Annual General Meeting - TrustNews Dec 2003

In November the Trust's Annual General Meeting took place in the Guildhall. The meeting was opened by Sir Peter Ramsbotham, President of the Trust. He welcomed members and guests and, expressed the Trust's regret that illness had forced Roger Backhouse to resign from the Council. After thanking him for the enthusiasm he had brought to the work of the Trust he introduced Patricia Edwards who had recently been elected to the Chair by the Council.

Sir Peter also introduced and welcomed new Vice President The Lord Ashburton, and the Trust's other Vice President Donald Insall who was the guest speaker for the event.

Pat Edwards then took the chair and the meeting's business was conducted, including the re-election of Council members Shione Carden, Rosemary Kinnaird-Smith, Keith Leaman, Iain Patton, Antony Proudman and Huw Thomas, and the election of Peter Radcliffe who had previously been co-opted as the Trust's new Hon Treasurer. Following the presentation of the accounts the retiring Hon Treasurer, Ian Grant, was thanked for his five years of hard work for the Trust.

re-siting of the Library ...

an issue on which many strong views are held

Other business raised included some discussion about the proposed re-siting of the Libraries by the County Council, an issue on which many strong views are held. Clir Pam Peskett related her understanding of the situation and member Grant Dawson put forward a proposal that the Lending Library stay where it is, and only the Reference Library and storage facilities be moved to the new site by Hampshire Records Office. The meeting voted unanimously that no decision should be made on this project until the County Council identifies the alternative use intended for the Lending Library building in Jewry Street - an important listed building which the Trust feels should be retained for civic use.

Other issues raised covered the setting up of an Oram's Arbour community group, and the continued efforts to get listing for the Hockley Viaduct.

Donald Insall: informative but magical talk

Introducing the speaker, Donald Insall, the Chairman referred to his long professional association with Winchester and his reputation as a distinguished preservation architect. His talk on the restoration of Windsor Castle after the fire was not only informative but magical and delivered with a relaxed professionalism, for his firm were the co-ordinating architects and he personally served as the Architect Member of the enquiry into fire safety in the royal palaces.

'order out of chaos'

We are all familiar with the dramatic images of flames engulfing St. George's hall and the great kitchen, but his slides of the restoration work were a surprise. So thick was

the forest of tubular scaffolding holding the remaining structure together that one wondered how work could ever start. But order came out of seeming chaos. The skills of structural engineers, stonemasons, plasterers, woodcutters (beams), gilders and the artists of the wooden floor inlay, were all shown in fine detail. Eventually all was once more perfect. The green drawing room, which had been awash with a continuous waterfall created by the fire brigade as a fire barrier, was eventually dried out. The new green wall covering and restored mirror seemed to make the previous devastation a bad dream. Donald Insall, struggling against a virus, brought great vitality and charm to this presentation, whilst making the serious point that people should be more acutely aware of fire risk and of the speed at which the first small flames can travel. He urged everyone to be more vigilant.

Vote of thanks

Michael Carden proposed a vote of thanks, expressing especially the Trust's gratitude for Mr Insall's fulfilment of his promise to speak despite not being well.

Sally Patience

Development Control - TrustNews Dec 03

Much has happened since our September TrustNews, so, for those members who were on holiday or didn't read the local papers, here is a brief résumé of some of the decisions made on applications discussed previously.

Among those refused are developments on land behind **64 Quarry Road** and at **8A St Thomas Street** and **Middle Brook Street**, and a scheme to re-clad the **Romsey Road Police Headquarters** in glass.

Permitted schemes include a new Winchester College boarding house at **Antrim House, St Cross Road**, and an amended scheme for **13 Cathedral View**, both of which we found acceptable.

There have also been amended schemes for developments to which we had previously objected. The new outline proposals for **King Alfred's College extension for dining & student facilities** appeared to have taken notice of our criticisms and therefore seemed acceptable, although we were still concerned whether the large Chestnut trees at the north end of the road boundary would survive the drastic changes of level that were proposed.

