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# CHESTERFIELD & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

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## Campaigning to make Chesterfield a better place to live

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The main frontage of Brampton Manor in happier days as a flourishing pub.

### WHAT IS HAPPENING AT BRAMPTON MANOR?

In January 2020 a company named HP General Partner Ltd applied for listed building consent and planning permission to convert the main house at Brampton Manor (107 Old Road), a grade II listed building, and a separate building to the rear known as the Clubhouse, into five self-contained flats. The application (CHE/20/00017/FUL) was clearly deficient in several respects.

The 'heritage report' submitted with the application was simply a summary of the archaeology of the surrounding area and said nothing

about the buildings. The county council's archaeology officer, when consulted about the application, mentioned the report's shortcomings but did not suggest what should be put in its place or that its inadequacy made the application invalid.

Doubts also arose concerning the true intentions of the applicant. Among the documents submitted was an environmental assessment prepared in July 2018 for the applicant's architects, Frank Shaw Associates Ltd, for a scheme to create 103 residential units, to redevelop the public house (the listed building) into a 'residents' social club' and the cruck-framed barn to the rear (a scheduled monument) into a restaurant. It also mentioned the 'construction' (sic) of the existing gazebo in

the grounds (listed grade II\*) and the retention of the existing sports facilities, a legacy of Brampton Manor's earlier life as a members' social club.

Appended to this report was a location plan and a layout plan of the Brampton Manor estate, prepared by Frank Shaw Associates for a company named Tawnywood Ltd. These drawings appear to show six blocks of new building in the grounds, which were presumably intended to house the residential units referred to in the report.

Tawnywood Ltd was incorporated in August 1990. Its registered office is Capstone House, Dunston Road, Chesterfield S41 9RD, and its directors are Angela Suzanne Hunt, Robert Arnold Veerman and John Lindley Wilson. HP General Partner Ltd was incorporated in May 2000. Its registered office is also Capstone House and its directors are R.A. Veerman and Christopher John Phoenix.

The Civic Society initially supported the application to convert the pub into flats, until we became aware of what appeared to be the applicant's longer-term plans to erect new buildings in the grounds, which would adversely affect the setting of three protected buildings (the public house, the gazebo and the barn), two of them judged to be of national importance. We also became aware that the applicant was in dispute with the tenant of the pub, which raised the possibility that the scheme might not go ahead. We therefore made a further submission to the Borough Council, urging the rejection of the application.



Inside the cruck barn of c.1600 at Brampton Manor, a scheduled monument.

On 11 February 2020 Historic England wrote to the Borough Council setting out very serious reservations concerning the application. As well as the inadequacy of the heritage report, which failed to meet the requirements of the National Planning Framework, Historic England considered that the future of all three protected structures on the estate, two of which (the gazebo and the barn) are on their ‘Heritage at Risk’ register and are also more highly protected than the pub, should be considered together, not in isolation.

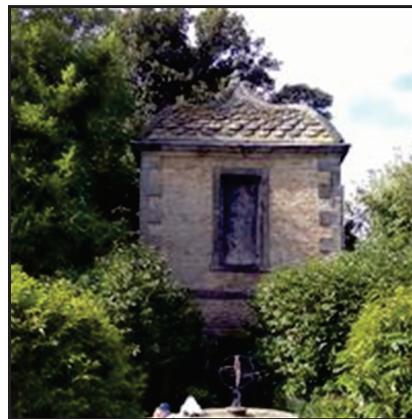
Most seriously, Historic England reminded the Borough Council that, given the impact of the application of the barn, Scheduled Monument Consent would be required, and that this took precedence over Listed Building Consent. Scheduled Monument Consent is granted by the Secretary of State (on advice from Historic England), not the local planning authority. In other words, the application as it stood was hopelessly flawed and could not in its present form be determined by the Borough Council.

This intervention appears to have led to the applicant requesting, on 23 February 2020, an extension of time for the application. Similar requests were made throughout 2020 and the early part of 2021, until eventually the Borough Council suggested a deadline of 26 February 2021 for the submission of the application in its final form. Until a few weeks ago these requests could be found on the electronic file for the application; they have since been removed.

On 12 February this year the applicant submitted new drawings for the

proposed conversion of the public house into four flats (two on each floor) and the adjoining clubhouse into a fifth. These drawings were accompanied by a Supplementary Planning Statement (which inexplicably refers to ‘six new apartments’) in which the flats are said to be for persons aged 55 or over.

The statement refers to a heritage report, although this has not yet been made available on the council’s planning website. It also describes the gazebo as outside the ‘application site’ but within the applicant’s ownership, and suggests that ‘should there be a requirement for the imposition of a condition regarding its future maintenance, upkeep and a programme for such works, it will be appropriate for the Council to follow that course of action’.



