



The Buckingham Society

Campaigning for a better Buckingham

Newsletter February 2019

A word from our Chair

Soon after the death of the Comte de Paris at Stowe House in 1894, a, now defunct, newspaper called the “Westminster Gazette” referred to Stowe as being, “*a vast mansion in a big park in an unattractive part of Buckinghamshire two miles from the most absolutely uninteresting county town in the kingdom*”. The article then went on to say that, “*...there are those who declare this description of Buckingham is rough on Chelmsford*”.

Clearly, the Gazette’s contributor had it in for Buckingham (and Chelmsford) and, maybe in 1894 it was true, although I would guess it is quite likely that the writer had not actually been here (journalists then, as now, not necessarily being strict purveyors of actuality) and was just being satirically amusing (as they saw it). But, if true in 1894, it certainly is not so now.

I have led a number of walks around the town in the last couple of years and the consensus of opinion is that Buckingham is a very pleasant place to be. Visitors are generally surprised by the amount of history there is here and just how lovely so many parts of the town are. They also comment on how friendly and welcoming local people are.

In order to ensure that Buckingham continues to be somewhere that people find attractive, the Town Council has set up a new Economic Development Working Group. This involves councillors, representatives of local businesses, local people who have the welfare of our town at heart and the Buckingham Society. The group is intended to develop strategies to ensure that the town thrives and continues to be a great place to live and work. Aims with which the Buckingham Society members would clearly agree and which chime very well with the activities undertaken by the Society since its inception (as the Buckingham Action Society) 45 years ago.

I will be representing the Society on the working group and will let you know through these newsletters how it progresses. In the meantime your Society will continue to undertake those actions, as outlined in this newsletter, all of which seek to prove the Westminster Gazette completely wrong.

Buckingham Society Tree Walk

Michael Hunt, the society's tree expert, will be leading a tree walk for Buckingham Society members in Buckingham on Friday 26th April at 10.30a.m. The image to the left of a Golden Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior jaspidea*) at Brookfield Lodge was taken by Michael. All members will be very welcome to join him on what is sure to be a very interesting stroll around the town.



If you would like to join the walk, or would like more details, please let me know.
Kathy Robins - Kathyrobins@walnutyard.co.uk or 07834484762

Planning – Carolyn Cumming

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP)

I note that back in July 2017, this newsletter reported that VALP would become fully adopted in 2019. As a result of the Inspector's interim findings last September, the Council have introduced some modifications which do now appear to have been accepted by the Inspector as "sound". He accepted the Council's response to his initial criticisms of the housing supply figure and is satisfied that with a commitment to an "early review" of the plan when more information is available about the exact route of the proposed Cam-Ox Expressway, the VALP is sound. We might therefore expect to see an Adopted Plan by the summer of 2019.

Tingewick Road Triangle (17/04668/ADP)

The developers have gone a long way to meet some of the wished for design elements within the overall scheme. Having had two meetings with representatives of Barratt/Wilson Homes, many of our original criticisms regarding use of materials and architectural detail were recognised and we believe that the amended proposals will now result in a sympathetic scheme. We are pleased to see St Rumbold's Park given due focus with the well itself being provided with a new information board and given added protection. It is anticipated that, assuming approval is granted, the first 60 of the 382 houses will begin this summer. A three year build is envisaged.

Wates Proposals for Osier Way 19/00148/AOP

An outline application has now been officially lodged with AVDC. Members will remember that they carried out a consultation last October on their initial proposals, at which members of the Society made several suggestions but the layout plan does not make clear exactly how these have been incorporated; e.g. controlled speed measures on internal roads to prevent rat running. This is a large housing scheme (up to 420 dwellings), which it must be emphasised, is on a site that was not allocated within the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan and the Society would certainly support the Town Council in their opposition to the development because of that. It is, therefore, doubly regrettable that Wates have chosen to file this application with a minimum of 25% affordable housing instead of the 35% required within the BNDP. A five metre "buffer" of native trees is proposed between the existing properties on Gawcott Road and the adjacent new housing. In our view there should be increased green open space at this point. We are also disappointed that no site is proposed for a new primary school. Given the projected development to the south and west of the town, this is, in our view, short-sighted.

MacDonalds TakeAway 18/02959/APP

With regard to the objections previously raised on issues of traffic, noise, litter, the developer's agent writes (complacently we think):

i) that their transport assessment does not envisage any negative impact on adjacent roads

ii) that as the drive-thru (their spelling, not ours) is not adjacent to residential properties, additional noise would not impact over and above the existing context of the site

and iii) that they cannot be responsible for those members of the public who litter away from the site.

