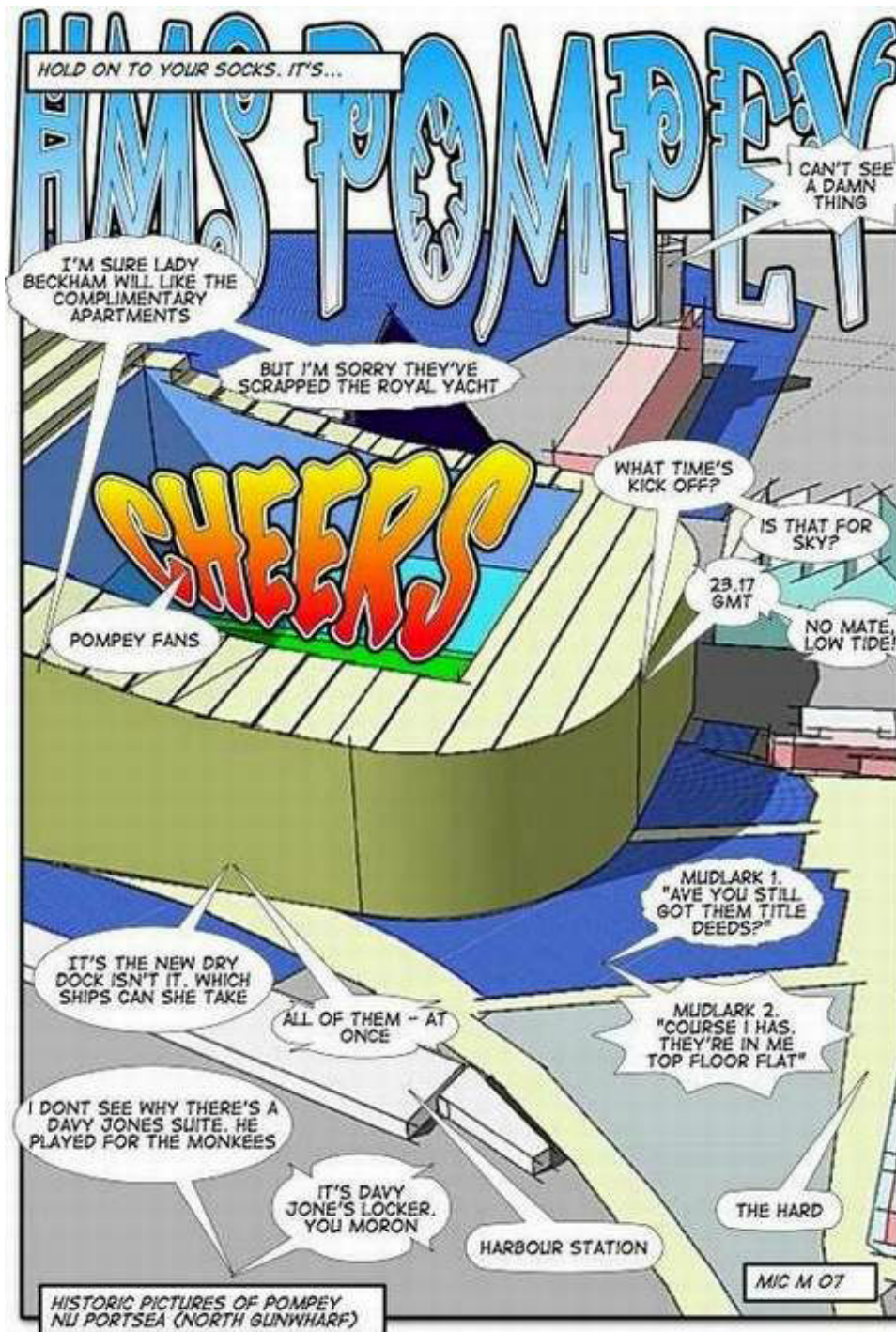


Portsmouth Society News

The Newsletter of The Portsmouth Society - Summer 2007

PORTSMOUTH FC STADIUM FOR THE HARD?



Cartoon by Mick Morris

IF you are interested in football – or in the future of the city – you can hardly have missed the announcements about Portsmouth Football Club's plans to build a huge block of 1400 flats with a stadium inside, completely filling the Hard in Portsea. The building which would range from 11 storeys to 22 storey in four sloping walls has been designed by famous Swiss firm Herzog and de Meuron who transformed Giles Gilbert Scott's Bankside power station into the Tate Modern.

The architects suggested the site. The developers are Sellars, one of the largest privately owned property companies in the country, who already have interests in Pompey Village.

As far as we know, this is the biggest development ever proposed in the city. Four of the Executive Committee met Peter Storrie, Chief Executive / general manager of Portsmouth Football Club on 20th June to find out more detail.

