SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER
June 2014

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A S YOUR NEW CHAIRMAN, I thought I would like to tell you about some of my personal priorities for the Society as I see them at the moment.

We need to strive towards our ideals of making Spalding as attractive a place as possible in which to live and work and enjoy leisure. Out planning team will continue to point its eagle eye at planning applications lodged with the District Council. Among the uncontroversial plans to build minor house extensions and do necessary tree works, there are larger issues like unused major buildings – the old Johnson Hospital comes to mind – and places where planning permission has been given but nothing has happened, like the Bull and Monkie site, the GPO Sorting Office, Burden’s site on Winsover Road and the areas of waste land either side of Roman Bank. (See pages 4&5.) These are disappointing signs of neglect and do nothing to promote an attractive Spalding.

I am concerned that Spalding needs to sell itself better, so that people desire to visit us here. We have some good local shops in the town centre which we should all be using, so that others may come here and benefit from them; there must be thousands of people within 20 miles who would, if they would only discover Spalding, enjoy the more human scale of shopping here. We should make our strengths more widely known – what a great place for a leisurely stroll are our river banks, and what interesting buildings we have; our three blue plaques give people something to talk about, and more are on the way (page 6); and we are gathering thoughts on putting information plates at sites of interest. We are more likely to take pride in our town if we are better informed about its history. At this point I would like to thank Marion Brassington and John Honnor for their recent articles placed in the Lincolnshire Free Press under the heading ‘Then and Now’.

I am very keen that this interest in Spalding should not be just a vision shared by people ‘of a certain age’; if we do not take care to explain our thinking to others, we run the risk of losing treasures to those who are seeking merely to profit financially – remember how close we came to losing the Sir Halley Stewart Playing Field (granted, debate will continue about who shall use it, but at least we still have it). Can we all please talk to our families and friends about the things we value and strive for in our town, especially to younger members in our circles? If this results in some fresher blood on our Committee, this will be all to the good, but also a greater range of signatures to letters to the local press will give us a broader base on which to build.

For the first time ever we are including with the Newsletter a leaflet from another organisation. The Society’s concern is the built environment; the CPRE’s is the countryside. But on the government’s planning reforms our concerns dovetail. The easier it is to build in the open countryside, the longer brownfield sites in our towns will remain derelict eyesores. Conversely, the less obligation to put “brownfield first”, the greater the pressure on the countryside. Should you wish to join the CPRE’s campaign either by signing the charter or making a donation, there is a form on pp.7&8. (Apologies for the smallness of the print.)

David Jones

For the diary

Friday, 26 September
2.00 pm - £9.00

FOLKINGHAM

Guided tour of village, with presentation and demonstration of chocolate making at Hansen’s Chocolate House.
At least 18 needed for the visit to be viable. Please book (with cheque) with Robert West (94 Spalding Common, Spalding, PE11 3AU; tel. 01775 760231) before 26 August.
Meet at House of Correction (Billingborough Road). Own transport.
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE! Few will regret the replacement of the 60s Tax Office on High Street with something more sympathetic to Holland House next door – “the best [house] architecturally in the town” (Pevsner). The challenge is to get it right.

(A) is the Georgian-style design first submitted. Although it is a virtual copy of another town house in High Street, we objected. We felt that, despite its lower height, the proposed apartment block would compete with Holland House or even dominate it, and suggested dormer windows for the top floor. We were pleased when English Heritage made exactly the same objection and proposed the same solution. The resubmitted design (B) follows our advice, and the new building now appears smaller and so no longer competes with Holland House, although it is exactly the same height as it was before.

Part of the ‘magic’ lies in the eaves line. Most Georgian buildings have a very strong eaves line, often with a parapet or sometimes a balustrade as here with Holland House. It is this strong line that comes to be the perceived height of the building, especially when viewed from street level, with anything above it more or less ignored. Thus, it is the higher eaves line or perceived height of the proposed building in (A) that makes it appear to compete with its neighbour, whose eaves line is lower. So, by lowering the eaves line and emphasising that fact with a contrasting band of stone, the revised design (B) enables Holland House to assert its rightful dominance. It’s a sort of visual con-trick.

