

THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870



www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org

NEWSLETTER

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March 2016

New Members

We are delighted to welcome some new members, Rufus Fraser, John Mowbray, Lorna Webb and Roger Tullet.

If you have any friends or acquaintances, who may be interested in joining, please do not hesitate to put them in touch with our Membership Secretary, Mike Lyons on mike@mikelyons.me.uk

Joan Roberts & Barbara Stovold

Raising our Profile

You may have noticed an increase in attendance at our meetings over the last year. We are particularly pleased about this, as we have been trying to improve our publicity. Currently, we send notices of our meetings to East Grinstead Living, RH19, East Grinstead Courier, and East Grinstead Online, as well as the County magazines; Sussex Living, Magnet and Index, to spread the word further afield. Of course our contributions are not always printed, but our 'hit rate' is improving!

In the summer, we had an article on the High Street published in Sussex Living and have been recently asked to speak to a local group. We strongly feel that our Society has a place in encouraging interest in all aspects of the town and anything we can do to further this aim must be worthwhile. Any ideas to 'Raise our Profile' will be gratefully received.

Joan Roberts and Barbara Stovold

Open Forum

Our annual discussion meeting was hosted by Nic Beale, who was pleased to welcome, Leader of the Town Council, Rex Whittaker and Councillor Bob Mainstone, Chairman of the Town Council Planning Committee.

The first topic raised, was concern at the **new junction traffic lights at St Johns Road/ Moat Road**, where there is an entrance to the new Meridian Village. The lights are traffic sensitive but still cause delays at busy times.

This led to a discussion on the **CPZ (Controlled Parking Zones)**. It was noted that 39 roads are earmarked for change, which pushes parking into new areas – so called '**displacement**'.

It was emphasised **that enforcement was key to successful parking strategy**, although some parking areas are not being used e.g. Brooklands Way. Rex Whittaker called attention to a meeting of the **County Local Committee**, which is a forum of local County Councillors, to be held on **March 23rd at 7pm, at Ashurst Wood Primary School**, where there will be an opportunity for discussion.

Comment was also passed on the **uneven pavements** in the town and camber of the pavements, which makes use of a **mobility scooter** particularly hazardous. It was noted that the responsible authority is WSCC.

The appeal by Linden Homes against the refusal of planning permission by MSDC to build on the site of **Hill Place Farm** was the next topic raised. Great concern was expressed at the effect on the infrastructure, especially traffic, if permission is given. EGTC will be represented at the appeal, which will be held in August/September this year.

Rex Whittaker said that it is critical to get the Neighbourhood Plan approved before August, so that there is an agreed local plan for housing. He described the timetable for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Examination of the Plan will be on March 23rd followed by the Examination Report at the end April. Hopefully, there will be only minor modifications but any contentious aspects may need further consultation. The referendum will hopefully be held in June or July and if it has 51% approval, one of its major features will be the restriction of new development to within the town boundary.

Similarly the **District Plan** has had its second consultation but East Grinstead is still vulnerable to developer's plans, until it is approved. This Plan will go to examination in June/July but will probably not go to a referendum until 2017. One of its main features, as far as housing is concerned, is the proposal for a development of 600 houses with supporting facilities at **Pease Pottage**.

The next topic discussed was the **Community Infrastructure Levy** and the importance of recovering payments from the developers as soon as possible. Section 106 contributions will be replaced by the CIL schedule, which is charged by the square metre, depending on the size of the house. 25% of this money will come to the Town Council.

Great concern was expressed at the **destruction of the Wallis Centre and for the need for a purpose built community centre**. EGTC premises are available at the Court House, the Meridian Hall, and the Cranston Suite but these are expensive, not easily accessible if you don't drive, and not suitable for everyone's purpose. Councillor Whittaker mentioned that the Town Council had earmarked £12,000 in the capital budget, for the community room at the new St Luke's building at Quarry Rise.