In this edition .. Portsmouth FC Stadium for The Hard?, Meetings & Events, Core Strategy for Portsmouth, Proposals for Northern Quarter, Planning Matters, Buildings in their original condition, Membership update, South West Trains, Planning white paper, Meeting with PCC Chief Exec. David Williams, World Heritage proposals, Edinburgh Rd/Commercial Rd closure, Civic Award, Commemorations

On offer are:

- single aspect flats on three sides wrapped round the stadium, connected by two bridges to an outer ring of flats; a new stadium for 36,000 people with 785 parking spaces underneath; total provision 1400 for residents and 300 for match days.
- a new pedestrian link across Portsmouth and Harbour station from Gunwharf to the Historic Dockyard,
- a new bus station with a large public piazza on top, 40,000m² of public space in total
- a 'town beach' with tidal access for boats under a bridge
- public pedestrian access at ground level around the periphery of the stadium
- club shops underneath the stadium
- a new berth for the Warrior, since the block will fill the area all the way across almost to Boathouse 4
- Relocation of Gosport Ferry – at end of stadium is one option.
- Gosport waterfront too is to have a new complex to enhance the other side of the harbour.

We asked Peter Storie whether the club had considered other sites. Why not rebuild in Fratton? He said that the present stadium takes 20,750 + full waiting list. They are building more seats, but the scheme for 850 homes adjacent to the stadium for which they have planning permission does not stack up financially – they couldn't find a developer to do it. The new owner wanted a brand new stadium, something special, not the concrete jungle of Fratton. Did PFC consider other sites? There were no other sites. It was a commercial decision. They cannot put a stadium where there is no infrastructure. A £100m stadium will take considerable revenue. Tipner would require the clean up of MOD range – there are huge problems and it's not a suitable site for flats or the stadium.

As 60% of Portsmouth Football Club supporters live on Portsea Island, the club has given itself the four years it will take to build the stadium and flats to break people's habits and re-educate the fans that they can't come to matches by car. The council is discussing a bus lane in Eastern Road and residents' only parking. The new Wembley stadium has no parking at all, but a new station. The club intends to bring in park and ride to get people used to the idea. The council is discussing a bus lane in Eastern Road and residents' only parking. They are considering ferries from Clarence Pier and South Parade Pier.

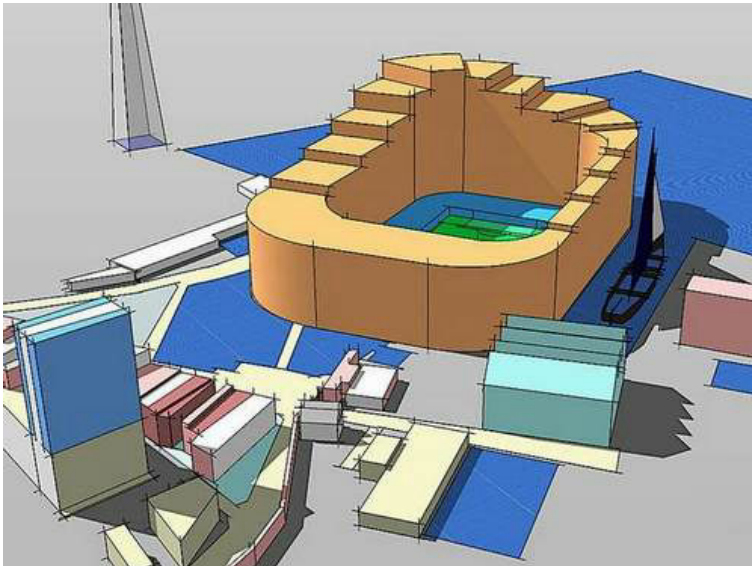
Consultations had according to Peter Storie been positive: there are discussions with the navy, Crown Estates, Queen's Harbour Master, trustees of the Warrior, the Naval Base Property Trust, the bus companies, city council. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be any prospect of major investment by Network Rail. There will be special trains on match days – 19 matches a year – max 21 / 22 games. They considered concerts, but when the season ends the pitch needs to be relaid. Floodlights will be integral facing down.

Joint analysis of the scheme with the Historic Dockyard is to be commissioned (from the university) – what the Historic Dockyard will get, usage, how the scheme will increase visitor numbers.

The largest dredgers in the world based at Fareham...The necessary Transport and Works Act has been discussed with the Queen's Harbour Master. The developer would pay for the Act of Parliament. Ownership of the site is shared by the Crown Estates including the site of the Warrior and the council which has leased the site to the MOD since the eighteenth century.

HMS Warrior would be given a proper berth; Sellars will pay. They have met the whole Warrior Board and Portsmouth Naval Base Trustees. The problem for Warrior is that their main benefactor, Sir John Smith has just died – ownership is unclear.

It is up to the Planning department team to feed back political views. Details will be made public once the application is ready in October – there will be lots of public meetings over 16 weeks. Mr Storie believes property values and businesses around area will benefit during construction and after. He acknowledges that the Government Office of the South East might call the application in. There is a draft Local Plan for the Hard. What is wanted is a stadium icon...There have been initial discussions with English Heritage – Sellers is dealing with the top of EH.



