
CHESTERFIELD & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No 17

www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk

March 2021

Campaigning to make Chesterfield a better place to live



Brookside, looking west from the junction of Ryehill Avenue. This attractive street picture is threatened by Derbyshire County Council's plans for a 'cycle superhighway'.

PROPOSED CYCLE 'SUPER HIGHWAY' FOR BROOKSIDE

Derbyshire County Council has been given £1.6m. by the Government to improve and extend the existing cycle and footpath which provides a traffic-free route from Brookside to the town centre and railway station. Few people are likely to object to the upgrading of the present route, although some might ask whether usage, current or future, by either walkers or cyclists justifies spending £320,000 a mile, when plenty of potholes on local roads could be filled in for that sort of money.

There is, however, growing opposition to the extension of the route at

its western end by creating a 'cycle superhighway' on the north side of Chatsworth Road between Storrs Road and Holymoore Road, and doubts about the permanent closure of the upper section of Crow Lane as part of the eastern extension to the Royal Hospital.

The county council has for the last few weeks run a 'public consultation' exercise, which has provoked an unusually large number of comments about the western and eastern ends of the route. Almost all the comments on the western extension are hostile.

The Civic Society committee has considered the scheme and submitted a detailed paper to the county council objecting very strongly to the proposals for Chatsworth Road. Indeed, we are unhappy about the nature of the 'public consultation' itself, which

involved delivering flyers door to door around Piccadilly Road (which is not directly affected) but not Chatsworth Road (which is). The scheme appears to have been driven by pressure from the Chesterfield Cycle Campaign and takes no account of the fact that other road users, including pedestrians as well as drivers of private cars, goods vehicles and buses, vastly outnumber cyclists.

The intention is to encourage more people to walk or cycle into town from Brookside and Holymoorside, and for staff at the Royal Hospital to cycle to work. This is, we feel, a fanciful hope unlikely to be realised. Most people who live on the western side of Chesterfield go into town by car or bus, as do most of those who work at the hospital, and we have no doubt that they will continue to do so.

The proposed 'cycle superhighway' will badly damage the appearance of Chatsworth Road, interfere with residents' access to their driveways, make movement by pedestrians along and across the road difficult, and impede the safe movement of motor vehicles along a very busy road which forms part of a major inter-regional freight corridor, notably for heavily loaded HGVs carrying minerals.

This stretch of Chatsworth Road includes a sheltered housing complex, a medical centre with a pharmacy and car-park on the opposite side of Chatsworth Road and Storrs Road, and a 1,300-pupil secondary school.

The building of the superhighway will involve making the carriageways

on Chatsworth Road narrower and therefore more dangerous for both pedestrians and motor vehicles. If it is impossible to create a route for cyclists elsewhere (at one stage it was intended to use a route across fields between Somersall Lane and Greendale Avenue, off Holymoore Road), we feel that the scheme should be scaled back to building conventional cycle lanes on either side of Chatsworth Road.

The full text of our submission to the county council is available on the Civic Society website; if any member without internet access would like a copy please phone Philip Riden (554026) and we will post one out.



SHOULD CROW LANE BE CLOSED PERMANENTLY?

The eastern extension to the cycle route involves its continuation from the station down Crow Lane under the existing railway bridges, and from there up the lane and along Wetlands Lane to the rear entrance to the Royal Hospital. As part of this, the upper section of Crow Lane, between the entrance to Tapton golf course and Dobbin Clough Farm, would be permanently closed to all motor vehicles, as it is at present on a temporary basis. Dobbin Clough Farm and the Paddocks would retain access to the outside world along Wetlands Lane, which obviously cannot be closed to vehicles.

This is the other part of the county council's cycle route scheme which has attracted most comment. Opinion appears to be fairly evenly divided between support for closing Crow Lane for good and restoring it to through traffic as soon as possible.

The Civic Society committee's view is that, while hopes that more staff will cycle to work at the hospital along Crow Lane are probably wishful thinking, there is a strong case for closing this part of the road to traffic. It is a very narrow holloway, with no passing places, no lighting and poor visibility. It is already popular with walkers and cyclists, and has become more so since it was closed the vehicles. There has also been a marked fall in the amount of litter dropped on the road.