The grade II\* listed gazebo at Brampton Manor: described by Historic England as a very rare survival.

There is no reference to similar action in respect of the barn, which the applicants intend to continue to use for storage, as at present, and which apparently is in no need of repair or maintenance. That view is not shared by those who have examined the structure in the last twelve months

The rest of the statement makes a case for increasing the supply of housing for older people in Chesterfield, which the applicant considers justifies the granting of planning permission and listed building consent in respect of the two buildings to be converted into flats.

Nowhere in this statement is there any reference to the points made by Historic England in its letter of 11 February 2020, and in particular the

need to obtain Scheduled Monument Consent because of the impact which the proposed development would have on the cruck barn.

The Civic Society committee’s view on this application remains unchanged since this time last year. We believe that this application should be rejected, partly because of uncertainty as to the applicant’s true intentions for the Brampton Manor property but more fundamentally because the estate contains two nationally important protected structures alongside the grade II listed pub.

The application does not properly consider the impact of the conversion of the pub on these other two structures, nor does it safeguard their future, nor does it consider the problem of the derelict former sports facilities which currently disfigure the setting of the listed buildings. We fully endorse the view expressed by Historic England over a year ago that before any building work is permitted, a comprehensive plan, based on much fuller historical, archaeological and architectural research than has been possible so far, should be drawn up to determine the best course of action for the entire estate.

We have therefore made a third submission to the Borough Council urging the rejection of the current application.

## STATION MASTER PLAN UNVEILED

Probably all Civic Society members have now seen press reports of the Borough Council’s Masterplan for the redevelopment of the approach to Chesterfield Station – the first such scheme since Corporation Street was built by the council in 1870 to improve access to the newly rebuilt Midland Railway station on the site of the present one.

The main features of the plan are a new pedestrian ‘boulevard’ from the edge of the town centre down the hillside to the station, slightly to the south of Corporation Street, and a new vehicle access road from the foot of Hollis Lane through what is currently Jewson’s premises and the old



One of the drawings prepared by Whittam Cox, the Borough Council’s consultants, showing the new pedestrian boulevard from the station to the town centre.

goods yard, ending in a junction with a realigned Brimington Road.

The first of these will be an improvement on Corporation Street, although that is to remain, with a wider, better designed bridge over the Inner Relief Road. The second will equally be a vast improvement on the present route along Durrant Road and Malkin Street.

The Civic Society made a modest contribution to the reports produced by the Borough Council and their consultants, Whittam Cox, and is one of the organisations invited to comment on the plan. We will do this and also set out our ideas in the next Newsletter. The plan has already been welcomed by the Liberal Democrat opposition on the Borough Council, which is also good news.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the project is that its execution is definitely not dependent on HS2B going ahead. Separate funding has been arranged and the station itself is not to be enlarged or rebuilt. Until it becomes clear how far demand for passenger travel recovers after the pandemic, never mind whether HS2B (or some alternative) goes ahead, it would be pointless to plan, for example, for another platform at Chesterfield. To do so would merely delay the urgently needed improvement of the station approach.

Combined with the Waterside scheme, which is beginning to take

shape, the Station Masterplan promises to transform not merely the approach to the station but whole of the north-east edge of the town centre, which was built-up piecemeal with generally unremarkable buildings in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The only building worth retaining (and is to be in the Masterplan) is North Midland House. Once thought to be the only surviving remnant of Francis Thompson’s original North Midland Railway station of 1840, it is now clear that it dates from the rebuilding of 1870. It appears, on the other hand, to incorporate masonry from the earlier station and for that reason alone merits retention.

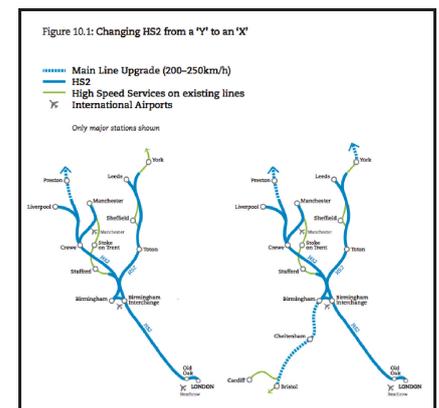
## MEANWHILE, ANOTHER HS2B SUGGESTION

While there remains no firm news as to whether the eastern arm of HS2 between Birmingham and Leeds is to go ahead, a report by Greengauge21, a transport policy think-tank, has suggested what could be either an alternative scheme or an extension to the existing proposals.