Perspective by Mick Morris of the proposed stadium

Plans for Fratton site: two storey homes are what the council wanted. No more than five storeys – and continuing the pattern of existing roads + greenery. They will apply for planning permission at the same time as flats and stadium: 600 houses and flats.

Mr Storie's final points were that: the City needs a new football stadium; PFC is an integral part of local economy; The morale of community needs to be raised; We need better communications in that area – links to dockyard and railway; The project would secure financial future of the Historic Dockyard.

Mick Morris's perspectives give some

idea of the huge scale and bulk of the flats, which will more than fill Gunwharf, displacing the Warrior.

How much do we value the Hard as it is - with all its traditions and the wonderful panorama which opens as you pass through the pinch point at the end of Queen Street between the Ship & Castle (the first building the Society saved) and the Victory Gate? Warrior will no longer be in view, and one of our greatest views - ships large and small passing against Gosport's backdrop will be gone. In essence this is a huge block of flats which will cost millions - and bring in millions - by taking one of our priceless assets, the view from the Hard, important historic buildings and conservation areas will be overshadowed. On the other hand, the harbour station and some sections of the Hard, particularly Brunel House are shabby and in desperate need of investment. Buildings by great architects are thin on the ground too. The proposal is raising our ambition to see brilliantly designed structures which enhance the public realm - as is likely to happen with the new harbour transport interchange at Ryde. Please let us have your views!

Celia Clark

Meetings and Events

Meetings are on the first Wednesday of each month (not Jan//Aug/Sep) at the John Pounds Centre in Queen Street unless otherwise stated. There is no admission charge - all are welcome. For the latest programme see www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk .	
Wednesday 4th July 7.30pm	The Economy of Portsmouth - Barbara Thompson, Strategic Director for Economy, Culture and Community Safety, will speak on the local economy and the need for a conference centre in the city.
Wednesday 3rd October 7.30pm	Spitbank Fort - Neale Brickwood, the current owner of the fort which lies in the Solent, will speak on its history and current use.
Wednesday 7th November 7.30pm	Monthly meeting , speaker to be confirmed
Wednesday 5th December 7.30pm	Solent Waterfront Strategy - Martin Hendry of Adams Hendry Consultants will speak about the study they are undertaking to support development of the strategy which will help marine businesses gain greater access to waterfront facilities

Core Strategy for Portsmouth

A group of Society members and associates were joined by people from the Community Network to respond to the City's Planning Policy team consultation about the Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy is meant to be a "visionary" look forward for the next 20 years and one of a series of documents that form the Local Development Framework (LDF) that the Government has decreed to be a flexible replacement for structure plans. The LDF has to comply with governmental guidance, sit within the Regional Spatial Plan under the direction of the Government Office for The South East and the emerging Regional Plan which is the responsibility of the unelected South East Regional Assembly.

As Portsmouth has only just adopted its last City Plan after years of wrangling with the Government Inspector it has been later starting preparing its LDF than neighbouring authorities which has the advantage that our officers should be able to tap into a growing local professional experience.

The Portsmouth Planning Policy Team warned that if topics are not identified at this stage then they could not be introduced into the LDF later, which hardly suggests flexibility in a fast changing world!

The first LDF document was the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which set out the way for future LDF consultations, was adopted by the City some months ago with very little public input possibly because few would have recognized an SCI having anything to do with a City Plan.

The planners were anxious to obtain better response to the Core Strategy document but struggled with the public consultation and having failed to involve the Neighbourhood Forums they ran five poorly attended public meetings. In these circumstances it was good that the Society was able to use its network of people who are passionate about the City to provide a well attended meeting of those who were very willing to share visions which included a great deal around sustainability, climate change, flood risk and the built environment.

When Planners have analyzed the feedback they will produce the "Issues and Options" stage, hopefully something less esoteric more resembling real objectives that residents can understand. Whilst the original programme was for the Issues and Options to be put out for consultation during the summer of 2007 this has been slipped to the autumn. Hopefully this provides an opportunity to link it with the forthcoming consultation for the Community Strategy 2008 - 2013 which has to be developed and delivered by the Local Strategic Partnership (a voluntary partnership of public and private sector bodies with community representation set up to deliver Government funded programmes such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and monitor the new Local Public Services Agreements which provide reward grant if specific agreed objectives are delivered on time).

There is another strand of the LDF where members need to be ready to be involved. These are the Local Development Schemes (LDS) that are the new style of planning briefs. The first LDSs have been prepared for Southsea Town Centre and Hilsea Lido. Other LDS on the horizon are for Station Square (the city centre ground level car parks behind Debenhams and beside Matalan) and the Hard.