This section of Crow Lane forms part of a number of circular walks which it is possible to make around Tapton and is an asset to the local community. Its value will be enhanced by permanent closure, with no real inconvenience to motorists.

STATION MASTER PLAN AND THE CYCLE ROUTE

In our submission to the county council on the proposed cycle route we stressed that the eastern extension should be seen in the context of the borough council's 'Masterplan' for the station approach. This scheme is not mentioned at all in the county's consultation exercise, and yet the existing cycle route ends at the station and the eastern extension is to run past it.

The Masterplan includes a new link road to run from the foot of Hollis Lane through what is at present Jewson's premises into the old station goods yard, ending at a rebuilt junction with Malkin Street and Brimington. This will provide much improved access to the station from the south.

In particular, in our view, it provides an ideal opportunity to close the route currently used to get to the station from Hollis Lane and Hady Hill via Piccadilly Road and the lower section of Crow Lane. This was never intended to be used on the scale it now is by station traffic. Piccadilly Road is not narrow but many of the houses lack off-street parking. Combined with commuter parking this has the effect of narrowing the carriage-



Tapton Golf Course: access could be maintained even if Crow Lane is closed.

way, so that for much of its length it is impossible for two vehicles to pass.

Crow Lane, by contrast, is narrow, with a railway bridge with substandard headroom and a reverse bend that entails single-line working controlled by traffic lights.

Once the new link road, which will have no frontagers or parked cars to get in the way of moving vehicles, and no bridges or traffic lights, is open, we believe that Crow Lane should be closed to all motor vehicles between the station and the junction with Piccadilly Road.

Access to properties on Crow Lane (Rose Cottage, the golf club and two pairs of semi-detached bungalows) would be maintained via Piccadilly Road, which would become a residential cul-de-sac. It would still be possible to park on the road and walk to the station or town centre. The lower section of Crow Lane would at the same time become a safer and pleasanter place for both walkers and cyclists.

STATION MASTER PLAN: OTHER CIVIC SOCIETY IDEAS

While we generally welcome the Borough Council's plans for the station approach, and also the assurance that the scheme will go ahead whether or not the eastern arm of HS2 is built, we have made some suggestions or raised points on which we would welcome reassurance.

We feel it would be prudent to have a 'Plan B' for landscaping on either side of the new link road, in case it proves impossible to develop

the small factory units intended to be built there. We also wish to assured that there will be adequate parking for the commercial developments planned, alongside the multi-storey car-park for rail users.



A bridge too narrow: the Civic Society wishes to see a much wider replacement.

We would like the new bridge over Corporation Street to be as wide as possible, to improve the appearance of the upper portion of the road, and for the footpath from the station up to the bridge to be designed to ensure that all users, including those with wheelchairs, pushchairs etc., will be able to use in all weather.

As an ancillary aspect of the project, we would like to see the whole area between Corporation Street and Spa Lane re-planned and redeveloped. Some car-parking could be retained but we feel that this part of the town would look better if it was more fully built up again.



Kilblean House, Corporation Street: a golden opportunity to extend the Stephenson Memorial Hall's facilities.

Finally, we have suggested that the council consider buying Kilblean House (i.e. the old Clifton Hotel, later the Barking Badger), which has stood empty for several years, and incorporate it into the Stephenson Memorial Hall estate. It could be used by both the Pomegranate Theatre (perhaps as a small studio auditorium) and the

Museum & Art Gallery, for example as a much improved venue for art exhibitions.

Our full submission on the Station Masterplan is also on the society's website and, once again, we will gladly post copies to members unable to access the internet.



The public house at Brampton Manor, proposed to be converted into flats.

BRAMPTON MANOR UPDATE

There is still no decision by the Borough Council on the application to convert the public house on this site into flats. The deadline for the application has been set back again and it is now to go to the planning committee on 29 March.

The two main developments since our last Newsletter have been the issue of another lengthy letter from Historic England to the Borough Council, stressing the need for the future of the entire Brampton Manor estate, with its three protected buildings (house, barn and gazebo), to be considered as a whole, and a six-page report by one of the council's conservation officers which makes the same point and several others.

