



The Buckingham Society

Campaigning for a better Buckingham

Newsletter June 2020

A word from our Chair

Well, it has certainly been a strange few weeks since I last wrote one of these pieces. Then it was mid-February and the Corona virus was this thing swirling about in China but not something for us to worry much about. It might come here but it was only 'flu and, with a bit of hand washing, we would all be OK. How things have changed!

Life seems to be divided now into BC and AC – before and after Covid as we now have to call it. BC, “furlough” was a word I had only ever heard in old Western films when one of John Wayne’s men in the US Cavalry wanted a bit of a break from army life and “lockdown” had never had any place in my vocabulary apart from perhaps when watching an old episode or two of Porridge or Clint Eastwood in Escape From Alcatraz. As for Zoom, well, I knew it was a hit record in the 1980s for Fat Larry’s Band but that was it and did anybody foresee the great toilet roll crisis? As somebody said recently, “in 2015 everybody got the wrong answer to the question, what will you be doing five years from now?”.



Now, AC, we are all used to not going out as often as before, if at all; standing two metres apart in queues, not necessarily being able to see or hold our nearest and dearest and listening to the nightly roll call of the ever-increasing numbers of victims of the awful virus.

But life goes on. Wonderful people have kept as many of our town’s shops and market stalls open as are permitted and generous volunteers are helping out in all sorts of ways throughout our town. And, of course, the NHS in all its

forms and local pharmacies have been there for all of us all the time as well as the amazing people working in care homes or providing home care.

Most of us in Buckingham are fortunate enough to have space to get out, gardens to sit in and opportunities to enjoy the glorious weather that we have been experiencing. It must have been so very difficult for people dwelling in large towns and cities, especially those in flats and with children or living alone. Is it any wonder that some didn't quite manage to abide totally by the lockdown conditions? That other new word, "Covidiot", should, in my view, have been used a lot more sparingly than it has been.

I finished the piece I wrote in February by commenting that we are very lucky to live in a prosperous and, on the whole, very safe place but that we should not forget those who are not as fortunate as ourselves. That seems to me to be even more true now than it was back in those BC days, and I for one am very grateful to be in Buckingham in these strange times.

Welcome to Lace Hill – By Petula Boddy and Joelle Jones, Joint Chairs of The Lace Hill Residents Association

Originally named Windsor Park by the developers, the estate is now more aptly named Lace Hill with roads named after lacemaking terms and accessories, a nod to Buckingham's rich past as a centre for lace making. The first resident moved into her new home in December 2012. The original planning permission was given to construct 700 new homes: a mix of housing types from leasehold apartments, social housing, shared ownership and what were described as freehold properties - which includes small terraced houses through to large 4/5+ bed roomed detached.



Pictured left is a public open space area. The stones on the wall are the beginnings of our Lace Hill snake made up of stones painted by our children. It now goes completely round both walls and is starting round a second time.

In terms of history we are young and building on the history of the story of Buckingham; a new community and a very multicultural one. The Lace Hill Residents Association was originally formed a few years ago to provide a united front against builders and management company. Residents automatically become members when they move into their new home. Two thirds of all residents have joined a residents' Facebook page to keep in touch. We periodically circulate a printed newsletter, organise competitions and events.

However, these new build properties have now come to be known nationwide as 'fleecehold' properties. 'Fleecehold' means that although you think you have bought a freehold property, you must pay annual maintenance fees and charges towards the upkeep of the wider estate. This is happening on the estate as our local district council chose not to adopt the estate unlike other Buckingham estates. It is however fortunate that the majority of the roads and drains on the estate will be adopted.

These charges are not made clear to buyers when they purchase their new property as the charges are described as a small charge for grass cutting! On other estates this work is

carried out by the local authority, funded by council tax charges. We also pay council tax in full but with fewer benefits. Added to this, public spaces and parks on the estate are used by non-residents who do not contribute in any way towards the upkeep. These charges are neither regulated nor capped and on estates across the country residents see costs rising disproportionately year on year.