During December '06 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published the Kate Barker Review for how the Planning system might be streamlined. Whilst much of this is aimed at reducing the time (and cost) that major schemes take to work through the planning system there is also a suggestion to skip Issues and Option consultations. Yes, the ODPM is now looking to change the new flexible system that has to rigidly follow government guidance.

The indications are that 2007 will be a busy year trying to translate, assimilate and then respond to bureaucratic gobbledegook to encourage the City to adopt people friendly policies.

Charles Burns

Centros Miller's proposals for the Northern Quarter

The developers (Centros Miller) who now own or are negotiating to buy the site of the Tricorn, the northern end of the Commercial Road precinct and the beginning of Lake Road held a public exhibition of their massive scheme for 3 days in March-April 2007 at The Haven in Lake Road. We studied the models and perspectives and welcomed the opportunity to talk to the developers' representatives and the architects of some of the proposed buildings.



Artist's impression of the Central Piazza with the new M&S store to the right and St Agatha's church in the centre.

We welcome some aspects of the proposals: the dual use of city centre space - residential above retail, but the lack of the promised commercial activity as a middle layer is a disappointment, especially as the Tricorn was a pioneer in this: shops, warehouses, flats, clubs and pubs, parking, one above the other.

There was a very large model which gave an above eye-level view down the new Main Street. The pleasure derived very much from what turned out to be an illusion. The street appeared to be colonnaded; but, disappointingly, the colonnades are fake; the shop windows come right up to the columns. A real colonnaded street in this central axis to the whole development would be very attractive and a definite advantage to shoppers, who also appreciate the partly covered mall in Gunhwarf. We asked the developers to create a genuine colonnade. Also the perspective labelled 'piazza' between St. Agatha's and the Cascades appears bigger than, when compared with the plan, it will actually be.

This leads on to our main criticism - the absence of public open space. The new building proposed between St. Agatha's and the Cascades which impinges from the south on the 'piazza' is far too big and unnecessarily reduces the size of the 'piazza' to a dumb-bell shape, overshadowed by the buildings to the south. It should be reduced to a third of its proposed size, and possibly rounded to echo the apse of St. Agatha's chancel. Its aggressive angular shape impedes and damages the view, which is important, especially when St. Agatha's is only visible along the new 'Charlotte Street', but not from 'Main Street'. We also object to the angular, ungraceful facade to the building 7B which glares towards St. Agatha's. This needs redesigning into something more elegant. Only the Marks and Spencers - by Van Heyningen and Haward architects - has any distinction as a design, but it will be very close to the chancel of St. Agathas.

The whole area of the Northern Quarter is too much built up, too congested to be a response to the many requests at the first consultation for more open space, public art, children's play areas, fountains, seats. We think we spotted some water jets in front of Marks and Spencer's but no reference was made to them in our discussions. There is nothing to replace the delightful tree-lined little park to the north-east of St Agathas or the large trees and shrubs between St. Agatha's and Cascades. In earlier discussions the possibility of an open square in the central crossing streets was suggested by the developers, but there is no sign of it in these latest proposals. The public art is, we were told, going to be the subject of a public art strategy to be

announced later. We think that art and landscape design should be an integral part of the design process and not be brought in at a later stage as an afterthought.

We are extremely disappointed that there is no proposal to rebuild the Lady Chapel of St Agatha's which was sacrificed in the 1970s for a road 'improvement' which in fact never happened. This should be a major part of Planning Gain under a Section 106 agreement. We now understand that this agreement - which should have been open to public consultation - only involves upgrading of public spaces in Commercial Road and Edinburgh Road - not nearly enough in our view.

We are also seriously disappointed that in such a massive development there are no cultural facilities eg art cinema, theatre/performance space/gallery - a mistake also made by Gunwharf Quays, and only now rectified at our suggestion by the Aspex Gallery. We were not reassured when the location of cafes and restaurants was not yet clarified, nor whether there is any intention to make this huge development part of the 24 hour city, rather than everything closing after the shoppers leave. We also believe that the layout should be more permeable for pedestrians. Going through what looks like a private archway to the south of St. Agatha's is the only way to the Catholic Cathedral, Queen Street, Victoria Park, the dockyard and Portsea. The city council is discussing whether to take over the Unicorn centre as a city museum. A major pedestrian bridge would then be needed between St. Agatha's closed northern yard and the new Marks & Spencer..

We need elevations and perspectives to give an idea of the appearance of the access ramps to the car-parking layers. Potentially they are going to be very ugly. The whole scheme is going to be overwhelmed and potentially destroyed by the road system which is now apparently cast in stone. We criticised it at the Development Control Committee. It not only imposes unnecessary delay on the main south-north route with four extra sets of traffic lights but provides no direct access for traffic from the south and west, as well as, incidentally, destroying the at-present agreeably pleasant and green central reservation and large trees on either side planted thirty years ago by the County planners, forming the approach from the north along Mile End Road.