We did however continue to object to two amended schemes. The development proposed for **land between Sparkford & Airlie Roads** had seemed too high a density to be characteristic of the area. The reduced density of the new scheme - about half that of the original, in terms of both dwellings per hectare (dph) and bed-spaces provided - met this criticism, but we were most unhappy with the lack of subtlety and cohesion of the style of architecture and the amount of land that would be given over to hard landscaping. We had also found the design of the earlier scheme for a high-density scheme on the site occupied by **Northgate House &**

Documation House on Staple Gardens inappropriate for the area. The amended scheme reduced the density from 74 to 69 dph (though the bed-spaces increased by one to 119), and had responded to our comments about the roofline, which had seemed too flat for the somewhat spiky character of the Winchester roofscape. However, the style of the proposed large blocks still seemed more commercial than residential, and as the design approach we considered inappropriate for the area had been retained we felt unable to withdraw our original objection.

Thankfully only one large new development has been proposed during the past three months. This was for 53 units in the gardens to the rear of **Nos 8-22 Chilbolton Avenue**, where 137 new bed-spaces would be provided. The design of the proposed replacement for the house providing access onto the site was felt very inadequate for its position, and although the layout and contemporary style of the new development had seemed acceptable for this back-land area, following a site visit with the Planning Sub-Committee it became clear that the proposed height and siting would be very detrimental to residents of Greenhill Road. This application has been refused.

There has been an application by the Hartley House Montessori organisation to change **The Pump House, Garnier Road**, from the permitted use for offices to a nursery school. As no-one has apparently wanted to have an office here, we welcomed a use for this interesting building, but were worried about the consequences resulting from the extra traffic generated by parents delivering and collecting their children at the same time as commuters were using this 'rat-run' route, especially as it was not clear from the plans what provision had been made for dropping off the children. This proposal has now been withdrawn, so it is possible that changing circumstances (perhaps using the land of the present Recycling Centre, once this activity has been transferred to the new Bar End facility) might allow the building to be used for this commendable purpose.

Decisions are still awaited for some other interesting new schemes. While having no objection to a contemporary conversion of the meeting hall at **41A Brassey Road** to a 3storey-3-bedroom house, the treatment proposed did not seem sympathetic to the character of the rhythmic features of this urban street. A scheme for the site of **19,20 & 20A Jewry Street** made ingenious use of a very awkward site, and while it seemed the massing and roofscape would be a good addition to the area, it was felt that a simpler design approach would be more appropriate for a site next door to the Library, a Grade 11* Listed Building.

It is a sad reflection of life today that it necessary to install security cameras at **Deanery Cottage, The Close**, to overlook the Dean Garnier Garden, and of course the Trust has no objection to this. However, it does expect that an application giving details showing how they are to be installed should be provided. It is therefore sad to say that we have had to object to two applications for this proposed installation, both because of inadequate information. When a Grade 1 Listed Building is concerned, the Trust considers it is essential to know exactly where on the façade two sizeable cameras and their robust brackets are to be installed.

Shione Carden

Planning in Winchester - TrustNews Dec 2003

The Trust Council was pleased to learn, in September, that amendments were proposed to the Shopping Policy in the Local Plan for Winchester to meet the objection lodged by the Trust.

The Policy Group has been very busy over the past three months. The publication of the Trust's document on the Implementation of PPG 3 in Winchester and representations made to the Principal Scrutiny Committee of the City Council may have had some influence on the Council's decision to hold two seminars on this subject in October. The Trust was invited to provide a speaker on both occasions when Michael Carden put our case most ably and received substantial support from the audiences. Further papers published and circulated to Councillors and Officer and the Trust appreciates the response published in a paper presented to the Winchester District Local Plan Committee on November 3rd. This Committee agreed to amend its policy to recognise the need for flexibility in applying the 30 dwellings per hectare criterion in the leafy suburbs.