Following from this, a query was raised as to what will happen to the **old police station**, if or when the police move to **Chequer Mead**, which could be as soon as Autumn 2016. Consideration has been given to a possible surgery on the police station site.

A question was raised on the proposal for a **Traveller's site at Imberhorne Lane** but there was no further news on this topic.

Nic closed the discussion by thanking everyone, and especially Councillors Rex Whittaker, and Bob Mainstone for their contributions to a lively debate.

Joan Roberts

The Queen Victoria Hospital : Proud of our Heritage – Confident in our Future

A talk by Richard Tyler, Chief Executive of the Queen Victoria Hospital National Health Service Trust

The theme of Richard's talk was the importance of ensuring that the hospital was firmly imbedded in the town and serving its people. He felt that since joining the QVH in 2013, he had discovered a hospital proud of its past and the amazing pioneering work of **Archibald McIndoe**, which has continued to this day and which is fully supported by the town.

The **Queen Victoria Hospital** is a small hospital with a regional reach, a turnover of **£62 million and a staff of over 1000**. It offers a range of specialist services in breast reconstruction, hand surgery, skin, head and neck cancer, as well as sleep studies.

The community services are growing, improving local services such as: physiotherapy, diagnostics, occupational therapy, minor injuries, and urology services. Discussions are under way about the introduction of E.N.T. work.

The **QVH generated a surplus of £2 million** last year for re-investment in the Trust, which will be invested in improving the hospital IT services, including patient records etc.

The hospital is working in conjunction with local G.P.'s on **improving primary care** for local people, with the aim of offering a variety of services for people including work on preventative medicine. However, the QVH is not an ideal site for primary care and discussions are taking place between the **local G.P.'s, the Town Council and the hospital to produce a clear vision and strategy for the future health needs of the town**. The aim of the QVH is to remain true to its legacy, and to work more closely with residents to improve local services.

Following his talk, Richard responded to questions from members.

He acknowledged the **parking problems**, both locally and for patients travelling from a distance to use the specialist services, for a small hospital on a small site, which is one of the challenges to be faced with no easy solution.

Responding to a question regarding the closure of **community beds**, he felt that this raised the wider issue of developing a long term plan, as there was possibly a need for fewer surgical beds, which might increase capacity for use elsewhere. There is a need to actively manage patient care to reduce **'bed blocking'**, as the squeeze on local authorities, means that social care is not available.

Richard was asked about the disbanding of **rehabilitation services**, which he promised to investigate. He mentioned that more clinics from other hospitals would be coming the QVH, hopefully including a respiratory diseases clinic, which would work with local G.P.'s.

The Chairman thanked Richard for an enlightening and well received talk.

Joan Roberts

May Fair 2016

It's approaching that time of year, when May Day begins to loom large. To explain to new members – every year the Society has a High Street stall at the town May Fair to raise funds for the Society and to raise our profile in the town. So, please consider making more room on those shelves at home, by donating your excess books, bric-a-brac or jewellery to stock our stall. Donations to Nic, who has a nice large garage to store them, or bring them along to one of our meetings. He would also be delighted to hear from anyone who could spare an hour (or even half an hour) to man the stall on the day.

Joan Roberts

More News on Public Telephone Boxes

The poor state of the telephone boxes in the town was first reported by society member, Michael Leppard last Autumn. John Bridle took on the responsibility of chasing BT, who have proved most helpful. The first telephone box reported was the one adjacent to the War Memorial and the green mould was soon removed. Since then, four more have had the 'spring clean' treatment, in the following locations: junctions of London Road/Yew Tree Lane; Mill Way/Dunnings Road; Lewes Road/Herontye Drive and Quarry Road. BT have yet to make a decision on the box at the junction of Brooklands Way/ Garden Wood Road; whether to repair and clean it or to remove it.