We are not happy with flats only a short street's width away from the fumes of the carpark - which contains no echoes of the Tricorn - as once suggested by a Chapman Taylor representative. The residential block containing social housing and shared equity has no opening windows to the south because of overlooking the Cascades plant. Some-resident controlled way of providing natural ventilation for them is essential.

Little notice appears to have been taken of the public's comments and desires expressed at the consultation stage. There was a desire for something for children - play spaces - permanent outdoor seating, - some cultural provision - cinema or concert hall. At any rate something to draw people into the area other than shopping, particularly for evening attractions

Since this exhibition, a public notice appeared of the intention of the County Council to sell to the developers the land which they still own including St Agatha's Church itself and the little tree lined park to the east of it. We wrote to object to this sale, hoping that if they held on to this land which is central to the development, they might be able to influence the design. Roger James went on 4 June as a deputation to the County's Property and Resources executive. They gave his case careful attention and concluded that they could help us best by agreeing to sell the land, at the same time making suggestions, with our help, as to how it might best be used. The County Council feared that if they were to refuse sale the City might well use compulsory purchase. The City Council's intention is to replace the St Agatha's open space with space for the open market in Edinburgh Road instead of the bus station - hardly what most people would regard as public open space.

Roger James

Planning Matters

Four members of the Executive Committee meet regularly to look at the planning applications which are submitted to the City Council. On an average week there are 20-30 new schemes ranging from small extensions to homes to major developments such as the Northern Quarter. The advent of the Internet has helped and it is no longer necessary for us to traipse to the Civic

Offices to look at plans, but it is still a time-consuming job. You can help! Keep your eyes open for green notices attached to lampposts, look at the weekly planning lists available in libraries and on the PCC Web site (www.portsmouth.gov.uk), look at the Planning Portal on the same Web site, look out for the listed, major and conservation area planning notices published in The News on a Friday. If you'd like the society to look at an application then contact John Holland on 023 9283 9660 or email at mailbox@portsmouthsociety.org.uk.

John Holland

Buildings of interest in their original condition

Idea! - Keep a sharp lookout around the city for buildings that still remain to this day in their original form. Original windows and frames, gates, walls, doors and fittings, roof coverings and so on. Of course, with fair wear and tear over the years, items like these may well have been replaced but have they been replaced with exact replicas?

Frankly, highly unlikely! Impossible? I'd like to think not.

In these days of ubiquitous UPVC replacements for softwood items, new hardwood (desert-forming) exterior doors (yes, with those lovely, so popular fan lights!), off-road private parking bays instead of front gardens, cement roof tiles in place of slates and so on, one might well despair of ever finding an example or, at least, that isn't less than a certain quite recent age.

Do we know any such buildings of a reasonable age still in their original form? Do we know all of them? Do we have a complete photographic record of them? Do we actively encourage them to remain unaltered?

Readily acknowledging that most of our members are probably, like myself also, far too busy to contemplate doing this with all thoroughness, or that many of us are quite understandably just not really interested in doing so in the first place, there may however be some who could find this to be a quite enjoyable way of entertaining themselves as they travel around Portsmouth. Perhaps some may indeed already know of such buildings.

Of course, keeping a lookout for these rather valuable features is not the sort of thing to do while driving a vehicle, any more than speaking on a mobile telephone and even if walking along the pavement one still needs to keep an eye open for traffic as well as for uneven paving, other pedestrians, dog mess or even (these days it would seem) cyclists ignorant of the law!

As members of The Portsmouth Society we probably all share an interest in the built environment hereabouts and covet many of the well-known and readily appreciated old buildings in the city. However, it is questionable as to how many of these remain in their original form. Those that do remain would need to be quite without any kind of modification at all of any kind over the years, with all maintenance and repairs having been carried out mirroring the original design and with the same materials as used in the first place. These buildings, if they even exist, will probably already be known to members and will have been well recorded many times over but as a quite new member myself I cannot say I know for sure.

They are likely to be either listed by English Heritage or have enjoyed to the fullest possible extent the protection of appreciative previous owners and, more recently, a Conservation Area in which they are probably situated. Even if in a C.A. it could be that of these there are few if any which have not been altered in some way from how they appeared when the builders first moved off site at the completion of their construction.

In parts of the city, like where I live in North End, where the majority of buildings are houses dating from around the 1920's or 1930's this search for the retention of original features can be especially frustrating. Just when I think I have found a house with what appears to be the original wooden front gate (no modern fancy wrought iron creation!), front wall of local brick and of proper proportions, window sizes and frames just right, front door with probably the correct letter box and knocker, likely original finish to the front elevation... it is only when I cross to the other side of the road I look up and see that the slate roof is now dull, dark orange!

Maybe however, there could be one or two gems that have survived untouched over the years either by design or chance and they have just never been noticed for this virtue they still retain. This should surely be, to us at least, a virtue that is worthy of remark and record.