The conservation officer confirms the Civic Society's view that the new heritage report commissioned by the applicants is a great improvement on the previous effort, but draws attention to a number of omissions in the statement of works proposed, and the lack of any proposals for the grade II* listed gazebo, or the removal of the derelict sports facilities. A scheduled monument application for repairs to the cruck-framed barn, which are now urgently required, has been made to Historic England.

Given the findings and recommendations in the conservation officer's report, we feel it would be

wrong for the Borough Council to grant planning permission for any work to be undertaken on the public house in isolation, or indeed until the applicant has supplied more information in line with the requests from both the conservation officer and Historic England.

WINGERWORTH HALL APPEAL REJECTED

We are pleased that the Planning Inspector has rejected the appeal by the applicant against the refusal by North East Derbyshire District Council to grant full planning consent to erect a large and ugly timber-framed bungalow close to the surviving portion of Wingerworth Hall. The Inspector's report was quite strongly worded and should deter any renewed attempt to build a large house on this land.



One of the surviving back ranges of Wingerworth Hall.

The outline planning consent granted in 2018 for a 'modest, well designed' bungalow on the plot remains in force, and we understand that the applicant, despite losing the appeal, has managed to sell the land (subject to contract) for £200,000, a significant reduction on the asking price of £250,000. Caveat emptor.

DEVELOPMENT BEHIND MANOR HOUSE FARM, HASLAND GREEN

In October last year the owners of a parcel of land to the rear of Manor House Farm at Hasland

Green applied for outline consent to build seven houses on the plot, with access from Seagrave Drive. The application has yet to be decided.

A similar application was made in 2005, which officers recommended be rejected, although it was in fact withdrawn. It was accepted then that the land lay within an area deemed suitable for residential development in the Local Plan. The main objections to granting consent were that existing houses on Seagrave Drive would suffer from overlooking and that the scheme would adversely affect the setting of Manor House Farm, a grade II listed building.

All three points remain valid fifteen years later and it is for the borough planning committee to decide whether the first outweighs the other two. The conservation officer has recommended that it be rejected be-



Manor House Farm, Hasland Green, as extensively rebuilt in the 1980s.

cause of the impact of the scheme on the setting of Manor House Farm, a view understandably shared by the present owners of that property. Residents of Seagrave Drive remain unhappy about overlooking.

On the other hand, the ‘setting’ which the objectors wish to conserve has changed radically since the older part of the house was built, probably c. 1500. The property was enlarged in the seventeenth century with the addition of the gabled range on the main front, and the adjoining barns, now converted to residential use, probably date from the eighteenth century.

Perhaps more important, the layout has changed a great deal since the property ceased to be a working farm. All the outbuildings apart from the barns have been cleared away and the land has been redeveloped for housing. The house itself has been heavily rebuilt, including the demolition of a

structure once attached to the left-hand end of the main range. The house now looks much more like a small seventeenth-century gentry house than it did fifty years ago.

The extent of these changes must raise the question of what ‘setting’ will be preserved if the application is rejected. It will in effect be the layout created in the 1980s, including the present, not entirely authentic, appearance of Manor House Farm itself.

Finally, the contribution of the county council’s archaeology officers to the discussion can only be described as unhelpful. Manor House Farm (which is not a ‘manor house’ strictly speaking) has never been moated (how would anyone have got water to a site on such high ground?) and is not the ‘medieval core’ of settlement at Hasland Green. It is the largest of several houses built as encroachments at the southern end of the common waste which once extended on either side of The Green as far as the junction with Mansfield Road. The medieval open fields of Hasland appear to have lain on either side of Hasland Road around Penmore, not as far south as Hasland Green, which make the identification of ridge and furrow earthworks near the house dubious.

Any Civic Society members interested in reading a new history of Hasland, including Manor House Farm, will find a draft of a forthcoming Derbyshire Victoria County History publication on the Derbyshire VCH website. This is due to be published later this year.

HURST HOUSE: THE SCANDAL CONTINUES

Members will be aware that the Civic Society committee has for several years been pressing Derbyshire County Council, as sole trustee of the Chesterfield Schools Foundation, which owns the property, to ensure the future of Hurst House. This property, a grade II listed building in a conservation area, has now stood empty since 2014 and is judged by the Borough Council to be

a ‘building at risk’.

