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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 EAST–WEST CYCLE ROUTE: AN ASSET OR A CUCKOO?

*We are indebted to Bryan Thompson, a former chairman of the Civic Society, for this detailed assessment of the proposed cycle route across Chesterfield.*

Some members will recall when cycling or walking along streets and country lanes was a simple pleasure, albeit progress was slow. Slow progress is evident in early twentieth-century films of European towns and cities. What is remarkable is that often in the city centres there was little difference between the speed of trams, cycles, horses and cars and pedestrians, which meant they would intermingle comfortably. Less so early cars. The huge post-war expansion of motor transport, moving at greater speed, meant that these vehicles dominated the roads and this was reflected in highway design. Cyclists and pedestrians were at best displaced to the bleak margins or just ignored. Soon, town centres and beauty spots became associated with traffic jams and eventually car-free shopping precincts.

In the 1970s the Peak District National Park and Derbyshire County Council created a partially segregated traffic hierarchy, with upgraded lorry and through traffic routes, leaving minor roads and lanes for visitors and local people. Former railway lines became trails for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, with links to country



The busy Chatsworth Road medical centre, to which access will become more difficult if the cycle super-highway is built as planned.

lanes, bridleways and paths. It was a model that others followed. With further additions and road improvements, this spatial segregation of traffic remains but today the A619 and A623 form a major east–west route to and through the Peak District and Chesterfield, where it is often congested, damaging the local communities which it also serves.

Earlier than the UK, some European countries recognised that universal motor vehicle access was so damaging to the environment, cultural heritage and quality of lives that a radical, more sustainable approach was taken. The key to success was huge investment in public transport and recognition that motor vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians *need* to be segregated, with potential conflict reduced by good design. Copenhagen and several Dutch cities are seen as the best places where people are enticed to cycle, with dedicated cycle routes that are safe, attractively landscaped and maintained throughout the year, whatever the weather.

London and some major UK cities now have good cycle and walking



Brookfield School entrance and the junction with Somersall Lane, both of which will become more hazardous if the cycle route is built.

routes but achieving integrated transport across the country is problematic. Walking and cycling are rightly promoted for healthy living, more so since the pandemic, but greater use has revealed the inadequacies of the transport networks. For example, the Hipper Valley trail ends as a 1 metre wide shared path and a lot of mud where people have had to pass.

It was also quite evident that people prefer to be away from busy main roads and to walk or cycle through the obviously attractive, safe suburbs, parks, tracks and fields on the urban fringe. Elsewhere, cycling has had to be managed. Richmond Park has a code of practice that in some locations seeks single-file cycling with a 10 mph speed limit. On shared surfaces in the USA cyclists expect to give way to pedestrians. That has resonance with those early twentieth-century European cities but may not be compatible with making progress. It would help if pedestrians become more cycle-aware, since slow cycling, occasionally intermingling with pedestrians, is less of a personal threat than perceptions suggest.

In 2020 the Government published a definitive policy document for cycle provision, *Local Transport Note LTN 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure and Design*, which runs to 196 pages. It is made clear that government grants require compliance. This guidance for highway authorities and designers is to help safe cycling become a form of mass transit in many more places. Unlike fifty years ago, cycling must no longer be treated as marginal, or an afterthought. It must not be seen as mainly part of the leisure industry, but as a means of everyday transport.

It must be placed at the heart of the transport network, with the capital spending, road space and traffic planners' attention befitting that role.

There are five objectives to be met within the cycling infrastructure design: it should be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive. Infra-structure must be accessible and meet the need of the vulnerable. Some 22 criteria expand these aims. Several are worth noting in the context of the proposed scheme for Chesterfield:

- Routes should be planned for everyone. **There are sections which are unsuitable for all.**
- On urban streets, cyclists must be physically separated from pedestrians and should not share space with pedestrians. **The 1 m wide entrance to Somersall Lane is to be a shared surface, as are the wider sections around the Storrs Road junction and the top of Chatsworth Road (section 1). Most of the Hipper Valley section as well as the park will be a shared surface, contrary to best practice.**
- Routes should be planned for a significant number of cyclists. **As a non-leisure route, it is extremely difficult to justify the vast expenditure and inconvenience of the Chatsworth Road section. There are more obvious pleasant routes for leisure.**
- Largely cosmetic interventions which bring few or no benefits for cycling or walking will not be funded from cycling or walking budgets. **The Chatsworth Road section appears to be virtue signalling at the expense of pedes-**