For the present it would be of little use of course to note buildings that have only very recently been built and so never yet exposed to change but a line in the sand could be drawn of say ten, twenty or thirty years, whatever, after which age could be recorded those buildings that have remained unaltered. At the same time there would be no harm in noting how the younger properties are modified with the passage of time - as if we all have nothing better to do!

Robin Kay

Membership Update

I am pleased to report that last year saw a gain of 34 new members - a number well above average and surely a good sign of support. We need to keep this up with your help. Please circulate your newsletter when you've read it. Our work may not be fully understood by some and the newsletter will inform and encourage new people to come forward.

The annual subscriptions for 2007 were due in April. The response is good, and vital as this forms our only income. Standing order forms are available on request. The charges have remain unchanged for many years and any added donation is much appreciated!

Finally, I must mention those who work for the Society - they do so entirely at their own expense, the Chair, Secretary especially, also the Committee - they should all be thanked as they never fail to deliver a superb job!

Jean Thompson

South West Trains services

South West Trains have refused to relax their policy of using cramped, high-density, suburban rolling stock on many of the trains between London and Portsmouth. These class 450 blue trains often feature on the faster services whilst the more comfortable mainline stock, class 444 white trains, are used elsewhere. The reason given for the changes was to relieve overcrowding but studies have shown that the overcrowding is not an issue and, when it does occur, it happens only between Woking and Waterloo, a short section of the journey to Portsmouth. The reality of the issue is that SWT are saving money by a rolling-stock cascade which saw the release the 24 x Wessex trains which were used until recently on the Bournemouth line.

We continue to lobby SWT, MPs and councillors and we attended the Portsmouth Line Rail User's Group meeting at Rowlands Castle which was attended by SWT Portsmouth Area Manager, Mark Dunn. Mark reported that the findings of the health and safety review of the use of 450s' on long distance trains were due to be released shortly but that the full report would not be published. Why should this be? Does SWT have something to hide? We have written to both MPs to ask them to request full copies as and when the report is published.

John Holland

Planning white paper will cut local control

We share the concerns of the Civic Trust in the recent Planning White Paper issued by the Government. The following letter from Peter Bembridge, Managing Director of the Civic Trust was published in The Guardian on 5 June 2007.

"The contrast between John Vidal's article (Keep a watch on this space. Society, May 30) and Ruth Kelly's response to Simon Jenkins (Our citizens won't be losing control over their lives. May 31) could not be greater. But the intentions in the planning white paper could not be dearer."

"Firstly, the abolition of the requirement to demonstrate a need for major new developments will spell death for many town centres and local shopping parades, already suffering from the expansion of out-of-town retailing."

"In addition, the spectre of a presumption in favour of development will cripple the ability of local communities to have any effective role in the holistic planning of their areas."

"Just as bad, the expansion of permitted development will take a massive 30 of all "householder" developments out of planning control. This will severely reduce local communities' ability to have an effective say on the nature, scale, impact and appearance of development, negating years of effort by communities to ensure that their local areas are improved sensitively and carefully."

"The white paper places primacy on economic development. It will therefore severely limit local communities' ability to have any useful say in planning. Despite its assurances of greater community involvement, this will only be in the production of development plans; if the individual developments comply with a tick-box assessment set in stone by the local development plan, people will be unable to comment on design, however bad it may be. \ The planning white paper is piecemeal, ill-conceived and disjointed. An immediate return to the drawing board is urgently required."

A detailed submission is being prepared by the Civic Trust and it will be published on their Web site at www.civictrust.org.uk.

Meeting with PCC Chief Executive, David Williams

On 1 May Celia and Roger had a wide-ranging meeting with the new Chief Executive, David Williams. We hoped to get a definite commitment for an archaeologist to be appointed to the council and also an urban designer to replace Paul Ramshaw who has been much missed since he was enticed away by Havant a couple of years ago. In his letter after our meeting he tells us that all the Hampshire planning authorities are working together to improve collaborative working. "Archeology is one area where I strongly believe that authorities could work together better. There is a particular shortage of Urban Design Officers", he told us. "We have decided to advertise for a Principal Planning Officer instead as there are a large number of major projects requiring experienced planning input. We are looking for someone with skills in urban design."

We started our discussion with the proposal for Portsmouth Harbour to be a World Heritage site and to Celia's delight it transpired that Mr Williams knows a lot about World Heritage, having worked for Telford (which includes Ironbridge) and having been involved with the Jurassic Coast and Greenwich. He had set up local authority website for areas with WHSites. We discussed S.106 agreements and Planning Gain and how they could be made more transparent e.g. what did the city get for NQ (Northern Quarter); but we didn't get very far, not even in the letter that followed. Mr Williams regarded the initial publicity about the Hard/Football stadium as "the opening salvo". We asked, as we've frequently asked before, for the appointment of an archaeologist and an urban design officer.

