Local History Society. To avoid confusion, we shall retain the address 'Cell 3' – and hope this will not upset any former inmates!



Pre 1914:The Westgate Brewery prior to WWI



1934/5: The Ideal Cinema. Showing "King of the Wild" starring Rex the Wonder Horse.



1990s: The building in the 1990's with shops.



Present Day: Conversion into apartments.

CONTINUATION OF PLANNING REPORT

Sherwood Restorations Ltd on Upton Road applied for the erection of a versatile all-steel building to be used for partial storage and light engineering relevant to the restoration and preparation of classic cars and historic racing cars. We were of the opinion that this steel industrial unit would be entirely alien to the area and would not be in keeping with the existing buildings on the site, nor with Caudwell House or the nearby National Trust's Southwell Workhouse. Despite our concerns, this application was approved by the District Council. This steel unit is now in place, painted white, in a prominent position at the rear of the site.

An application for the building of four two-storey houses to the rear of Nos. 49-57 Fiskerton Road which was refused by the District Council has now gone to Appeal. There have been a number of varied proposals for housing on this site all of which have been refused by the Council and subsequently dismissed by the Inspector at Appeal.

SOCIAL EVENTS 2009 by Barry Austen

We started this year with a very good talk by **Nick Wilson**, son of Bill and Doreen, who is MD of a company specialising in the restoration of stone buildings. He gave us a highly informative, spirited and entertaining talk which was very well attended.

This was followed by a talk from **Roger Dobson**, on the history of Southwell's inns and ale houses. The wide range of activities that had been pursued in these licensed premises was fascinating, and demonstrated the depth of research undertaken by Roger in preparing for the talk and his book.



Members assemble outside Renishaw Hall



Thoresby Park House

In the spring we arranged a trip by coach to **Renishaw Hall**, the home of the Sitwell family. Although the gardens are regularly open to the public, the house is not; but we were able to arrange a visit inside the house and of course the gardens. The weather was kind to us and we had a great day.

Our final outing this year was to **Thoresby Park House** – the home of Hugh Matheson, a descendant of the Pierrepont family, who has built, within the last ten years a copy of a Palladian villa which is quite extraordinary and breathtaking. Mr Matheson gave us a first-class rundown on the building of the house, interspersed with his family history. Part of his family's wealth came from the Hong Kong firm of Jardine Matheson whose origins lie in the far-eastern drugs trade.

I am pleased to say that all our events were well attended. Where numbers were restricted some members were disappointed, but we hope they will be luckier next time.

THE CIVIC SOCIETY INITIATIVE

Earlier this year the Civic Trust went into administration. The Trust was a charity set up by the government in 1959 and acted as an umbrella organisation for all civic societies. To receive a Civic Trust Award was a much-sought-after honour amongst civic-minded developers.

Out of the ashes has arisen a new organisation the "**Civic Society Initiative**". When the Civic Trust collapsed Griff Rhys Jones was the newly-appointed President, and since then he has been taking an active part in getting the new organisation going. The National Trust has seconded Mike Burton, one of their senior managers, and he together with one of the Civic Trust's ex-employees based in Liverpool has set up an office. The new organisation has the backing of Prince Charles.

Your Chairman and Secretary attended a meeting of the East Midlands Association of Civic Societies and subsequently the Southwell Civic Society has sent a donation equivalent to our old Civic Trust affiliation fee to the steering group of the new organisation. In return, as an incentive, the National Trust is proposing to give one day's free entry to every member of an affiliated society.

A message from HRH The Prince of Wales to the Civic Societies National Convention, Blackpool, October 2009

As the former Patron of the Civic Trust, I was saddened to hear of its demise in April this year. I was particularly concerned for the future of the network of civic societies which can be of such value for many communities around this country. It was, therefore, hugely encouraging to see the emergence of the Civic Society Initiative to find a way to fill this void. I think Tony Burton and Ian Harvey deserve every congratulation for what they have helped achieve in less than five short months.

As civic societies, you play an essential part in cherishing the much-loved roots and identities of our communities and campaigning for a better, more sustainable, future. As a movement, your own roots are long and your achievements extensive. Out of adversity you now have an opportunity, if I may say so, to build something even stronger – a powerful community movement which can address the challenges of a fast-changing world and remain a steadfast champion of the fabric and character of our nation's cities, towns and villages. Nowhere should be without its civic society and no-one should be without the voice you can provide.

The Prince's Regeneration Trust will be able to support and contribute to your thinking as you move forward.