Their report, *Meeting the Rail Needs of the Midlands and North*, which can be downloaded free from

their website, suggests electrifying the existing lines from Birmingham to Bristol and the South West and to Cardiff and South Wales, enabling the line-speed to be raised from 125 to 140 mph. A similar approach could be used to allow HS2 to reach more towns in the Midlands and North at much lower cost than building new track. Greengauge21 describe the proposal as ‘Changing Y into X’, with Birmingham’s traditional position at the crossing-point of lines from south-east to the north-west and from the south-west to the north-east reaffirmed.

A scheme on these lines, if combined with the electrification of the whole of the Midland Main Line,



The proposed X-shaped network of electrified lines proposed by Greengauge21, contrasted with the current HS2 scheme.

could give Chesterfield faster access to both London and most of the other cities which were, until the pandemic struck, served by Cross Country trains from the town, while at the same time avoiding the delay, expense and disruption of building the eastern leg of HS2B in the form proposed.

Parliament has now approved the western extension of HS2 to Manchester but the Government has yet to publish its final proposals for the eastern leg. A scheme on the lines suggested by Greengauge21 might offer a way for the Government to abandon HS2B, with its enormous costs, without too much political loss of face, by still offering the Midlands and North a much improved service.

## CANAL SCHEME RESOLVED



The new lock on the canal at Staveley Marina: now it is to have another one.

There was welcome news earlier this month that HS2 Ltd and the Chesterfield Canal Trust have resolved the problem of how to restore the canal between Staveley and Renishaw while at the same time leaving open the possible reinstatement of a railway line over the canal to serve a traction depot planned as part of HS2B. This will involve building an extra lock, to lower the water level beneath the railway bridge. If this goes ahead and HS2B does not, in centuries to come boaters and other visitors will wonder why the canal dropped down at one lock only to climb up again at the next. The Chesterfield Canal is in any case an oddity among early waterways in the way in which it drops down the Rother valley from Chesterfield to Staveley only to climb up again to the summit level at Norwood. It would have been so much easier just to have gone down the Rother valley to join the Don at Rotherham!

## FLAT CONVERSION NEWS

A revised scheme has been submitted for the conversion of the upper floors of Burlington House into flats. The Civic Society committee supported the original proposal, since it would bring an under-used building back into beneficial use and provide more accommodation in the town centre. The revised scheme creates a total of 22 small flats, each on two floors, with a living

room and kitchen at first-floor level and two (or in a couple of cases three) bedrooms on the second floor. This we feel is an improved layout, although we have suggested that where possible the kitchens be separated from the living rooms to make the flats seem less like bedsitters. Since the original scheme was submitted Burlington House appears to have changed hands. The new applicants (who have presumably bought the building) are a firm named GAPE Equity Ltd, with an address in Carlton, Nottingham.

We have also supported a much more modest proposal to create a flat on the first floor above the bar at 22–24 Corporation Street. The second floor is already used as a flat.



The uninspiring back of Burlington House on Church Lane, not one of Chesterfield's more successful 1960s redevelopment schemes.

## PROVISION FOR CYCLISTS ON CHATSWORTH ROAD

Bryan Thompson, the previous chairman of the Civic Society, has written to County Councillor John Boulton, the Conservative member for the Walton and West division of Chesterfield, which includes Ashgate, Brookside and Somersall as well as Walton, about the proposed creation of a cycle route on Chatsworth Road between Storrs Road and Holymoore Road. This may be of interest to Civic Society members and so we are including here a summary of the points Bryan made in his letter, with an update from him:

I have been making a point of observing traffic along Chatsworth Road in the knowledge that provision may be made for cyclists. I support sustainable transport but expect it to be properly planned and designed to

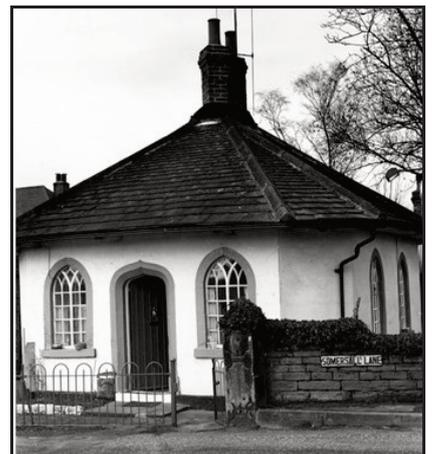
enhance the amenity of an area so that all benefit.

I am unaware of any direct public consultation on this proposal by the county council.