We mentioned City Vision Centre (the updateable scale model of the city proposed by Paul Grover at Southern Comfort) which we had wanted for the Mountbatten Gallery but had been pipped to the post. He told us he had found 40% of the Civic Offices building is unoccupied – largely as a result of closing individual departmental front doors and concentrating on City Help Desk. In our later letter we asked if City Vision could be fitted in there or the drugs unit there, leaving the Montbatten free for us. In his letter we got no more than that the matter is being considered. We raised the matter of some planning applications being delegated to officers for their decision while others went to committee. How was this decided, we wanted to know. He would check what other authorities do, and we would consult CivicTrust and CPRE. In his reply Mr Williams told us that Claire Upton-Brown, the Development Control Manager, were discussing these matter with Councillor Darron Phillips, the new Chairman. They were well aware of the work of Paul Grover but they would not necessarily use his Solent Centre. On Section 106 agreements his answer, in his letter, was obscure.

Although we did not get as much as we hoped for – not even the names of the Council's new Design Champion and Historic Buildings Champion - it was worth having the meeting as we have at least opened a dialogue with someone who was prepared to listen.

Celia Clark

Portsmouth Harbour & Spithead as a World Heritage Site? Report on progress

Over several meetings this group has begun to draw the boundaries for the core and buffer zones – from Ryde skyline to Portsdown Hill, Fort Cumberland to Seaview and HMS Daedalus to Fishbourne. The huge number of relevant national and local policies are being identified, with help from Laurence Keys of the Ryde Development Trust, Ann Coats Naval Dockyards Society and David Baynes of the Friends of Old Portsmouth Association. David has made contact with the World Heritage officer in Liverpool, so that we now have a copy of their ten-year management plan. Joanne Cable of Medway council offered us the research they commissioned into the effect of World Heritage status in Blaenavon, Liverpool, Greenwich and Saltaire. She is coordinating Chatham dockyard's bid for World Heritage status in 2010, which was launched with support from English Heritage, SEEDA and Medway Council on 14 June.

Our current task is to draw in and discuss the proposal with the many other stakeholders - mainly by presentations to them. So far, these have been made to Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce, Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Partnership, Friends of Old Portsmouth, Solent Forum, Portsmouth Port Forum, Solent Protection Society, Portsmouth and Southsea Rotary, and hopefully, soon, English Heritage... This process is on-going, and so is information gathering from other World Heritage sites such as Rochefort.

In May the Portsmouth Harbour Renaissance Board and the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust have agreed to support a seminar to launch the bid and seek endorsement for it - to take place in the auditorium in Boathouse 6 in mid-October. As Peter Goodship of the PNBPT says, "we are conscious of the need to consider very carefully the benefits and dis-benefits of designation and that success will not be achieved without enormous effort and broad stakeholder support. We envisage inviting speakers who in combination would be able to present the strength of the case for Portsmouth Harbour, the process and from experience elsewhere in the UK what it means to achieve such status both good and evil. Among other things it would enable the audience to table questions to members of the panel of speakers who we hoped might include English Heritage, an existing WHS city such as Liverpool, UNESCO experts".

Those involved in the proposal are convinced of the benefit of the process itself irrespective of whether the ultimate goal is achieved. If this led to the creation of common policies for the conservation, presentation, promotion and sustainable development of this rich cultural asset then the exercise would have proved to be worthwhile in its own right. For tourist attractions around the harbour – worth £300m income to the local economy but currently separately marketed, joint world wide marketing would be of tremendous benefit. We are also conscious that sites of maritime and marine industry need to be safeguarded. Other aims might be higher quality new developments and urban design; a tall buildings policy; genuine sustainable development; the rediscovery of the key importance of water transport, reducing traffic congestion and pollution; and the protection and enhancement of public access to the water. The opportunity offered to lodge the proposal in the draft Local Development frameworks in each local authority is clearly timely - and the Portsmouth Society has put this forward in its representations. There would be enhanced planning controls over design and location of new buildings affecting the core and buffer zones. WH sites are monitored by ICOMOS – and can be placed on the World Heritage in Danger list if proposed changes are perceived as damaging.

'Maritime Greenwich' has seen a dramatic growth in visitor numbers as a cultural tourism destination: from 1999-2003 visitor numbers increased by 43% from six million to 8.5 million, bringing in a 39% increase in revenue from £299 million to £415m. Tourism-related employment increased from 5200 to 7200 jobs, and overnight stays from 477,000 to 552,000 visitors. There was also a 45% increase in people visiting outside the peak summer season of July-August. All of this activity was centred almost exclusively on the World Heritage site. Money continues to flow into the World Heritage site – from public sector grants, HLF and European funding as well as other sources to fund both large-scale and small-scale projects. There are collaborative partnerships between Greenwich WHS Steering committee and the Greenwich Society.