The detailed designs for the flow of traffic into and out of the site make your head spin. It will be interesting to see if it works in practice.

West End Farm (18/04290)

This latest application we think is a classic example of how the planning system can so easily be abused. The initial application for this site envisaged a residential care complex, which was refused, but eventually granted permission by the Inspectorate at appeal on the basis that further care home provision was needed. A new applicant, (Brio Retirement Homes) has acquired the site and is now applying for a "variation" which would see the development providing a "retirement village" for over 55s. Furthermore, the buildings themselves are to be built off site in Liverpool to a standardised format which ignores the original designs. This back-handed approach makes a nonsense of the system and fuels resentment towards development per se.

Which perhaps lends added testimony to the Government's new commission *'Building Better, Building Beautiful'*. Its stated objective is to *"develop a vision and practical measures to help ensure new developments meet the needs and expectations of communities"*.



Civic Voice has introduced a survey seeking views of what Civic Societies up and down the country think could be done. They say "Give us your examples of the Good, the Beautiful, and the Ugly. The Buckingham Society submitted answers to the survey, emphasising the need to look at individual architecture and architects for all housing schemes, rather than rely - as so many do - on "pattern book" designs. What do you think of this?

16/00151/AOP

Land Off Walnut Drive and Foscoote Road, Maids Moreton

As this newsletter is being prepared, we hear that the above development application will be heard at the AVDC Strategic Development Committee on February 20th. The Society has strongly objected to these proposals, which at a stroke would double the size of the village, have a severe and detrimental effect on the amenity of all existing residents and create a traffic nightmare in the village itself, as well as at major nearby junctions. It is therefore with alarm that we learn the development has received Officer Approval. How has this happened?

When this application was first received, the evidence produced by HELAA (Housing and Economic Land Assessment) clearly stated that this parcel of land on the edge of the village settlement overlooking Foscoote Reservoir (a bird sanctuary) was unsuitable for development. Highways also regarded the traffic implications as unsustainable, not least because of the obvious absurdity of inserting a mini roundabout on Main Street at its junction with Walnut Drive and the equally obvious unsuitability of Foscoote Road to offer a secondary access. The Officer now claims that sufficient “mitigation measures” can be put in place to wave aside all these legitimate objections. Tell that to the residents who live on Main Street and Walnut Drive.

In the Officer’s report, there is an admission that AVDC have 11 years of housing supply. This development of 170 houses is therefore completely unnecessary should the argument revolve around supply.

It is also acknowledged that the facilities required to service a development of this size will be provided by Buckingham. But what seems to have escaped notice – conveniently – is that the accumulation of new housing around Buckingham (well nigh 1000 new households) is set to overstretch these services to snapping point.

We are turning our market towns into cities, our villages into dormitory towns but at such a rate that our inadequate medieval road network, our crowded schools and pressurized health services cannot cope.

This development is a microcosm for what breeds resentment and conflict with planners and developers. For very sound and good reasons, this parcel of land was considered unsuitable but the developer – without any consultation with local residents – has been able to squeeze concession after concession with officers so that with no real thought to the wellbeing of existing residents, they can use the system for their benefit alone.

Buckingham Society Conservation Awards – Terms of Reference

This is a new initiative by the Society aimed at given recognition to people and organisations that have done something to improve the look of our town. The terms of reference for the awards are as below:

- The new awards were formally launched at the AGM in November 2018
- The awards, in the form of a framed certificate, will be presented annually on Buckingham Civic Day
- The criterion for nomination will be simply that the nominees have undertaken a project that enhances and improves our historic market town
- Projects could be of any size; not limited to architectural matters and not confined to the Conservation Area. For example:
 - enhancing/restoring all or part of an existing building
 - creating a completely new building
 - interesting tree or other flora planting
 - creating/improving some other form of open space

- helping to improve a proposed development
- There will be no upper limit on the number of awards presented
- All members of the Buckingham Society will be encouraged to participate in making nominations and nominations will be taken only from members of the Buckingham Society
- Nominations to be sent by email to Chairperson@buckinghamssociety.org.uk
- The decision on whether or not to award a certificate will be made by a sub-group of the Executive Committee comprising the Chair and any other Committee members who wish to be involved but not at a regular Committee meeting
- The awarding group will meet and make their decisions in early May to provide sufficient time to notify recipients and ensure that as many as possible would be available to receive their award on Civic Day
- Nominations may be put forward at any time but all will be held until the awards group meets and considered at that meeting
- For nominations to be considered in 2019, projects should have been completed between May 1st 2017 and April 30th 2019. Subsequently, nominations would cover one year only from May 1st to April 30th, which is the closing date for submissions.