On the rest of the site, a row of modest terraced houses, Edwardian in style, runs along Holland Road opposite the carpark.

THE PREPARATION of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (which will replace the existing South Holland Plan) is proceeding gradually, to be adopted probably sometime in 2016. The Society was consulted on housing last year, and has recently been invited for its views on other land uses. We have advised against allocating any more land for industry, warehousing or haulage, as we understand a study for the SELLP team shows there is already sufficient employment land designated to last until 2031 and in Spalding there are unused sites at Wardentree Lane and Clay Lake. Offices, retail and entertainment should utilise brownfield sites in the town centre, to strengthen its vitality. The exception is sport and green open space for informal recreation. Spalding being almost 50% under-provided, we have suggested extending the Castle Field northwards to take in the former Gas Works site and an area at the Lock’s Mill end of Cowbit Wash. There must be no loss or erosion of existing green space.

Law’s Yard is a long-derelict brownfield site tucked away off Willow Walk. A recent planning application shows a well-designed residential enclave with varied semi-detached and terraced houses, nice landscaping and unobtrusive parking. If approved, let’s hope the site does not then lie idle and undeveloped.

Nationwide, huge amounts of land with housing permission do lie idle and undeveloped. In an attempt to get the houses built, the government has tried to make it costly and inconvenient to hoard land unused in this way. Planning permission can no longer be renewed automatically when three years are up. The developer now has to go back to the start, submitting all the paper work again as a new application and paying the hefty fee again. (£7,135 for Law’s Yard, for example.) But it is doubtful if it’ll have much effect, as there are still two massive loopholes. If a scheme requires demolition and that has happened, then development is deemed to have started, even if nothing more is done and the houses remain unbuilt (as is the case on Roman Bank and with Burden’s Garage site on Winsover [P.7]►
JUST AS THINGS get damaged in a school or store or need renewing, so in the centre of a town. Amongst other things, therefore, the Town Centre Manager needs to be a sort of giant caretaker. A walk round the centre of Spalding shows plenty that needs attention.

For example:- the planters full of weeds and fag-ends in Swan Walk (below) and outside Perfect Nails in Station Street and the Free Press office; the bashed bollard (Red Lion Street) and the bent barrier (Sheepmarket toilets); the fly-tipping (ex-Sorting Office) and fly-posting (anywhere the fitness gyms can fix a piece of plastic board to); proliferating poles (Priory Road, below right); refuse skips disfiguring the riverside (South Holland Centre); banners left up for weeks after the events are over … They may be individually insignificant, but collectively start to add up to a picture of shabbiness and neglect.

It will be just as important, however, for him to note things that are a credit to the town, that show where people clearly care. For example:- the handsome restoration a year or two back of Curry’s old shop in the Market Place; the hanging baskets in the summer; the Civic Society’s blue plaque project; the Olympics torch mosaic in the Sheepmarket; the Pumpkin Parade; the litter-picks organised by Christine Hanson of Bookmark; the removal at last of the shipping containers from behind Hill’s Furniture Store; and so on. The town centre manager must be ready to praise and encourage.

A major part of the job will be to identify opportunities – to improve the whole look of the centre and the way its public spaces work. Some fairly obvious quick-fixes perhaps are:- the scruffy patch at corner of the Sheepmarket (landscaping?); the unused space alongside Ladbroke’s (trees and cycle-stands?); new murals to replace the naff ones in Abbey Passage. Or take the traffic signs as one comes into the town centre from Station Approach. Nothing to tell the visitor that there is parking nearby to the left (Sheepmarket and Victoria Street, little more than 100 metres away), merely how to get to the Baptist Church and the United Reform Church. We could all suggest further improvements.