News of the recent changes to the Constitution and planning procedures of the new Buckinghamshire Council appears to freeze out the previous direct input from Town/Parish Councils and this could impact on any future planning applications for construction of any housing estates, large or small, in and around Buckingham.

The commercial buildings on Lace Hill: Lidl, Premier Inn and Costa, service the wider community and it is fortunate that these facilities are at the edge of the estate though it can cause a litter problem with tossed packaging, cans, bottles and food.

The COVID-19 lockdown has really brought out the best of community spirit with many residents organising or taking part in events designed to keep spirits high. Despite the negative issues with the estate, it is a very friendly and truly wonderful place to live.

Welcome to Lace Hill!

Planning – Carolyn Cumming

New Planning Rules in Buckinghamshire Council's Constitution

The new Buckinghamshire Council's Constitution for Planning Procedures has set out very different rules from those hitherto employed by AVDC when allowing parish councils to voice objections at Committee level. The devil is always (as they say) in the detail. The new rules detail a very complex and, in our view, very undemocratic method of permitting local objections to be aired at a planning committee which, in effect, remove the right of local organisations, including Buckingham Town Council, to raise concerns about planning matters apart from through a local member of the new Council. Not surprisingly, this has caused an outcry of protest from parishes and organisations in North Bucks, led by our Buckingham Town Council. For those wishing to read first-hand just what those new rules denote, follow this link:

<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

In response to the criticisms raised by a range of objectors including the Buckingham Society, the Council have indicated that the new rules will be reviewed. We are sure that the subject will form part of the debate in the 2021 Council elections and your Society will continue to keep a careful eye on what is going on.

Planning Applications

Although Covid-19 has given us all very different methods of communicating, planning applications continue in the same vein. And the society's Planning Group have met via Zoom to discuss and scrutinise them.

Swan Practice

Of particular concern have been two applications from the Swan Practice, who are seeking Outline Permission to convert both the North End and Verney Close Surgeries into housing schemes.

Although somewhat re-assured that some sort of primary care unit will remain within the town centre, the outline plans submitted for both sites are appallingly weak on detail. Since both sites sit within the Conservation Area, and in proximity to several listed buildings, a great deal more information on how any scheme would sit in relation to neighbouring properties and environment must be sought.

Our Chairman, Roger Edwards, outlined our concerns with an article in the local press and we are hopeful that the Society will be given a voice within the consultation that is promised to determine how their future plans develop. We welcome the possibility of enhanced medical facilities, but we also wish to see these crucially important town centre sites developed in harmony with their neighbours. To this end, we have also called for the Council to consult on an overall development strategy for Verney Close.

5 The Villas, Stratford Road

A very large and, in our view, unacceptable extension is proposed. The Society has written with its objections, citing the fact that this group of properties facing the Stratford Road has consistently failed to carry out planning conditions on previous applications going back over the past decade. Conditions that were specifically aimed at protecting the amenity of neighbouring properties, which this latest proposal would further demean.

The actual proposed design of the extension also shows a complete lack of respect for the existing dwellings, its heavy bulk at odds with the character of the street scene.

Oddfellows Hall, Well Street

Despite the many objections to the proposals to convert the hall into nine bedsits, approval was granted. Nobody seems to want to listen to the views of local people who can foresee the problems to come. We understand the property has been sold prior to the auction and that the purchaser intends to proceed with the conversion. It is a prospect fraught with difficulties and we shall alert all relevant authorities to the anticipated problems.