As you will see, all members of the Society are encouraged to participate; so please let us know of any examples that you think would qualify for an award.

Green and open spaces – Ian Orton

River Restoration in the upper Great Ouse catchment area:

As most members are now aware the River Great Ouse experienced a major pollution incident on 30 June 2018 when a considerable volume of what was almost certainly an industrial disinfectant seeped into the watercourse at Brackley.

Most, if not all of the fish, invertebrates and small mammals that inhabited the river and its banks over a 25 kilometre stretch of the river between Brackley and Thornton were obliterated. The damage to the ecosystem is incalculable.

In addition to hundreds, if not thousands, of fish killed the pollution seriously degraded aquatic plant life and other elements of the food chain. This has had predictable consequences for birdlife, especially egrets, kingfishers and other breeds that are heavily dependent on the river. Experts, such as Councillor Simon Cole, think that it will take around four to five years for the river to recover, assuming is done to accelerate the process and there are no further pollution incidents.

The good news however, is that although the incident was very serious it only affected part of the upper Great Ouse catchment area, i.e. the River Great Ouse itself. The extensive network of tributaries that feed into the river, including the Claydon and Padbury Brooks were unaffected. The pollution incident has also galvanised the Environment Agency into action.

Don't get too excited, however, because the Environment Agency has a very limited budget and as, such, any substantive initiatives are likely to be few and far between. In Buckingham we might see more weir removals (e.g. the ones in Bourton Meadow Park and behind the Waitrose car park). We have just heard that the Environment Agency has decided to start re-restocking the River Great Ouse with fish.

The Agency would, however, like to establish a Rivers Trust covering the upper Great Ouse catchment area to help initiate, fund and oversee restoration projects. The Trust would encapsulate a variety of stakeholders and could be eligible for funding from a variety of sources to help facilitate its work. This is likely to take some time to establish. As a halfway house,

however, the Environment Agency would like to establish a river warden scheme. River wardens have an important role in monitoring watercourses, e.g. water quality etc. and the associated wildlife (fish, invertebrates, birds, mammals). In



addition to acting as the Environment Agency's eyes and ears they can be a useful source of ideas for restoration initiatives that could be implemented by the Agency, local government or River Trusts.

I have attended on behalf of the Society two initial meetings that have explored the River Trust concept and a river warden scheme organised by Buckingham Town Council and the Environment Agency. These have attracted interest from not just organisations that have obvious connections with the river, e.g. angling clubs, riparian owners etc. but individuals as well.

There appears to be a feeling that what happened on 30 June 2018 must never happen again. It has also become apparent that there is a newfound appreciation of the River Great Ouse along with ways in which it can be restored and enhanced. This ties in nicely with "Our River", a project embarked upon by the Society well over a decade ago. Is it time to reactivate and extend this? Any views?

In the meantime should any member wish to participate in a River Warden scheme please let me know and I will act as a facilitator.

The Transport Group – David Child

There is not a great deal to report from the Transport sub group. Everything seems to stop in December and January. There are a number of Transport write ups on the Society web site - have a look via this link - <http://buckinghamssociety.org.uk/Transportschemes.html> Many are still valid and we dig up these and others we have not published every time we can reasonably link a write up to some event or funding.

HGV report

The society continues to try and establish the status of the weight restriction signs in and around the conservation area.



Damaged buildings The Buckinghamshire County Council Transport, Economy and Environment Draft Freight Strategy consultation document 2018-2036 show: - School Land –Addington Road –Western Avenue – Market Hill – Bath Lane – Bourton Road - part of Tingewick Road as having HGV bans. But although there are weight restriction signs on Well Street - Gawcott Road - Hunter Street (to name just three) the society has been unable to establish the veracity of the signs or BCC Freight Strategy information.

Furthermore the society has not been able to confirm that BCC is able to access “OS mastermap highways

network” Although Ordnance Survey advised in 2017 that “OS MasterMap Highways is available to all public sector bodies including Buckinghamshire who can access the information ... the weight and height restrictions” KATHY – I do not understand this paragraph.