The county council cabinet member responsible for the charity, Alex Dale, resolved in May 2018 to offer Hurst House for sale by private treaty and, if unsold after six months (i.e. by November 2018), to sell the property by auction. Attempts to sell the property at an asking price of £420,000 failed but, for reasons which he has never explained, Mr Dale did not carry out the second part of his resolution.

Instead, in 2019 the county council resolved to transfer its trusteeship of over forty educational charities of which it is sole trustee, of which the Chesterfield Schools Foundation is the second largest, to the Derbyshire Community Foundation, a charity which has no connection with the town. The Chesterfield Schools Foundation’s freehold interest in Hurst House would be among the charity estate included in this transfer.



Hurst House, held in trust by Derbyshire County Council for a major Chesterfield charity. The property has now stood empty for over six years.

It is not clear whether this transfer, which was approved by the Charity Commission, has gone ahead. According to the Register of Charities, the county council remains sole trustee of the Chesterfield Schools Foundation. The register also shows that the Foundation’s annual return to the Charity Commission for 2019, which as trustee the county council is required by law to make, was submitted 236 days (nearly eight months) in arrears. The county council has yet to submit an annual return for 2020, which is currently 50 days late. The directors of a limited company who behaved in the same way would be disqualified and the company struck off.

If the trusteeship has in fact been

transferred, either the Commission has failed to update the Register of Charities or the Derbyshire Community Foundation, as the current trustee, has followed the example of the county council and failed to submit the statutory return for 2020 on time, or even advise the Charity Commission of the change of trusteeship. Whatever is the answer, the situation reflects little credit on either the county council or the Derbyshire Community Foundation.

In the meantime, Hurst House continues to be exposed to weather damage and vandalism. Equally important, no young person aged between 11 and 25 who is attending (or has attended) one of the schools listed in the Scheme of 2002 under which the charity is supposed to be governed, and is therefore eligible to benefit from it, is known to have received anything from the charity.

If the trusteeship has been (or is in the future) transferred to the Derbyshire Community Foundation, this does not secure the future of Hurst House. Indeed, it exposes it to greater risk. The trustees of a charity are required by law to act in the best interests of the charity. It would clearly be in the best interests of the Derbyshire Community Foundation if Hurst House was demolished, since a cleared site would almost certainly be worth more than one with a neglected listed building standing on it.

Had the trusteeship been transferred to a body of responsible local people with an interest in Chesterfield, Hurst House would almost certainly by now have been sold to a new owner in a position to restore it. It is possible that the trustees of the Derbyshire Community Foundation, lacking any local links, will conclude that a policy of benign neglect will suit them best, until Hurst House has either been burnt down or has deteriorated to such an extent that it has to be demolished as a matter of public safety.

Traditionally, owners of listed buildings have concluded that immediate demolition is necessary on the grounds of public safety in the early hours of Sunday morning, so that by the time the local planning authority hears of the matter the following day

their officers are confronted with nothing more than a pile of rubble.

The Civic Society committee intends to do all it can to prevent Hurst House suffering this fate, despite the failure of the county council over several years, aided by the supineness of the Charity Commission, to make proper provision for a listed building entrusted to their care.

BLUE PLAQUE PROGRESS

We are delighted to report progress with our campaign to erect blue plaques, which has been supported by grants totalling £1,500. Your chairman and secretary recently met Derby University's deputy estates director, who has agreed that we can install a plaque commemorating the history of the university's Chesterfield campus as a girls high school. We are now in the process of applying for listed building consent. All being well, the plaque should be in place later this year.



The main entrance to the former St Helena School. We hope to install a Civic Society plaque on one of the gate-piers on the right of the picture.

Provisionally we propose to use the following text (which may have to be shortened to fit):

CHESTERFIELD GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

Founded at East Bank 1892
Sheffield Road buildings opened by
Derbyshire County Council 1911
Architect George Henry Widdows
(1886–1946)
Renamed St Helena School 1947
Closed 1991

CLIMATE ISSUES AND CHESTERFIELD

Cliff Lea has contributed this piece on the work of the Chesterfield Climate Alliance:

Our Civic Society has long been influential in encouraging and leading on preservation and protection of our local area against threats to the historic and visual built environment.

