



# The Buckingham Society

*Campaigning for a better Buckingham*

## Newsletter February 2020

### A word from our Chair

According to the Buckingham Advertiser, the Government has provided a grant of around half a million pounds to Buckinghamshire councils to help rough sleepers get into accommodation. And not before time say I. As I am writing this, storm Dennis is battering the windows and the rain is sluicing down and it is difficult to imagine anything more soul destroying than having to sleep on the streets.

The number of rough sleepers across the country has increased by almost 3,000 since 2010 with around 4,700 counted on one night last autumn. But people working with the homeless consider this to be just the tip of the iceberg. Research done by the Centrepont charity in London suggests that over 100,000 16-24 year olds *“asked their council for help last year because they were homeless or at risk”*. Head of Public Affairs at Centrepont, Paul Noblet said, *“We know that for every rough sleeper on our streets, there are many more hidden homeless people who are sofa-surfing, staying in unsafe or unsuitable accommodation or putting themselves in desperate situations to find a bed for the night”*. And the average life expectancy of somebody

sleeping on the streets is 47 – how shocking is that?



Now, you might well ask, “What has this got to do with the Buckingham Society”? And the answer in one way is nothing at all. As far as I know there are no rough sleepers in Buckingham, although it is very unlikely that nobody is “sofa-surfing” or sleeping in difficult circumstances, and it has been

identified as a possible issue here as Buckingham Parish Church has a scheme to assist possible rough sleepers of either gender and to offer help with accommodation.

But, while we may not see anything obvious in Buckingham, you only have to go to Milton Keynes Central railway station and then walk up to the shopping centre to see numerous people living in the most difficult circumstances. Many, possibly most, of these people have substance abuse and/or mental health problems. Don't we all have some sort of responsibility to help those who are put into such an appalling situation?

I am not advocating giving money directly to people on the streets as all the leading charities in the field are against that. But there are plenty of national organisations such as Shelter, Crisis, the Salvation Army and so on that need all the help they can get.

We are very lucky to live in a prosperous and, on the whole, very safe place. But we should not forget those who are not as fortunate as us.

## Design and Conservation Awards 2020 – Roger Edwards

You may remember that last year the Buckingham Society created a new award aimed at recognising people or organisations that have undertaken projects that have enhanced and improved how Buckingham looks. Called the “Buckingham Society Design and Conservation Awards”, they relate to projects of any size and could include new buildings, renovation of an existing building, planting trees or creating or improving some other form of open space.

Last year's winners were:

- The University of Buckingham for the Vinson Building
- Morrison Property Consultants for the transformation of the former NatWest building
- The Mitre pub for a sensitive internal upgrade and improvements to what is believed to be Buckingham's oldest existing pub.
- Mr T. Lawler for the conversion of 1 and 1A Ford Street
- Mr T Campbell and Ms P Battle for the conservation of 4 Nelson Street (the Blue House)
- Grail Conservation Builders for a long-term conservation project undertaken at 11 Bristle Hill
- Stoneleigh House for - a beautiful conversion of a town house into a boutique hotel
- Villiers Hotel – for a very high-quality internal rehabilitation of the Old Town Hall
- Mrs N Parish for the work she does in maintaining the Barton's Hospital Alms Houses gardens in Church Street
- The Railway Walk Conservation Group – for the work done by the group over many years in maintaining and enhancing the Railway Walk



It is now time to gather nominations for this year's awards. The criteria are quite simple:

- The nominees should 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 Buckingham in some other way
- The nominations should relate to projects undertaken between May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 and April 30<sup>th</sup> 2020

Anybody in Buckingham can make nominations, so if you know of a person, people or organisation that have done something to make Buckingham look better, please let us know about it. The awards will be presented on Saturday June 20<sup>th</sup> at Buckingham Civic Day.