It is essential that the restrictions appear on the OS mastermap highways network as this is the basis for many satnav systems and is probably required if any penalties are going to be applied to vehicle drivers who ignore the bans.

Meanwhile the mayhem in and around Well street continues unabated.

These are just a few recent pictures captured by residents when a camera or phone is to hand

If you are able to capture some of the remarkable HGV antics send them to transport@buckinghamssociety.org.uk and if possible the location and date the picture was taken

Railway Walk

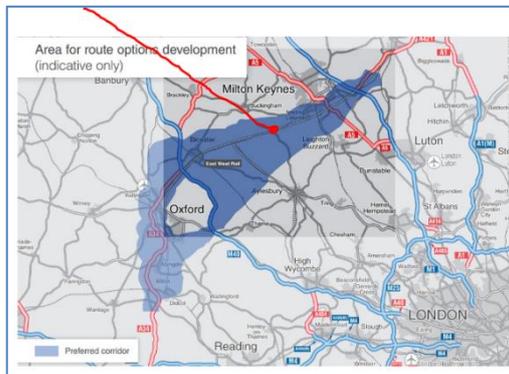
As part of the campaign to have it designated as a permanent public footpath, Buckingham Town Council is appealing for information about how and when people use the railway walk. This is a useful pedestrian link from Tingewick Road and other paths that join on the way to the industrial estate and the superstores near Lace Hill. It would be even better with a bit of lighting but one step at a time. The link to the BTC is here: <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/we-need-you-help-to-establish-a-right-of-way/>



Forms can be obtained from the Old Goal.

East - West Express way

The announcement by the Roads Minister Jesse Norman had only just been release when the October newsletter was put together so the map below was not available at that time.



You can see from this map that the likely route does not reach Buckingham. It does seem to confirm that will join the M1 at junction 13 but leaves the M40 junction open to 3 possibilities. I have not seen any reports on Oxford council position. It will be key because, if they press for a south of Oxford route to relieve the pressure on the A34, then it looks likely that the route would be south of Winslow. Here are a couple of links for more detail:

<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/environment/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/corridor-announced-to-unlock-full-potential-of-englands-economic-heartland>

Buckingham Trader of the Year 2018

In November last year, the people of Buckingham once again chose their



favourite local trader. Almost 2,000 votes were cast as local people took part in the poll, organised by the Buckingham Society, to choose their favourite Buckingham trader, place to eat and market trader. As with the previous year, people said how very difficult it was to choose from the array of excellent shops, cafés and service providers that we have in our historic

market town.

Thirty-three traders received nominations and the winner, for the second year in succession was “Leeders Hardware” with children’s clothing boutique “Dandy Lions” in second place.

The winner of the award for Buckingham’s Favourite Place to Eat was “The Meadow Row Tea Room”, first out of 23 nominations, with “Bee’s Kitchen” as a very close runner-up. The Market Trader of the Year award went to Ian Winman of the “Isla Jane Bakery”.

The awards were presented by the Mayor of Buckingham, Councillor Jon Harvey, at the ceremony to switch on Buckingham’s Christmas lights.

The Society started the awards three years ago to try to help draw Buckingham people’s attention to their town centre. The Society believes that Buckingham should feel proud that, in these difficult times for High Streets up and down the land, Buckingham still has so many brilliant people willing to set up shop and provide the goods and services that we need. The town centre is the heart of Buckingham and, without these people, the heart would go out of the town and Buckingham would die. They all deserve our support.

2019 Dates for your diary

Committee meetings 2019 - all start at 17.00hrs: 27th March
22nd May
24th July
25th September
Annual General Meeting 21st November
Annual Lecture and Garden Party 25th July. Further details to follow.

Executive Committee:

Roger Edwards	Chair
David Child	Treasurer, transport, website and planning
Carolyn Cumming	Planning
Ed Grimdsdale	Planning and society historian
Gill Jones	Membership secretary
Belinda Morley-Fletcher	Secretary
Nigel Morrison	Ent Fest representative
Roger Newall	Planning
Ian Orton	Green and Open Spaces, planning
Mark Parsonage	Website
Anthony Ralph	Planning
Kathy Robins	Newsletter Editor, planning
Colin Stocker	University representative

We should like to hear from you

Please give us some feedback - tell us what activities you would like The Buckingham Society to prioritise. Comments to: kathyrobins@walnutyard.co.uk Tel: 07834 484762. If you would like to become involved in any of our activities or attend a meeting of the executive committee, just contact us and come along.
www.buckinghamssociety.org.uk