I've been a member and supporter of Chesterfield & District Civic Society for 40 years since the 1980s. But as a scientist I have long followed the climate change debate and am currently involved with Chesterfield Climate Alliance — an organisation formed just a few years ago. Its purpose is to form a network of concerned individuals, ordinary folk such as me and you, and some of our local green organisations and politicians.

You may have noticed that 'climate' has climbed the political agenda. It's rare to pick up a newspaper without finding mention of global warming. Indeed, you may have also noted that the county council, borough council and North East Derbyshire District Council have all recently declared a 'Climate Emergency'. Like hundreds of other councils across the country and thousands across the world they are reacting to the latest news that things are happening a little faster than was thought a few years ago. These councils are on all sides of the political spectrum.

The progress and effects of global warming are not something that happens 'over there'. Across Derbyshire we've seen once in one hundred year flooding — three years running. Our moorlands suffered unmatched wild fires and globally the last twelve months have seen a series of unwellcome records broken for the hottest summer, hottest January and all-time time temperature peaks were registered from the Antarctic to the Arctic.

If you're interested to hear more about 'global warming', then those of you who are members of Chesterfield U3A can hear my talk about the issue and what we here should do, it's on Zoom at 2 p.m. on Wednesday 7

April.

Whilst it's understood that any reductions of greenhouse gases by Chesterfield, Derbyshire and the UK are miniscule in comparison with emissions from some other countries, it's important we ask our politicians to raise awareness with other countries, and it's interesting to see the great turn around in for instance the USA just over the last few months. Whilst there is frustration that there is little that we can do here, it's important that the UK and other concerned countries lead by example.

So, can the Civic Society help or have influence? I think so. Let me give you an example of just one area which is right in the Civic Society's purlieu: local housing.

It's generally recognised that the new housing being constructed around Chesterfield has abysmal standards in terms of insulation, with consequent high costs and energy use for heating. This is exactly the time that all levels of government should be legislating for 'passive housing', or indeed, at the very least a minimum EPC Grade A standard. Instead just 2 per cent of Grade A is currently being built in this area, and the usual standard is Grades B or C. I seem to recall that the Civic Society's Newsletter has carried just this same message. What are our politicians doing?

We are shortly to have more local elections, and in Chesterfield the Chesterfield Climate Alliance has set

up 'hustings' for Monday 12 April so that we can question prospective candidates on green issues, asking all them to declare their support, in particular that they pledge to ensure that our council works with the community to rapidly implement a Climate Action Plan which strives to cut carbon emissions drastically.

As a long-time member, I think that Chesterfield & District Civic Society should support the aims of Chesterfield Climate Alliance, indeed, they can be mutually supportive. Some of the aims of the Civic Society tally brilliantly with some of the aims of the Climate Alliance.

I'd like to encourage the Civic Society and any interested members themselves, to support Chesterfield Climate Alliance and to learn more of what's going on, and what they themselves can do. This is an emergency, and the world has only a limited time to ameliorate and control the situation.

You can see more information on the CCA website at <https://sites.google.com/view/chesterfieldclimatealliance/home>.

TELL YOUR FRIENDS

For the last year this Newsletter has been virtually the only means by which the Civic Society committee can keep in touch with the membership as a whole, and for

this reason we have tried to build it up with progressively longer articles and more pages. This appears to be paying dividends in terms of references to our views in the *Derbyshire Times*, which currently provides very good coverage of the sort of issues which the Civic Society is interested in. The committee has also been gratified to receive compliment from our own members.

We have at the same time maintained a constructive relationship with the Borough Council at both member and officer level.

We would be delighted if our members who have enjoyed reading the Newsletter would show it to their friends and encourage them to join the society. The subscription remains a modest £10 a year and full details of how to join are on our website.

As soon as we can, we will resume traditional meetings, especially when there are important issues facing the town which it is useful to discuss. For example, had this been possible, we would probably have convened a meeting about the proposed cycle superhighway, on which opinion locally is clearly divided and more information from the county council would be welcome.

The larger our membership the greater influence we can expect to have in pursuing our aim of 'Campaigning to make Chesterfield a better place to live'.