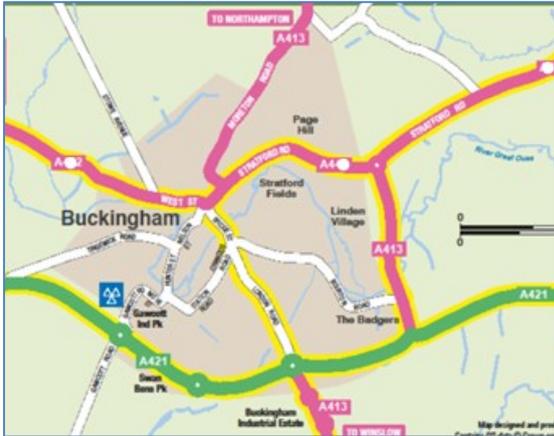
Transport Report – David Child

Heavy Goods Vehicles

In the February newsletter we reported that we expected a Buckingham HGV meeting to take place in March. The meeting was cancelled (Covid19) but the planned presentation by the BCC Transport Strategy Officer was circulated asking for emailed comments by mid-May. The transport group conferred via email and responded to the presentation in early May. At the time of writing another meeting date has not been set.

The proposal summary can be found on the transport page on the web site http://buckinghamssociety.org.uk/BStrandocs/BucSoc_HGV_Summary.pdf.

In brief: - width restrictions on Well Street, Mitre Street, Tingewick Road (new – location adjacent to the river walk pathway at Fisher Fields) and a weight restriction on the London Road bridge (new).



The changes from the February newsletter report were driven by the BCC proposed preferred HGV routing image to the left (a choice of HGVs on Market Hill or Bridge Street / London Road).

Also a detailed review of the potential HGV rat runs if only the Mitre Street width restriction was constructed resulted in the addition of the width restriction on Tingewick Road. The principle was “To isolate HGVs on the east side of Buckingham from the roundabouts on the bypass at Gawcott Road and Tingewick Road”

thus stopping HGVs cutting across Buckingham using roads unsuitable for such vehicles. The weight restriction on London Road Bridge is to protect the bridge and bolster the objective of keeping HGVs on the designated roads. We will continue to pursue this matter as it is clearly unreasonable for people to have their lives disrupted by HGVs using totally inappropriate roads in our town.

Pathways



The Society is planning to ask residents adjacent to the Moreton Road play area if they support the idea of a pathway link along the hedge line in the play area to link Longland Road to the play area entrance. At present there is no safe pathway from the houses by the Rugby Club to the estate the other side of the play area. More detail can be found on the transport page on the web site or via link: -

<http://buckinghamssociety.org.uk/BStransdocs/PathwayMoretonRd.pdf>

Publicity of this proposal will start in mid-June subject to Covid19.

News from the University – Colin Stocker, Estates Bursar

The University moved very quickly over to online teaching when lockdown occurred in March. Exams have just been completed online and the Spring term ends on Friday (19/6). Summer term starts on the 13 July and teaching will continue online for the whole of that term.

There are approximately 170 students on campus in accommodation and they are being supported by both the Domestic Services and Maintenance staff. IT also have a presence on

site. Otherwise all buildings have remained on lockdown and everyone else is working from home or on furlough.

With the gradual easing of restrictions we are starting to look at opening buildings for students on campus. We were able to open the ground floor of the Vinson Building as study space, as well as the Bookshop, last Monday (15/6). We are ready to open the Library as soon as restrictions on doing so are lifted and are working towards having the Refectory open at the beginning of the Summer term to provide a takeaway service for the students.

Plans are being developed for the Autumn term where we are anticipating being able to re-introduce face to face teaching and tutorials. However, unless restriction change dramatically for the better over the next couple of months, we will not be able to conduct larger lectures and nor permit social use of our facilities.

Building projects, including the planned Station Road and Tingewick Road developments, are all on hold until we have a clearer picture of the way forward. Student numbers in September and January will have some bearing on any decisions taken, so it's unlikely anything will happen until at least New Year, with our main focus currently being on how we can get the University back up and running again as quickly and normally as possible.

Green Spaces – Ian Orton

The Palladian Way - One of the more discoveries I've made during the Covid-19 lockdown is that Buckingham is the start or, depending upon the direction of travel, the finish of a long distance footpath.