**trians and others, including the local community.**

- Cycle infrastructure must join together or join other facilities. **The arrangements around the station ought to be better. The Crow Lane section needs much more justification.**
- Cycle routes must flow, feeling direct and logical. **The Chatsworth Road section is contrived and viewed by many as a waste of money. There are shorter alternatives away from heavy motor traffic.**
- In rare cases, where it is absolutely unavoidable, a short stretch of less good provision rather than jettison an entire route which is otherwise good will be appropriate. **i.e. the narrow, wooded track bounded by a steep bank and a leat next to Somersall Park popular with children and walkers.**

Most projects will have an element of compromise. In that context the east-west proposals are seemingly compliant, but on closer examination there are too many compromises and other issues to the point at which it stretches credibility. Unfortunately, the guidance not only expects the designers to be experienced in active travel, but it is so lengthy and prescriptive that it is easy to forget the wider need to give proper weight to other constraints and use the expertise they demand. Had that occurred we would have been celebrating a local asset.

LTN 1/20 does seek public consultation in addition to other bodies which will have a technical and user interest. To the annoyance of former ward members and many others, the public consultation missed the households which were most likely to object. The opinion survey on the website felt like more of a push poll to get a desired result. Even if done in error, this should not be the route to gain government funding. What occurred invites strong complaint to, and if possible redress from, the Local Government Ombudsman, or for the well-heeled a judicial review.

Several years ago, the Civic Society suggested that there should be a few additional roads in the town to enable more walking and cycling and

better neighbourhoods. Ashbourne hopes to have a bypass to take heavy lorries out of the town. Just imagine the benefits that would stem from an east-west relief road: less pollution, opportunities to enhance Chatsworth Road and Derby Road and improve the chances of saving the historic Walton Works.

There is no need for a cycle super-highway that, like a cuckoo, displaces others; instead what is wanted is a better segregated, meaningful cycle and pedestrian network that works well for everyone.

## MEANWHILE ... NO NEWS FROM THE COUNTY COUNCIL

During the run-up to the county council elections it was impossible for either elected members or officers to say much about the authority's much criticised plans for the cycle super-highway, and there has been no public statement since. The Civic Society committee is continuing to watch the situation very closely and will decide on what action to take when any announcement is made.

We now have firm evidence that households on at least eighteen streets (including Chatsworth Road and Somersall Lane) did not receive the circular which the county council claims was delivered to over 4,000 houses on 117 streets affected by the scheme. We consider this failure by the county council's contractors sufficient grounds for a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman on two counts. First, the county council did not consult as they claim to have done. Second, the county council has made a payment from public funds to a contractor without checking that the work contracted for had been properly executed.

One factor that has changed is that the sitting county councillor for Walton & West Chesterfield, through which the Chatsworth Road section of the route runs, John Boulton, lost his seat at the recent election to Paul Niblock, the Liberal Democrat candidate.

This was the last division in Chesterfield held by the Conservatives,

and was lost at an election where over the county as a whole the party gained a number of seats. In addition, Mr Boulton is a well known and respected local businessman who is generally agreed to have been an effective and hard-working county councillor. In these circumstances, it is tempting to suggest that his party's support for the cycle super-highway (on which he himself has made no public comment) may have cost him votes.

Paul Niblock's personal view, as both the borough and county councillor for the area affected, is that an east-west cycle route is certainly a good idea but his preferred route would be the one across the fields to Greendale Avenue. The Chatsworth Road route he sees as 'problematical', with two-way cycle traffic and two complex crossings. None of those he has spoken to who live on the route are in favour. Potential users have expressed their concerns at sharing a road with heavy traffic flow and a high proportion of HGVs. He is also concerned as to whether there was a proper consultation: 'it was very time constrained, not widely publicised and was basically take it or leave it, so maybe not a consultation at all.'

## WHAT IS HAPPENING AT DUNSTON HALL?

In 2018 Dunston Hall, the large house which adjoins the garden centre on Dunston Road, was offered for sale as a private residence in about 4 acres of grounds. In the event, the purchaser also acquired the garden centre, where a good deal of redevelopment has since occurred, and he has recently applied for listed building consent to carry out what are described as minor works at the Hall.

The application, which is currently under consideration by the Borough Council, is accompanied by a 'Heritage Statement'. This demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of the structural development of Dunston Hall and includes a very inaccurate account of the owners and occupiers of the house. It has been written by the applicant's agent, who has also designed the proposed works. He is not a registered architect.