Clearly “caretaker” is no longer an appropriate term, especially as larger shortcomings and enhancements will start to suggest themselves. They might well include :-

- Rescuing the Johnson Memorial Fountain from its obscurity in Ayscoughfee Gardens. Old photographs (above) show the strong character and focus it gave to Hall Place before it was sent into exile in the 50s to make way for a traffic roundabout. Its return would restore part of our heritage.
- Enlivening the pedestrian passageways. Although part of the centre’s mediaeval street pattern and a key to its successful functioning, most of them are drab and rather forbidding at the moment and therefore under-used. Yet other towns show what attractive and vibrant features such ancient passageways can be.
- The creation of two small attractive public spaces at the front and back of the Red Lion Centre. The opportunity was missed when the Quarter was being built.
- A review of the riverside – to strengthen its major rôle as a linear park, a green oasis in the very heart of the town, a place to relax, free of fuss and fiddle and commercial pressures. Between Victoria Bridge and the start of the Coronation Channel it is already very fine.
- A review of the centre’s one-way system and cycle ways.

He can’t be a wizard from Hogwarts, of course. There won’t be a magic wand. But working with both official bodies and voluntary groups, a Town Centre Manager will be able to help shape projects for the overall regeneration of the town centre and explore possible sources of funding. If Boston could obtain £1.1 million of EU money to help regenerate its centre, then why not Spalding?

Our historic centre, with its riverside, Georgian and late Victorian buildings, independent shops and restaurants, stall market, and lively South Holland Centre, has enormous potential – the seating area in Hall Place could look more like below, for example – but most people would probably agree that the centre is looking a bit tired at the moment and not making the most of itself. Having oversight of the whole, the Town Centre Manager should be able to make a considerable difference, so that it becomes really attractive as a place to live, work and play in, and to visit.
“When are they going to do something about the Bull and Monkie?” “Or the Welland Hospital site?” “How much longer do we have to put up with that eyesore in the Crescent?” Alas, we don’t know. But we have been able to put together what the present situation is with regard to most of the derelict brownfield sites and prominent redundant buildings in Spalding and who owns them.

Left from the top - ● Behind the Crescent: derelict since the 1950s, currently car-parking. No planning application. [George Adams]
● Site of former Telephone Exchange, behind the Crescent: permission for temporary carpark (2008), for 5 years from demolition (2009). [SHDC]
● Sheepmarket: vacant for over 50 years. Minimally landscaped for part of the time, but derelict for at least last 10 years. Permission granted for shops with flats above, 2011. [Cley Developments]
● Site of Auction Hall, Sainsbury’s Roundabout, King’s Road: vacant for about 10 years. No planning application. Currently compound for Network Rail’s upgrading of the railway line. [SHDC]

Right from the top - ● Site of Welland Hospital, Roman Bank: derelict since demolition (2011). No planning application. (United Lincolnshire Hospitals)
● Roman Bank next to river: permission for huge prestigious block of flats, 2007. Nothing done. Site now for sale. [Chrysalis Homes, Lincoln]

Opposite from the top - ● Former Royal Mail Sorting Office: empty and increasingly derelict for over 10 years. Permission for flats and town houses, 2011. Nothing done. Site subsequently sold to new owner.
● Swan Street: derelict for many years. No planning application. [SHDC]
● Site of Bettinson’s Garage, Holbeach Road: derelict for about 5 years. No planning application. [Executors of R.E. Bettinson]
● Bull and Monkie: permission granted for huge, gaunt neo-Georgian care-home, 2009. Renewed 2012. Pressed by the Council to clear up the increasingly derelict and vandalised site, permission granted to demolish
building and use site for temporary carpark for 3 years, February 2013. Nothing done. [Crispen Holdings, Gibraltar]

- **Gas Works Site, Albion Street**: vacant since 1983, apart from small area used as depot. Recently decontaminated. Pre-application discussions with SHDC with a view to housing. [National Grid Property]
- **Short Street**: permission pending for terraced houses and block of flats (2010) while S106 agreement finalised. [Paul Taylor DJC Ltd.]

Below - **Former Swimming Pool Site, Pinchbeck Road**: Vacant for about 40 years in case a new road was cut through from Station Approach to join West Elloe Avenue. No planning application. [SHDC]

- **Johnson Hospital**: Empty since c.2007. Change of use granted for hotel, business, residential, assembly and leisure use, 2010. Intermittently maintained. Out-patients building refurbished and opened as pharmacy in 2013, but closed after a few months.