This is the Palladian Way, a 125 mile "architectural walk" that links Buckingham and Bath by public footpaths. The route starts at the Old Gaol and finishes at Bath's Pulteney Bridge.

It is the brainchild of Guy Vowles, a Stowe alumnus, who is also a keen walker. Mr Vowles, who now lives in Gloucestershire, originally intended to create a walk from Bath to Oxford. But when he found that the distance covered would be just under 100 miles he decided to extend the route to Buckingham which, of course, is very close to Stowe.



The walk takes its name from the two palladian bridges close to the start and end of the walk. These are the bridges in Stowe Landscape Gardens and Prior Park, shown left, which is very close to the walk's end at Bath.

In between the walk takes in a number of very famous buildings, gardens and parks as well as a number of very picturesque towns

and villages in the Cotswolds. In addition to Stowe these include Tusmore, Kirtlington House, Blenheim Palace, Burford, Barnsley House, Cirencester, Malmesbury and Castle

Combe.

Tusmore, near Fringford, is now owned by multi-millionaire Wafic Said. In addition to building a new house described by the Georgian Society in 2004 as “the best building in the classical tradition” he also erected a 92 foot limestone obelisk to commemorate HM The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

Mr Vowles describes Kirtlington House at Kidlington as “the best example of Palladian architecture on the whole walk.

Blenheim Palace at Woodstock, is the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill and the principal residence of the Duke of Marlborough. Together with its gardens, which were designed by Capability Brown, Blenheim is a world heritage site.

The towns and villages of the Cotswolds contain very beautiful buildings especially in Burford and Cirencester although most of these pre-date the “palladian” and “classical” periods and owe their establishment to the medieval wool trade.

Barnsley House, near Cirencester, is one exception. Although it looks palladian it is, however, “baroque” according to Mr Vowles.

Malmesbury, or rather its abbey is the resting place of Athelstan, the first King of England. Pulteney Bridge in Bath is one of just two “housed” bridges in England. And of course Bath contains the greatest concentration of classical architecture in England.

All in all a walk along the Palladian Way seems just the job to spend a few days, especially as it looks as if foreign holidays during the summer will be off limits.

Let’s hope that cafes, hotels, pubs and restaurants soon open however to help ease and sustain those weary limbs.

Buxplore: Buckingham Community Heritage App

In May Buckingham Town Council introduced Buxplore, an app which you can find on this link: <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/buxplore/>

It can be downloaded on a smart phone or tablet giving a tour of Buckingham. It is possible to select a route and then take a tour around the streets and parks completing activities, questions and mysteries designed to suit all ages and interests. It includes:

Heritage for kids – a short walk for children through the oldest part of Buckingham, looking for hidden features and answering questions to unlock the next location.

History – A longer walk for older children and adults, with activities and questions about the town.

Green Spaces – highlighting hidden green spots around the town with nature themed activities.

Murder Mystery – Starting at the Old Police House there is an opportunity to discover clues to crack and solve a murder mystery.

Stowe – A walk from Buckingham to Stowe House and around the parkland trail, discovering how the Temple-Grenville family linked the two together.

Industrial – A glimpse of Buckingham’s hidden industrial past, from old factories to canal boats.

Buxplore has already proved a great success which is gratifying for those, including some members of the society, who were involved in its development.

Dates for your diary:

The annual lecture and garden party will not take place this year due to restrictions to limit the spread of covid 19.

The Annual General Meeting will take place on 26th November. It will be followed by a talk by Bill Robins “Secrets, Silk and Cyanide – Special Operations and the North Buckinghamshire Area 1939-45”

Executive Committee:

Roger Edwards	Chair
David Child	Treasurer, transport, web site 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, any ideas for social events (once they are again allowed) or simply write to us on any Buckingham related matter. If you have any ideas, questions or comments please address them 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