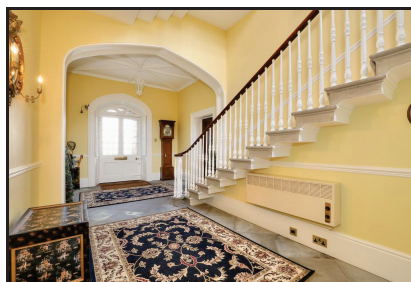
Dunston Hall appears to comprise two main phases of building. Probably about 1600 a characteristic north Derbyshire 'high house' (similar, for example, to Cutthope Old Hall), with three main rooms on each of three floors, was built. In 1826 (the date over the main entrance) the house was extended by the addition of a two-storey range to the south. The two phases were unified by a new east front, which rose to a common eaves level, surmounted by large gables. This helped to disguise the fact that inside parts of the house are on two different levels.



The east front of Dunston Hall. The older portion of the house is to the right of the entrance.

Possibly at the same time, a separate Dunston Hall Farm was created to the west of the main house, whose outbuildings are now occupied by the garden centre.

The Civic Society committee opposes the listed building application in its present form because of the weakness of the 'Heritage Statement', which we do not consider an adequate justification for the works proposed. In particular, it uses the word 'original' far too loosely, without defining what is meant by it. Does it refer to work dating from c.1600 or from 1826 or some other period? This is not a trivial matter of semantics, especially when the applicant wishes to remove parts of the fabric which his agent considers not to be 'origi-



The entrance hall of c.1826 at Dunston Hall.

nal'. The misuse of the word demonstrates the agent's lack of understanding of the evolution of an important listed building.

Before any work is authorised, we wish to see a full-scale survey made by a suitably qualified and experienced building archaeologist, as has been done at Brampton Manor.

In the meantime, it is unfortunate that the wrought iron railings at the entrance to the grounds of the Hall, which probably also date from c.1826, have been damaged by a road vehicle. These may be difficult to repair satisfactorily, since wrought iron is no longer made in Britain.



The gates at the entrance to Dunston Hall.

Finally, no planning permission appears to have been obtained for the works carried out in recent years at the garden centre, even though they clearly affect the setting of a listed building, and no application has been made to permit a change in the use of the Hall from a private residence to a venue for weddings and other events. Despite this, the present owner is advertising the Hall as being available (now or in the near future) on this basis.

The full text of the society's comments on the current listed building application can be found on the Borough Council's planning website.

## BRAMPTON MANOR: LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL?

It is now over a year since the owner of Brampton Manor (107 Old Road) applied for listed building consent to convert the house on the site (in recent years a private member' club and later a public house)



into four flats for the over 55s, and make a fifth apartment out of a building at the rear. The pub is listed grade II and dates from c.1600, when it was built by the Watkinsons, a local merchant family.

Since then a decision on the application has been repeatedly postponed, mainly because it took no account of the presence of two more important listed buildings on the site, a cruck-framed barn of c.1600, which is also a scheduled monument, and a later gazebo, which is listed grade II\*, meaning that it is seen by Historic England as being of national importance (as is the barn).



The gazebo at Brampton Manor, a very rare survival that is graded II\* by Historic England. The current planning application makes no provision for its future.

Historic England, the Civic Society and the applicant's own historic building consultant have all urged that before any work is done on the pub a comprehensive scheme for the redevelopment of the whole site should be prepared to ensure the long-term protection of all three listed buildings, and the applicant should explain what exactly are its plans to create a 'retirement village' at Brampton Manor.

The applicant's planning consultant has now (on 24 May) written to the Borough Council setting out the his client's long-term thinking, as illustrated by a site plan, and undertaking to repair the other two listed buildings.

In our view, this represents progress in the right direction, but we would like to see a different approach to the execution of the plans. We have suggested to the Borough Council that it either rejects (or secures the withdrawal of) the current application

to convert the pub into flats, and instead asks the applicant to apply for outline planning permission for the whole of its scheme, which includes a care home and blocks of new apartments in the grounds. The barn would become a café and the gazebo used for storing groundsmen's equipment.

We have suggested that outline consent should be granted, as long as the applicant is required to restore the two unoccupied listed buildings before being allowed to proceed with converting the pub, much less putting up new buildings. If the work was not done in this order, there is the risk that the applicant would carry out the profitable parts of the scheme and then plead poverty when asked to renovate the barn and gazebo. That is what we wish to avoid.

We would also like to see the proposed care home reduced from three storeys to two, so that it would not overshadow the pub.

## NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES: SIGNS OF PROGRESS



The derelict former North East Derbyshire District Council Offices on Saltergate..

An end appears to be in sight in the long-running saga of what to do with the former district council offices which have been a derelict eyesore on Saltergate for several years.

A 'prior approval for change of use' planning application has been submitted for conversion into 59 apartments. If this scheme goes ahead it will ensure the retention of both halves of the building, i.e. Saltergate House, the Chesterfield Rural District Council offices of 1938, a building of

some architectural merit, and the post-1974 extension, remarkable only as a monument to North East Derbyshire's delusions of adequacy.

The application comes after a tortuous few years, since the removal of the council to the former Coal Products offices at Wingerworth. In 2015 a company named Saltergate Solutions Ltd was registered, of which the then managing director of Heathcotes Care of 37 Station Road was a director.

As we mentioned in an earlier newsletter, in 2017 McCarthy & Stone sought planning permission to redevelop the site for an assisted living complex (which would have entailed the demolition of the existing buildings). The company abandoned the project after they were unable to agree terms for the purchase of the property.

In March this year Heathcotes (which was itself taken over by a larger group late last year) disposed of Saltergate Solutions Ltd to James Henry W. Holmes, a 47-year-old former market trader turned property developer from Sheffield, who renamed the company Saltergate Ltd. The planning application, however, has been submitted in the name of HI Blackpool Ltd, one of at least thirteen companies of which Mr Holmes is a director. He also trades as 'Homes by Holmes', which could lead to confusion with a registered company of the same name owned by Mark Holmes of Claygate (Surrey), a furniture retailer.

The first word in the name on the application is evidently an abbreviation of the name of another of Mr Holmes's companies, Holmes Investment Group Ltd, rather than a greeting from the seaside resort. His business has its headquarters at Holmes House, 9 Chapel Walk, Sheffield, previously the home of Sunkiss Tanning and Nail Centres Ltd, whose former director now works for Homes by Holmes.

Homes by Holmes is already advertising the Saltergate development on its website (not, it must be said, a masterpiece of English prose), where it refers to the building currently having 'planning approval' for 64 retirement apartments. In fact, the application by McCarthy & Stone (CHE/17/00769/FUL) has never been

approved (or rejected). The website states that the offices are 'now being converted' by the new owner, which hopes that building work will start this year and will be completed within 24 months.

Although some of these statements appear to anticipate decisions yet to be taken by the Borough Council, the crucial point is that someone has come forward with a flat conversion scheme that will ensure the survival of the 1938 RDC building and at the same time increase the supply of reasonably priced housing close to the town centre. This is to be welcomed; all that is now needed is full planning permission followed by an early start on site.

Indicative plans showing how the building could be turned into flats can be seen on the Borough Council's planning website under the reference CHE/21/00396/PA.

## THE WIDER PROBLEM

The Government has announced that their proposed Planning Act will include powers to force local authorities and other public bodies to redevelop or dispose of derelict land and buildings in their ownership.

Chesterfield does not at present suffer from this problem; what is a problem is privately owned property in and around the town which is being left empty. This is not only unsightly, but is also morally wrong, in that it deprives the community of a scarce resource (i.e. land) which could be used for its benefit.

The former district council building is one local example of this; it is not difficult to find others. A particularly conspicuous case is the former



The former Telmore Lodge pub at Winsick, photographed in 2019. The building now looks much worse than it did then.

Telmore Lodge pub at Winsick, on the main road from Hasland to the M1. This was originally a private house named Birchill Lodge, once owned by Grassmoor Colliery Company. New houses are currently being built elsewhere in Winsick but the land occupied by this unsightly and dangerous building could probably accommodate at least another half dozen modestly priced starter homes. That would mean half a dozen more families would have somewhere decent to live.

## HURST HOUSE YET AGAIN

We make no apology for publicising once more the increasingly scandalous situation which is jeopardising the future of Hurst House. This property, at the junction of Abercrombie Street and Sheffield Road, is a grade II listed building in a conservation area. It has stood empty (and potentially deteriorating) since 2014.

Hurst House is owned by the Chesterfield Schools Foundation, the successor to the charity originally endowed by Sir Godfrey Foljambe in his will of 1585, which led to the foundation of a grammar school in the town in 1598. Since 1940 Derbyshire County Council has been sole trustee of the charity, whose scope was widened in 1991 to benefit current or former pupils of all the secondary schools in Chesterfield (but not Brimington or Staveley).



A view of the back of Hurst House, when it was on sale by private treaty in 2018 but failed to sell.