Further research is needed, but much of the documentation already exists – listed buildings, ancient monuments, conservation areas, as well as the many policies which protect the underwater environment. However, these have not prevented the deterioration of the Grade I Block Mills in the care of the MOD – though, thankfully, work is now starting to make the building weather-tight.

What we would like from you: support and endorsement for the idea. If you would like a presentation to groups you belong to, I would be happy to give one. Comments welcome!

Celia Clark

Closure of Edinburgh Rd (east) & Commercial Rd (south) to buses & cycles

The public inquiry into the proposed closure of Commercial Road (southern section) and Edinburgh Road (eastern section) to vehicular traffic was held in the Guildhall on 12-14 June. The City Council's intentions are to close these roads to buses and cycles so that they can be pedestrianised and allow the relocation of the market. Losers in the scheme, of course, would be bus passengers whose stops would be scattered along Station Street, Stanhope Road, Unicorn Road and Edinburgh Road (west).. We objected and John Holland presented a case against the scheme on behalf of the society with Roger James summing-up. Here is his closing statement.

"I would like to start by congratulating the three council officers for their effort to make this indefensible scheme, the case for the extinguishment, appear as a reasonable proposition. For this scheme surely is indefensible without even taking into consideration its absurd expense. Its alleged improvements are largely spurious and quite often disadvantages – I am thinking of the evidence given by Dr Caroline Cahm yesterday and Mrs Phil Priest this morning. The case is so full of holes it ought to have been knocked on the head long before it got to the stage of a public inquiry."

"I was a councillor at the time of the initial pedestrianisation of Commercial Road. Before that time the buses ran down the length of Commercial Road stopping, outside shops. The problem of the proposed change then was how to get the re-routed buses near to the shops.. The solution adopted here is to take them as far away from the shops as is physically possible. Similarly, where do we put the market which used to be in Charlotte Street? The solution is to put it not where it always was but as far from Charlotte Street as you can."

"One advantage of the whole scheme is said to be that it brings retail advantage to the shops (all six of them in Edinburgh Road). As things are now, people who want to shop there can get out of the bus right outside. The improvement is to make them get out of the bus opposite the cathedral at least a hundred yards away. You yourself sir, got a taste of the way this is being played when you asked why Arundel Street was not being considered as a site for the market and you got the answer that the council had already spent a lot of money in Arundel Street. They needed somewhere else to spend the £2 and a half million of section 106 money from the developers of Northern Quarter, which surely should be spent in the Northern Quarter. There is a nice little park there which is to be concreted over; and no amenity area of any sort is planned there. Here are just three comparatively trivial bits of nonsense, examples of the justification of this scheme."

"We must 'mend the broken spine'; this means restore the traditional through route along Commercial Road: But there never was a pedestrian route there. What there was before Guildhall Square was even built was a through bus route from end to end and before that probably a tram route. What do we do with Edinburgh Road now that we've taken away the buses? Answer have a Performance area in this flat bit of street, forgetting that there is a ready-made performance area with terraced sides outside this very window in Guildhall Square less than two hundred yards away."

"We do hope, sir, that you will recommend to the Secretary of State that he NOT approve this order. There are many less damaging ways in which this sort of money can be spent in Portsmouth."

Roger James & John Holland

Portsmouth Society receives Civic Award

The society was delighted to receive a Civic Award at the mayor-making ceremony on 15 May. Civic Awards are given to community spirited people and organisations who have made outstanding contributions to Portsmouth's life.

The citation reads "In recognition of the outstanding contribution the society has made to protecting and encouraging the quality of architecture, design and conservation in Portsmouth, and its work for causes it believes to be in the interests of the city."



Celia Clark receives the Civic Award from the Lord Mayor, Councillor Michael Blake

The Civic Award badge and commemorative certificate were presented to Celia Clark, Chair of the Portsmouth Society, by the new Lord Mayor, Councillor Michael Blake. The society's name will also be inscribed on a comparative plaque in the Guildhall.

Commemorations

Thomas Telford's 250th Anniversary in 2007 was marked by Dr. Douglas Allenby, Chairman of the Institute of Civil Engineers Southern Branch unveiling a plaque on Storehouse 9 in Portsmouth dockyard on 8 June. Telford worked in Portsmouth dockyard as young clerk of works on several buildings including the Commissioner's House designed by Samuel Wyatt, St. Anne's Church and No.9 Storehouse. Dr. Michael Bailey and Brian Patterson gave lectures on Telford's enormous legacy of buildings, bridges and the foundation of the Institution, and a dinner and ball in his honour were held in Boathouse 7.



Dilly Keene, the thousandth member to join the Portsmouth Society, unveiled a plaque commemorating Frank Matcham's design of the King's Theatre on 9 June contributed by the Matcham Society who held their AGM in the Kings.



The Portsmouth Society, Registered Charity no. 266116

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We welcome new members. Please come to any of our meetings or contact Jean Thompson for more details.