## Planning – Carolyn Cumming

### Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

The proposed Modifications Consultation took place over a six week period last November-December. Your society submitted several comments, particularly in relation to the withdrawal of BUC051 (Site M in the Neighbourhood Plan), while continuing to allocate two sites in Buckingham that were not part of the town's own Development Plan. We also anticipated that the new proposal for Shenley Park (scheduled to provide up to 1100 dwellings) would generate a vociferous response. In all, we learn that over 850 responses were received and that the Inspector has requested further clarification from AVDC before giving his formal conclusions. We will, therefore, not see an adopted plan in place before the new Unitary Authority replaces AVDC. When (and if) the plan is finally adopted, it will immediately be subject to review.

Frankly, we can only gasp at the appalling amount of time, energy, paper and expense that this whole charade has cost – and so little gained.

### MK Futures Strategy 2050

In the meantime, Milton Keynes have published their draft strategy for growth beyond 2030. A study was commissioned to explore suitable locations for growth outside the present Milton Keynes boundaries; namely spilling over into Aylesbury Vale, South Northants and Bedford Borough. They emphasise that the proposals are very much in draft form and do not commit neighbouring authorities to the suggested locations but, taking into account patterns of growth that will enable best use of public transport systems, they have identified extending their urban tentacles towards Towcester, Winslow, Leighton Buzzard and Bedford. There is also a suggestion to link Buckingham to Winslow with a mass rapid transit service (i.e. a dedicated bus!). You can read more about these ideas and the thinking behind them at : [www.mkfutures2050.com/strategy-for-2050-engagement-page](http://www.mkfutures2050.com/strategy-for-2050-engagement-page)

## **Verney Close**

Closer to home, there are new plans to build more flats behind what is now 'Coffee1'. The design, similar in effect to the new flats above the coffee shop, has looked to harmonise with the Buckingham Centre opposite and the roofs of the mews houses in Candleford Court. But the nature of this narrow burgage plot gives the impression of a "quart into a pint pot" and its proximity to its neighbours is, we continue to think, overwhelming.

## **Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust (VAHT)**

Following the consultation held last summer, VAHT have brought forward their interesting proposals for a low-cost, modular housing plan to be sited behind the flats on Pightle Crescent. There could be eight apartments in all, designed and built on eco-friendly lines. The Society is supportive of the scheme, which promises an innovative and sustainable way of providing affordable housing.

## **Proposals for a Phase III, Moreton Road**

Far less welcome is the recently received second attempt at building a further 130 houses on the green fields behind the earlier developments along Moreton Road. The original scheme was dismissed at Appeal and by the Secretary of State since the BNDP had allocated far more suitable sites elsewhere. AVDC, however, persisted in including the site in the VALP and the plan has been resurrected. Quite apart from the very real difficulties of access, the plans are woefully lacking in "future proofing" or mitigating against climate change. The new report, 'Building Better, Building Beautiful' calls for unprecedented change of outlook, including the earliest possible consultation with local communities before any stroke of the pen is put to paper. The Society much regrets the position taken by AVDC in deliberately flouting the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan.

## **Transport Report – David Child**

### **HGV**

For some time, the Buckingham Society has been campaigning for better control of HGVs in Buckingham. The BCC freight officer has initiated meetings, which includes the society, councillors from the Town council and BCC. The next meeting will probably be held in March.

### **Not only HGVs in Well Street**



At this time it is clear that enforcement of HGV restrictions in Buckingham would most likely require legal change at national level and a considerable investment in monitoring equipment and would still need resources to enforce legal actions against the HGV driver.

The Society's views have adjusted after realising that these changes will not happen in the foreseeable future and is therefore

proposing to BCC that a difference approach is needed.

## **Proposal**

The aim is the removal of potential HGV rat runs through the narrow streets of Buckingham.

Two routes that HGV vehicles use have been identified, these routes are unfortunately promoted by in cab navigation systems which the HGV should not be following blindly.

Also it has been confirmed that HS2 is going to be constructed. The Buckingham bypass has been scheduled as an authorised HS2 HGV route and therefore these short cuts will be at greater risk of being used.