The requirement set out in PPG 3 "to develop a shared vision with their local communities of the types of residential environments they wish to see in their area" will were necessitate the production of Neighbourhood Design Statements to be used as Supplementary Planning Guidance and this will require funding. We hope that the Cabinet and Council will make the resources available.

All the changes will be considered at a Council meeting on December 15th and thereafter will be subject to a six-week consultation period. The Public Inquiry will start in May.

Patricia Edwards

Award Scheme - TrustNews Dec 03

The Trust is, again in 2004, organising its Award Scheme and is now inviting submissions. This prestigious scheme, whose aim is to identify and acknowledge quality in the design of buildings within the City of Design check-list for Winchester, has five categories:

1. New buildings (of any size);
2. Rehabilitation/restoration of older buildings, including the sympathetic refurbishing of exterior details;
3. Landscaping;
4. Shop fronts, fascias and facades;
5. Streetscape: lighting, signs, street furniture, walls, fencing, flooring.

Awards and/or Commendations will be considered for each of the above. Projects submitted should have been completed between 1 January 2001 and 31 March 2004.

Tree Planting - TrustNews Dec03

The Trust's tree to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth will be planted on St. Giles' Hill at 1.30 pm on December 4th - all members are invited to attend.

Solent Architecture Centre - TrustNews Dec 2003

What are architecture centres?

Architecture centres are hard to describe in a few words, but they are basically independent organisations (networked by CABE), the object of which are to promote good design of buildings and developments. Their means of doing this (in the words of a recent report) include:

- **Guidance** - to provide guidance to developers, local authorities, government bodies and communities on best practice in urban planning, design and procurement.
- **Support** - to act as a local educational resource to assist the planning and wider community.
- **Focus** - to act as a focal point for local communities in engaging in dialogue on the built environment.
- **Outreach** - to undertake outreach and publicity around urban development issues in the region.

Background to the Solent Centre and Trust involvement

Early this year the Trust was asked to send a member to attend "a seminar of key stakeholders to help set up a new architecture centre for the Solent area". Having attended this we missed a further meeting in the summer but attended the latest one in November. There has been an intermittent move to create an architecture centre in Hampshire for a long time, and the Trust has always been interested in the idea, but it was clearly too expensive a project to get under way without major external funding and somebody with the time and experience to get it going.

CABE has now offered £100,000 to the Kent Architecture Centre to set up a new centre for the central southern area and, primed with this backing, there is good reason to believe that a number of other organisations are likely to join in. Once established, Kent would step back and the new centre would become autonomous. The name Solent has been chosen so that the centre is not restricted in its activities to one county, while locating the base of its operations in the Portsmouth, Southampton area.

The Kent Architecture Centre is a very successful example of the sixteen centres already operating in the UK, and there are many more in Europe. Starting with 2 or 3 people, Kent now has a staff of 13, and a number of significant achievements to its credit.

Comment

Various activities of the Trust would be able to draw strength from an architecture centre: our efforts to persuade the authorities to pay more attention to good design, similar efforts to persuade developers to employ suitable architects, our promotion of good design in schools via the Chippindale Venture, etc. We cannot support the centre financially, but having been invited to join the initial working party or steering group, I feel we should continue to give the project our moral support, and if possible have a hand in guiding its direction. The other members of this very large group include representatives from the two Universities, CABE, English Heritage, the design and associated professions, Southern Arts, most of the local authorities, SEEDA, SEERA, GOSE, Countryside Agency, and the Portsmouth and Southampton Societies.

I was puzzled why local and regional government organisations should be so supportive and think there are two reasons: I believe that local planners are genuinely keen to see good design in their areas, but that in the present climate they are aware that they are increasingly ill-equipped/unable to promote it effectively, and would value what an architecture centre could do to help. This may also be true of the regional organisations, but I also believe that recent Government exhortations about good design mean they are obliged to join in..... Prescott is in favour of architecture centres.

Whatever the case, I feel that we and the other two amenity societies should endeavour (probably working together) to ensure that the Centre does not become too government orientated.

Michael Carden MBE