After the Civic Society drew the attention of the Charity Commission to the failure of the county council properly to discharge its statutory

duties as trustee (by leaving Hurst House empty, which was clearly not in the best interests of the charity), the cabinet member responsible, County Coun. Alex Dale, resolved in May 2018 to offer Hurst House for sale by private treaty or, if unsold within six months, to sell it by auction. County Coun. Dale has never explained why he failed to execute the second half of this resolution after it proved impossible to sell Hurst House at an asking price of £420,000.



County Councillor Alex Dale, the cabinet member for young people, who is responsible for discharging the county council's obligations as trustee of 46 educational charities.

In 2019 the county council announced that it proposed to transfer its trusteeship of 46 educational charities to the Derbyshire Community Foundation, an umbrella organisation for several charities based in the south of the county which has no connection with Chesterfield. The Chesterfield Schools Foundation is the second biggest of the charities and the only one which owns real property. The other large charity exists for the benefit of two primary schools in the Ripley area, and its transfer was opposed by Ripley Town Council on the ground that it should be administered by local trustees. The county council and the Charity Commission ignored this objection.

At about the same time the county council transferred £250,000 from its reserves to the credit of the charities' account, possibly to make good its failure over many years to pay a proper rate of interest on balances held in



trust for the charities. It has proved impossible to confirm this suspicion, since the county council (in answer to an enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act) stated that the payment was made by an officer without any written or electronic record being created, or any instruction from an elected member that might have given the reason.

In February 2020 representatives of the Old Cestrefeldians Trust were told that the trusteeship and assets of the 46 charities, including the freehold of Hurst House, were shortly to be transferred to the Derbyshire Community Foundation.

A recent enquiry to the latter body has established that no transfer has taken place. A search on 26 May of the Register of Charities showed that the accounts for the Chesterfield Schools Foundation for the year ending 31 March 2019 were submitted 236 days late, and that the accounts for 2019–20 have yet to be submitted. They are therefore 115 days overdue.

Trustees are required by law to submit these documents to the Charity Commission, which appears to be incapable of pursuing trustees who are negligent in discharging their statutory obligations. As some members will know from personal experience, a limited company failing to make similar returns to Companies House for such a lengthy period would be struck off and its directors fined and disqualified.

Leaving aside the question of whether taxpayers are receiving value for money from a county council which employs legal officers apparently incapable of executing the simplest of tasks on behalf of their employer, or from a statutory regulator which appears to be equally supine, there are two continuing issues of local importance.

The first is that Hurst House remains empty and may be deteriorating. Assuming that it is eventually transferred to the Derbyshire Community Foundation, and that this body does sell the freehold, as the county council resolved to do three years ago, it will be interesting to see what price is achieved. If it is less (in real terms) than £420,000 the difference will be a measure of the damage done to the Chesterfield Schools Foundation by the gross professional incom-

petence of the county council's legal officers.

The second is that no young person in Chesterfield aged between 11 and 25 has benefited from the charity, as they should have done according to the Scheme of 2002 under which the Chesterfield Schools Foundation is supposed to be administered by its trustee.

Reasonable people may differ as to which of these matters is the more important. But no-one with an interest in either the built environment of Chesterfield or the welfare of young people in the borough is likely to disagree with the view that Derbyshire County Council's conduct as sole trustee of the Chesterfield Schools Foundation is, and has been for many years, a disgrace.

## ADOPT YOUR LOCAL STATION

*Our committee member Philip Cousins has supplied this note about a new initiative by East Midland Railways.*

Chesterfield railway station has a new station adopter group, under the auspices of East Midlands Railway (EMR). Though currently only a small group, the local Rotary Club has expressed an interest in getting involved. Alexa Stott, EMR's Community Ambassador, is currently coordinating the group.

Despite the lock-down the group has already been making a difference at the station – eighteen sturdy wooden planters have been constructed in the raised gravel area (many years ago the former south bay platform) between platforms 2 and 3.

The Civic Society is very keen to promote and take part in the station adopters' scheme, which has seen real results elsewhere – locally at Dronfield (though this scheme is coordinated by Northern) and on the line to Matlock. It is not just about gardening and general tidying either. EMR's most recent adopters' newsletter gives a flavour of some of their other activities. These include photography, art and historical displays.