**Not pictured** – **Site of Burden’s Garage, Winsover Road**: permission for convenience store, 2009. Nothing done. [Spar Company]

Thanks to Richard Fidler of SHDC Planning Department for additional information. (More on brownfield sites in ‘Planning Matters’ on p.2.)

---

**SOCIETY NOTES**

This year’s AGM was held on 18 March, when the officers elected for the coming year were David Jones (Chairman), Robert West (Vice-Chairman), Marion Brassington (Secretary), Melvyn Price (Treasurer), and Committee members Vivien Berry, John Charlesworth, John Honnor and Paul Walls.

Sadly our Nature Conservation Officer, Annette Faulkner, has had to resign through pressure of other commitments. For many years she has fought on behalf of the Society for the preservation and encouragement of wildlife within the town and on its fringes, for much of the time single-handedly. Whether working amicably with Council officers or exasperatedly with developers and builders, all would testify to her knowledge and persistence. Our grateful thanks therefore to Annette, who will be a hard act to follow.

A warm welcome to new members Mr. and Mrs. P.J. Hall, Gunita Sele, and Kay Weijers and Rafe Thomas.

**Annual subscription** – A gentle reminder. Members who pay by cheque but haven’t yet paid their 2014 subscription please send it to Melvyn Price, at the address on p.8. (Single person £8, two at the same address £12, full-time students free. Cheques made payable to Spalding & District Civic Society.)
Judy Chapman is still trying to pin down the exact address at which William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, lodged for his years in Spalding at the start of his charismatic career.

Meanwhile, however, there is no doubt where Jimi Hendrix stayed on the night of that extraordinary gig in May 1967, when the line-up in the Bulb Auction included such all-time rock greats as Pink Floyd, Geno Washington and his Ram Jam Band and Cream, as well as the Jimi Hendrix Experience. He stayed at the Red Lion. And it looks now as if a Jimi Hendrix plaque is likely to be the next one to add interest to our town centre streets. Nigel Williams, landlord of the Red Lion, is enthusiastic and SHDC Planning Department is happy in principle for this addition to the listed building.

In retrospect, the local press’s account of the event is fascinating, as much for what it leaves out as for what it includes. Fully two-thirds of the coverage is taken up with listing “isolated” incidents of disorder after the gig:- shop windows broken, sweets stolen, the Chequers overwhelmed by thirsty youths, mustard squirted from a tube over someone’s jacket, the hands prised from a clock in the laundrette while coffee was thrown about and a lad “tried to go for a ride in a spin-drier”, and the police “drove round the Halley Stewart playing field flushing out courting couples with their headlights” (Spalding Guardian, 2 June 1967).

Incidents unquestionably distressing for those on the receiving end, but small beer indeed compared to the sort of mods-and-rockers mayhem Spalding had worked itself up to expect, i.e. “the scene of the biggest riot since Margate”. There is a palpable sense of disappointment from the reporters that they didn’t have anything more sensational to report. “POP GOES A ‘DAY OF FEAR’ THEORY” said the Spalding Guardian’s front page headline. “The beat concert that was expected to flare into a riot and didn’t.”

And the remaining third of the coverage devoted to the concert itself? “I was unprepared for the beauty of it,” wrote Sheila Robson; “it was beautiful like some savage painting by El Greco.” Most of the account was given over to the good behaviour of the 7000 fans (“I’ve never been in a crowd that frightened me less”) and their clothes. “Most of the girls looked delightful in flowered trouser suits, patterned coats with matching dresses, frilly bloomer suits ……”

But what about the music from this fabulous line-up? Well, Geno Washington gave two encores, we’re told, despite having tonsillitis. Otherwise there is just a single paragraph and a caption. “The event itself had little importance,” opined Fay Young, “— strictly for the in-crowd. Geno has a football match effect, Jimi Hendrix (chief crowd puller) fits music to sensationalism, The Cream are good, to see The Move is to forget, to see Zoot Money is to see everything, and to see Pink Floyd is to laugh.” Then under a photograph of Jimi Hendrix (“in Britain the biggest name today”) there’s the caption: “This man made his guitar really sing.” And that’s it. There was nothing in the Lincolnshire Free Press.

