



HENLEY SOCIETY SPRING 2011 NEWSLETTER

Editor: Sandra Moon

In 1961 across the country many gracious and outstanding buildings were being demolished to make way for bold new architecture some bland and some ghastly. A meeting was called to save the Catherine Wheel and from this, The Henley Society was formed, to ensure the preservation of the best buildings in Henley. This year the Henley Society celebrates 50 years of conservation and efforts to improve the Town by involving local people who share a love of Henley.

New Members

We are delighted to welcome the following as new members of the Society:- Mrs Susan Adams, Jenifer Copeland, Julie Perigo & Ms A Scanlon.

In fact we are pleased that Jenifer and Julia have agreed to join the Committee.

Can you help: Does anyone know where Mark & Elizabeth Hunter formerly of 4 Kit Lane, Checkendon have moved to.

If so please let Sandra Moon know on 01491 573887.

OUR AGM for 2011 will be held in the Grade I Listed Chantry House on Friday 1st April at 7pm followed by a talk given by John Lockwood on “Conservation through the Management of Change”. Lord Phillimore one of our Vice Presidents will preside and wine will be served afterwards.



John Lockwood is a town planner and urban designer. He has extensive knowledge of the workings of local government and hands-on experience of development projects and shop front design and restoration in particular.

In recent years he has undertaken consumer-oriented studies of over 200 town centres throughout the country including Henley, Wallingford and Thame in South Oxfordshire.

South Oxfordshire District Council Core Strategy

The final consultation draft of the SODC Core Strategy document has recently been made available. It sets out the policies that will dominate the Council's decisions in terms of planning for the period to 2025; and there are two aspects in particular that we considered to be questionable.

The first is the allocation of 400 new houses, including about 150 'affordable' houses, to Henley. This allocation has been made despite the admission by the Council that it would be difficult to find sites for them without contravening other planning policies relating to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Thames corridor. Our response to the consultation stated: "The Society considers that to identify land for about 400 new houses within the constraints rightly indicated in para 7.17 is unrealistic and therefore unsound. No indication is given as to where a sufficient number of *'small sites within and adjacent to the town'* might be found, especially if the stated planning constraints are to be maintained, together with the aims, stated in Policy CSHEN1, to *'enhance the town's environment'* and to *'improve accessibility, car parking, pedestrian and cycle links'* and, in Policy CSEN I Landscape, that: *'The landscape and waterscapes of the River Thames corridor will be maintained and where possible enhanced, as will the setting and heritage of the river'* A modification that would give a small boost towards a target figure of new housing would be to replace the term 'houses' by 'dwellings', thus allowing for flats and apartments. The term 'affordable houses' is ambiguous: an indication is needed of how such houses will continue to be affordable to successive occupants".

The second aspect that we considered to be questionable (putting it mildly) was the second sentence of para 10.11 which states: "*The study also indicates that Henley would benefit from an improved range of bars, restaurants and cafes, a choice of food store in the town centre to improve expenditure retention and a greater range of town centre uses to make sure that it maintains its market share*". As readers may well imagine, members of the Society's Executive Committee reacted to this sentence with expressions of disbelief. Our response made the following points: "This sentence is so divorced from the current reality that it endangers the credibility of the whole document. Any survey of retail premises in the town centre of Henley would show that there is currently an excessive number of bars, restaurants and cafes (many of them with relatively few customers); and the number will soon be increased by the current development of two more substantial restaurants at the old Police Station and Hobbs Boatyard. (Quality, of course, is a separate issue). Also, with the recent arrival of Sainsburys, there is now a choice of food stores in the town centre; and for some items, additional choice is provided by stalls at the weekly market. Furthermore, no reason is given for the aim *'to make sure that it (Henley) maintains its market share'*. This measure is of no consequence to the residents of Henley and has no relationship to the viability of existing retail businesses. If adopted, this policy (resulting from para 10.11) would inevitably increase congestion which, as stated in para 10.6, already creates an unpleasant environment. And, as stated in para 5.35, the internet is having a profound and increasing influence on how we access services; and one corollary of this is that the growth of internet shopping will curtail the need for the future expansion of shopping floorspace. What is needed is more effective use of the existing floorspace."

This summary necessarily gives a less than complete account of the District Council's intentions for Henley and its surrounding area but readers wishing to find out more can read the full document, on request, at the Henley Library. However, the SODC consultation period is now closed.

NB Direct quotations from the Core Strategy document are in italics.

Your Executive Committee have been working hard to arrange a programme of interesting visits during the coming year. We are hoping during the year to arrange a visit to the Churchill War Rooms.



On 10th March we planning a visit to Apsley House, one of the last great aristocratic townhouses in London and home of the 1st Duke of Wellington with its stunning art collection, medals and memorabilia.



Following lunch you will be free to tour Kensington Palace which during December 2011 has been transformed into the Enchanted Palace revealing the magnificent State Apartments in a surprising and magical new light.

On 3rd August we are greatly anticipating a visit to the Gardens of Highgrove home of HRH The Prince of Wales. As tickets are very limited for this excursion we are sure they will be much in demand and booking forms will be sent out nearer to the date and for members only.

Nearer to home our member of Parliament John Howell OBE MP will be giving a talk on “Localism” prior to the Localism Bill which will be debated in Parliament during 2011. The Bill heralds a major review of the planning system and the introduction of new community rights and it is anticipated it will come into force in 2012.

Following the success of our Christmas Lunch at Badgemore a repeat booking has been made for Saturday December 10th and we hope that even more of our members will join in the festivities. Booking forms will be forwarded to you nearer to the time but this is a date for your diary.

We hope that you are enjoying your membership of the Society and look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