For more information see [https://www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk/site/default/files/assets/download\\_ct/20210104/9Ff4Qu0cOO-H64nouyStYkAgBIS88CKvPK5IQ-RhOdcUg/station\\_adoption\\_xmas\\_newsletter\\_pages-compressed-1.pdf](https://www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk/site/default/files/assets/download_ct/20210104/9Ff4Qu0cOO-H64nouyStYkAgBIS88CKvPK5IQ-RhOdcUg/station_adoption_xmas_newsletter_pages-compressed-1.pdf).

[www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk/site/default/files/assets/download\\_ct/20210104/9Ff4Qu0cOO-H64nouyStYkAgBIS88CKvPK5IQ-RhOdcUg/station\\_adoption\\_xmas\\_newsletter\\_pages-compressed-1.pdf](https://www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk/site/default/files/assets/download_ct/20210104/9Ff4Qu0cOO-H64nouyStYkAgBIS88CKvPK5IQ-RhOdcUg/station_adoption_xmas_newsletter_pages-compressed-1.pdf).

The society will be actively exploring how we might be able to work in partnership with the scheme over the coming months.

If you are interested in joining the group more information is available from EMR's website: <https://www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk/routes-destinations/adopt-a-station>.

## BLUE PLAQUE FOR FIRST WORLD WAR LOCAL NURSE



Friends of Spital Cemetery would like to invite Civic Society members to the unveiling of a blue plaque commemorating Anne Veronica Fletcher at 11 a.m. on Tuesday 27 July 2021. Nurse Fletcher is one of the First World War casualties buried in Spital Cemetery.

The plaque will be installed at 7 Spital Gardens, where Anne lived. Parking is available nearby on Valley Road, Alexandra Road East and Cemetery Road. From 11.30 there will be refreshments at St Leonard's Mission Church. Afterwards visitors will be welcome to walk or drive up to Spital Cemetery, where Colonel Carol Kefford, Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps Association, accompanied by three nurses from 22 Field Hospital, Sheffield, will lay a wreath on Anne's grave. Brief guided tours of the cemetery, particularly to graves associated with the Great War, will be available.

Anyone who would like to attend this event is asked to let the Friends know, either by emailing [thefriends-ofspitalcemetery@gmail.com](mailto:thefriends-ofspitalcemetery@gmail.com) (no

spaces or hyphens) or by phoning Philip Riden on 01246 554026, who will pass on a message. The Friends - hope that by the end of July we will not have to restrict numbers but nothing is certain. They will operate an attendance list and if numbers have to be restricted, or in the event of extremely poor weather, will consider alternatives and will contact people on the list. They also need rough idea of number for the refreshments.

This event is free but all donations to further the work of the Friends will be gratefully received.

## PROGRESS WITH OUR OWN BLUE PLAQUES

We are pleased to report that the plaque commemorating Chesterfield Girls' High School is about to go into production and an unveiling ceremony, to which former St Helena pupils will be invited, is being arranged for later in the year. The design of the plaques for the Corporation (later Civic) Theatre and the Picture House (later Odeon) Cinema has been finalised and we hope to give our suppliers, Leander of Doveholes, the go-ahead

for those within a couple of weeks, again with a view to installation before the end of the year.

We are very grateful to the Borough Council and one of our members for generous donations which have enabled us to commission three plaques in one year.

## WINGERWORTH HALL: STILL TRYING

Nothing, it appears, will deter the owner of the land adjoining the two surviving ranges of Wingerworth Hall from attempting to secure planning permission to build on the site. His latest gambit, after it was pointed out that a buildings with rooms on two floors connected by a staircase did not meet the usual definition of a 'single-storey dwelling', is to submit new drawings, on which the height of the ridge has been reduced by all of 25 cm (less than a foot) and the staircase has disappeared.

As the owner of the adjoining listed building (which would be adversely affected if the plan went ahead) has observed, this is a very high-ceilinged bungalow, of the sort whose owners often insert Velux windows to light rooms created in the

roofspace, as they can do without planning permission.

The revised elevations do not look any more like a barn conversion than those on the previous drawings.

## AVIAN PORCINE SPOTTED OVER MILL LANE IN WINGERWORTH

One unexpected discovery as a result of the Civic Society's involvement in the Wingerworth Hall saga is that North East Derbyshire District Council have decided to appoint a conservation and heritage officer to its planning staff. Assuming the postholder stays longer than a predecessor did some years ago, this is welcome news. It will mean that councillors will now be advised on conservation matters by a member of their own staff, as has long been standard practice for well-run local planning authorities. It will no longer have to engage outside consultants such as the author of the short but illiterate report on the latest Wingerworth Hall planning application, which no-one could take seriously.