John Charlesworth
Or if a foundation trench has been dug and concrete poured, then again development is deemed to have begun, although nothing more is ever done. The only power a Council has left is compulsory purchase, which is hardly ever used.

The Society has objected to the ‘Gateway Business Park’ proposals. Not only is the site of this huge development on greenfield land way outside either the Spalding or Cowbit development boundaries, but there is no need for further industrial sheds and warehousing (first paragraph, p.2), and there is ample brownfield land within the town for offices, conference centre and hotel (see pp.4&5). The old Johnson Hospital is ripe for imaginative conversion to a hotel, and the under-used Winfrey Avenue could accommodate a conference centre (conveniently close to the station). As proposed, Spalding itself would be unlikely to benefit much from conference visitors. The ‘Business Park’ is way out of town and adjacent to the A16, so why would anyone want to detour into the town? And the ‘employment opportunities’ are a red herring. Yes, they’d exist, but so they would equally if the offices, etc., were sited within the town.

Planning Sub-Committee

SLOOPS, KETCHES AND LIGHTERS

AFTER the formal proceedings of the AGM, Keith Seaton’s illustrated talk on Spalding’s heyday as a port took us into a very different riverside from today’s tranquil flow and sedate water-taxies. A constant coming-and-going and jostle of sloops and ketches and lighters at the High Street and Double Street wharfs. The chink and rattle of chains, tapping of rigging against masts, shouts; cranes swinging round; coals from Selby and Newcastle, timber, iron railway rails, groceries, cement, winched up for some of it to be reloaded onto the horse-hauled lighters and barges that would take it upstream to Stamford; with shipments in return of mangolds and potatoes, wheat and oats and freestone for Goole and Hull and London. Here at the High Bridge heart of the town there must have been a busy-ness and variety, a physicality of muscle, skills and the raw materials of daily life that gave a daily spectacle and a sort of strength of identity to the town, since lost. The old photographs and Edward Gentle paintings that Keith Seaton showed are very evocative. But we should not romanticise. Many of the vessels were crewed by Spalding men and boys, and occasionally one of those sloops or ketches that had been moored by Herring Lane or Holland House slipped quietly downstream only to be lost at sea with all hands.
Our guide for the Society’s Mosque visit on 24 April turned out to be Mr. Ansar Ali, who used to be the SHDC Housing Manager when Paul Walls and I were council members.

Having taken off our shoes, we entered the prayer hall. Five columns support the roof above this vast space, which is carpeted throughout with a design of individual prayer mats, facing the mihrab, the arched niche in the wall directing worshippers towards Mecca. To one side of the mihrab is another ornate feature from which the imam addresses the worshippers - akin to a pulpit.

An upper floor was being used by the women during our visit and for after-school classes. Above it all floats the huge dome, the largest in East Anglia, just one metre lower than the Cathedral.

The Mosque was designed to hold 3000 people, although as many as 5000 occasionally attend. A third-generation Pakistani, Mr. Ali volunteers at this mosque but attends one nearer his home for his daily prayers. This being the 21st century, people are no longer summoned to prayer from the height of a minaret, but those unable to attend have a radio link direct to their homes to call them to prayer in their home. This was one of the unexpected pieces of information that emerged during a question-and-answer session in the Mosque’s library.

Many thanks to Mr. Ali for his friendly and informative reception.

Robert Wes
Chairman: David Jones, 19 Ladywood Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2DA. 01775 766277
Secretary: Marion Brassington, 55 Pinchbeck Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1QF. 01775 767923
Treasurer: Melvyn Price, 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN. 01775 722908
Newsletter: John Charlesworth, 37 Regent Street, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2YN. 01775 768303
Registered Charity Number 259956 Website www.spaldingcivicsociety.org.uk