The proposal by the Society is to construct width restrictions on Well Street and Mitre Street.

In the case of Well Street, the majority of HGVs come from Bridge Street and Mitre Street when they enter from the A421 bypass. By establishing a 2 metre width restriction it provides a single point to monitor should HGVs try and negotiate the physical barrier.

Concerns have been expressed about access for Fire engine and HGV dustcarts but a width restriction is no different to the road being blocked by parked vehicles or even temporary road closures and no doubt mitigation arrangements could be engineered into the design of the width restriction.

## **Trees are not a Panacea – Ian Orton**

Does anyone remember 1973? I do because 1973 was “Plant A Tree Year”. And I spent a good part of my Easter vacation planting hundreds, if not thousands, of whips at a nursery site at Irchester Country Park near Wellingborough.

Fast forward to 2020 and trees, and tree planting, have become much more important again. Indeed according to some people, such as private jet-using “slebs” and some members of Extinction Rebellion trees, and tree planting, are the panacea to all our environmental problems.

Unfortunately, however, the reality is much less straightforward. Increasing the tree canopy by planting more trees can make a useful contribution to mitigating some of the problems associated with global warming. But trees are far from a universal panacea. The truth is that the benefits of planting trees are often exaggerated and seldom weighed against the associated carbon costs, such as the impact of ploughing before planting a new tree plantation.

Nor are the benefits associated with a new tree plantation netted against what was growing there before which might already be very efficacious carbon sinks, such as permanent pastures or peaty moorland. Moreover, planting trees can exacerbate environmental problems. Recent research conducted by the University of Helsinki found, for example, that pines, birches, and spruces actually increase nitrous oxide in the atmosphere. Clearly there are “good” trees and “bad” trees.

But wholesale tree planting can have other unanticipated by-products, not all of which are necessarily beneficial. This is especially the case when vast tracts of upland moorland are turned over to tree plantations. Biodiversity is often the first thing to suffer, especially when the trees that are planted are all of one type. The situation can be further exacerbated when the trees planted are not even native species but

hail from other parts of the world, such as the North Pacific (as in Sitka Spruce). The reality is that wholesale planting can - and does - destroy unique habitats and the flora and fauna that previously flourished. Widespread forestation of our upland moorlands has endangered the curlew and other ground nesting birds, for example.

Trees ARE beneficial and are often beautiful (especially if they are deciduous hardwoods). And we should be planting more, especially in Buckingham. But they are not a panacea to all our environmental ills.

## The Return of Otters to the Great Ouse in Buckingham



After the discharge of pollutants into the Great Ouse in July 1918, an estimated 2,000 fish were killed and no otters were seen during the following year.

However, this welcome picture of an otter was taken by Trevor Lawler on Christmas Day 2019 in the centre of Buckingham.

## 20 mile Hour Speed Limit - Anthony Ralph

CURRENT AND FUTURE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS seem not to incorporate pavements in the traditional sense, relying on different coloured paviers or something similar at best, to delineate pedestrian from vehicular traffic. Together with parked cars, this presents a hazardous environment and realistically, this unlikely to change. So slowing down cars can mitigate the danger for pedestrians forced to step out into the road to navigate round such hazards.



So, a partial solution would be a reduction in the permitted speed limit - hence the campaign for 20mph limits in selected areas. Does this stop speeding in of itself – clearly not, but it allows enforcement and importantly creates a social environment where speeding is not socially acceptable in housing developments and other vulnerable areas, in a similar way that wearing seat belts, not using mobile ‘phones whilst driving, and not smoking in public buildings are now not acceptable when once they were. It may well be necessary to introduce other traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps, etc. but speed reduction is a positive first step.

As an example, in Lace Hill speeding vehicles are the focus of much debate because last September, a car crashed into a house in Honeycomb Way causing such damage that the family who live there have only just moved back in this February once repairs had been completed to their property. While this is an extreme example, it does highlight what a speeding car represents in terms of a real and present danger.