I understand that the Storrs Road/Chatsworth Road junction is to be made more cycle-friendly and hopefully enhance the adjacent Conservation Area. From there, the plan is to connect to the Hipper Valley Trail via Linden Avenue rather than down Somersall Lane. The original intention was to extend the trail across the fields up to Holymoore Road via Greendale Avenue.

Notwithstanding the investment in a new bridge and road crossing, I am told that land drainage problems have obliged the county council to look at Chatsworth Road as the alternative. Even if it is occasionally unusable, extending the Hipper Valley Trail seems highly desirable, as it would improve a very popular walking route and offer a much more inclusive, safer slow cycle route away from normal road traffic.

Chatsworth Road will be much less attractive to cyclists because it is a section of a busy inter-regional and mineral lorry route, which has been improved elsewhere to aid traffic flow. It is also a principal access for tourist and local traffic to and from the one of the busiest National Parks. Vehicles often exceed the speed limits, making the right-turn harbourages essential. But safety margins are only adequate in places and ought not to be narrowed to enable meaningful cycle lanes. However, near the Somersall Lane junction the harbourage is



The former gatehouse to Somersall Hall at the end of Somersall Lane, whose boundary wall has suffered from vehicle collisions.

used to overtake left-turning traffic and has probably contributed to the accidents which have damaged the listed curtilage wall of the gatehouse. Any new cycle lanes ought to be planned to take into account these and other constraints, such as roadside parking and the difficulties pedestrians have crossing Somersall Lane safely.

John Boulton promptly passed my comments to the Economy, Transport and Environment Department of the County Council. It seems that plans are being finalised with the view to public consultation.

Subsequently I came across a Freedom of Information request that gives the council's submission to the Department for Transport for funding and it includes a set of plans. See the link: <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/674369/response/1640844/attach/html/3/T2%20Proforma.pdf>. A principal aim has to be 'Creating a road environment that is safer and provides greater capacity for both cyclists and pedestrians.'

The section along Chatsworth Road appears to show a segregated cycle route on the north side created by the loss of right-turning harbours and upgraded pedestrian crossing points. However, no provision is made to improve the well-used and dangerous crossing-point at the end of Somersall Lane or any acceptance of the fact that most people walk on the south side of the road as it serves most properties and is the route to Holymoorside. The benefits here to pedestrians and local residents who have to use the road is open to question. Similarly, given the nature of the road, should the county council be promoting it as a cycle route into the National Park?

This part of Chatsworth Road is

very attractive and in some towns would be a Conservation Area. There are two Conservation Areas elsewhere on Chatsworth Road. Both have been harmed because of road traffic. It would be unfortunate for Chesterfield if this important entrance is spoiled. That is not conducive to investment, nor more cycle and pedestrian routes.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHANGES

Our member Peter Williamson has responded to the piece in the last Newsletter about the possible introduction of single-tier local government in Derbyshire:

I have been thinking along similar lines to yours for some time, at least as far as our corner of the county is concerned. The two-tier system has outlived its usefulness, and one only has to recall the winter when the gritters 'couldn't reach Chesterfield because of the snow', and the duration of the street lighting failure in Markham Road, to see that a town of this size should not have essential services provided from the bottom of the back of beyond. When the current barriers went up at the entrance to Corporation Street, I briefly entertained a fantasy about adorning them with 'ABOLISH DCC' stickers!

One point I would comment on in your letter concerns Bolsover. Notwithstanding any social leaning of the eastern fringe towards Nottinghamshire, unless there was a wider review in progress I doubt that there would be an appetite for fiddling with coun-

ty boundaries (ceremonial or otherwise), or for spreading authorities across them. I have been thinking more in terms of a similar realignment in the south, with Bolsover and North East Derbyshire each divided at a latitude somewhere south of Clay Cross, the southern parts going into Amber Valley and the rest merging with Chesterfield. This would unify Alfreton with its hinterland, place more of the actual Amber valley within the borough which has taken its name, and render the new Chesterfield authority substantial enough to think about applying for city status at some time in the future.

Incidentally I do not think Derbyshire County Council's wacky proposal comes from any desire for change, but rather a desperate bid to hold on to power if change is imposed from above. In other words, 'if there is going to be a single tier, it should be ours'.

Further contributions to this discussion would be welcome. If anyone is interested in reading more about the changes which have taken place in other counties, or proposed changes which have been abandoned because of local opposition, there are two apparently authoritative articles on Wikipedia on 'Structural changes to local government in England', one on the 2009 changes and the other on changes between 2019 and 2023. Most of the counties affected have a smaller population than Derbyshire and in most cases the creation of large units based on existing county councils has been opposed by local communities (as well as district councils) because the new authority would be remote and unaccountable.