To have a 20mph limit on new developments, incorporated into the terms of the planning requirements where the road and pavement demarcation is at best minimal or not delineated at all just seems common sense. And where residents of an existing development agitate for a 20mph limit, there should be a mechanism for their views and desires to be considered. In addition, the Buckingham Neighbourhood plan should take account of having 20mph speed limit criteria incorporated into future development plans, thus ensuring putative planners understand the criteria is recognised by Buckingham as something to be taken seriously.



Links offering further information on the subject...

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speed\\_limit\\_enforcement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speed_limit_enforcement)

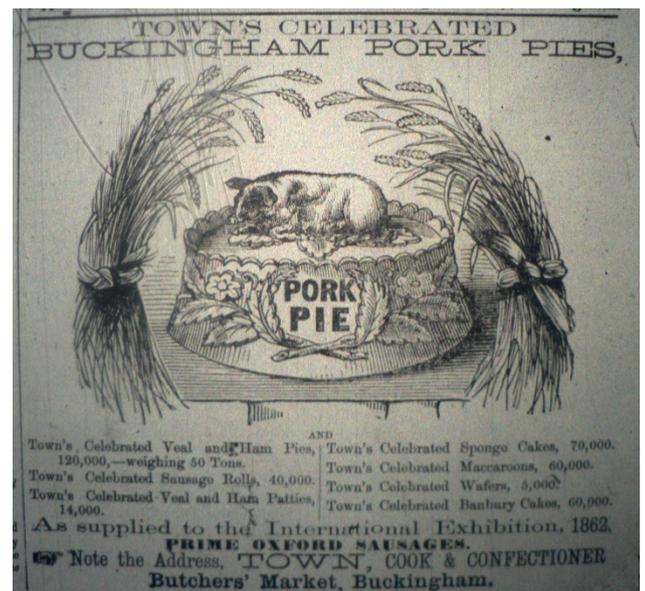
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/20-mph-speed-limits-on-roads>

<http://www.20splenty.org/>

## Buckingham's Lost Industries – Ed Grimsdale

"The Buckingham Society intends to showcase Buckingham's Lost Industries on Civic Day in June 2020. A time there was when Buckingham could claim to be the home of the [Melton Mowbray] Pork Pie and the [Banbury] Cake. Our Prize Baker was Mr R.Town who had a shop which is now a Hairdresser opposite to the Post Office. His building shared a thick party wall with the Latin School a.k.a. the Chantry Chapel. Mr Town built a big oven into the wall. The Chantry Chapel had no windows that opened so in Summer Mr Town would bake Latin Schoolboys until their cheeks turned as red as cherries. The poor lads also suffered hunger pangs as the whiff of Mr Town's Prize Winning Pork Pies wafted their way.

P.S. To supply International Exhibitions with tons of pies meant that Mr Town needed lots of surface on which to dry out his raised pork pie cases. What did he use? The abandoned Butchers' tables in the Butchers' Shambles opposite his shop. They were saturated with dried blood. Fortunately, nobody had heard of Health and Safety, and the proof of the pudding was in the eating!"



Right - An Advert from 1863

## The Death of Mr William Howkins



We were saddened to learn of the death of a long time Buckingham Society member Mr Bill Howkins. He owned the Howkins haberdashery shop at 29/30 West Street. He was, until very recently, an active member of the society, contributing memories and information about the town.

### Dates for your diary:

Civic Day 20<sup>th</sup> June, including presentation of the Conservation Awards and a guided town walk

Lecture and Garden Party, Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> July starting at 6.30pm in the Vinson Building

AGM 26<sup>th</sup> November - followed by a talk "SOE in Buckinghamshire"

### Executive Committee:

Roger Edwards	Chair
David Child	Treasurer, transport, website and planning
Carolyn Cumming	Planning
Ed Grimsdale	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
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](mailto: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](http://www.buckinghamssociety.org.uk)