In 2002 there were 92,000 BT payphones across the UK. Today 57,000 remain, of which only 9,400 are traditional red boxes. Row after row of retired red telephone boxes remain in a yard in Mersham, Surrey, awaiting their fate. Staff at Unicorn Restorations, one of a number of restorers, spend up to thirty hours stripping old kiosks and repainting them in the same shade of red, as once stipulated by the General Post Office. In a few weeks they will begin their afterlife abroad or more likely in British gardens.

Incidentally, East Grinstead Town Twinning Association presented a red telephone box to our twin town of Mindelheim in Germany, where it sits in splendid state in the town square.

In 2012, BT's 'Adopt a Kiosk' scheme allowed councils and charities to purchase a red box for a £1. Some, now house defibrillators or are used as street cafes, local shops or pubs or even as local libraries or community information centres. The uses are imaginative and many.

The widespread use of mobile phones means that both the modern version and the much loved red boxes will continue to decline.

Barbara Stovold

Finding Out and Keeping Up

At our recent 'Open Forum' a query was raised concerning the accessibility of the Neighbourhood Plan, which is only available online or to read in hard copy at the Town Council offices or at the library. As someone remarked, few of us have time to sit down and read such a detailed document in the offices and not everyone has access to a computer or ability to use one.

This means that the consultation is reaching fewer people, with the result that there will be a lack of awareness of the proposals for the town, which will have far reaching implications until 2031. Nic wrote to the Town Council about this matter and the reply from Julie Holden, Town Clerk, indicated that this was a policy decision by MSDC and that all consultation would be carried out online in future.

Finding out about one off events like the CPZ (Car Parking Zones) consultation is also problematic. We can only suggest that you monitor the local sources such as the Town Council website : www.eastgrinstead.gov.uk

For planning matters, just click on 'meetings' and then 'planning' and you will find that the agenda, list of planning applications and minutes of the planning meeting are revealed. The same applies to any other Town Council committees you may be interested in. For the real 'nerds' amongst you there is the opportunity to attend the actual Council meetings, where you may make any points you wish to make by addressing the Committee at Public Question Time but after that you have to keep quiet and listen to the Committee's discussion. You can creep silently away after the item you are interested in has been discussed.

Another useful source is the East Grinstead Courier. As well as publishing details of planning applications coming up shortly, you will find, towards the back of the paper, the obligatory advertisements from MSDC, advising of proposed applications for listed buildings, conservation area items and major developments. www.eastgrinsteadonline.co.uk is also useful for current topics of interest.

The dates, agendas, and minutes of the County Local Committee, which basically consists of our local County Councillors, discussing matter of local concern, are available on the County website: www.westsussex.gov.uk .These meetings are open to all and there are opportunities to raise any queries you may have.

Another essential source of information is your local library, where staff are always willing (and able) to help you.

Altogether, it can be a major task to keep up with local developments, but hopefully this is where your Committee can also help.

Nic Beale

The Alfred Wagg Studio, Chequer Mead

As many of you may have read in the Courier, over the last 12 months, it has been the intention of the Trustees to lease the Alfred Wagg Studio to the Police. Currently, the Studio is available for hire by local groups for exercise classes, drama, dance and meetings of a more general nature. The Police Station at East Court is now too big for their needs. There was a consultation period, relating to this proposal from 18/5/15 to 26/6/15. There were few responses but, notably, it was queried how appropriate it was to have such a facility as part of a Community Arts Centre. The planning application was approved by delegated decision of MSDC planning officers on 4th December 2015 and did not go to a formal Planning Meeting.

The Studio is in need of extensive renovation and special account will be taken of a possible lease to the police to meet their needs. The money from the sale of the Parish Halls has been earmarked for improvement of the Theatre facilities. Tenders have been received for the work on the Studio and discussions with the police are ongoing. However, this is a very uncertain period for current regular users, as it is not known if sufficient money will be available to provide alternative accommodation within the building.

Barbara Stovold

Chairman's Miscellany

The submission draft of the **Neighbourhood Plan** was approved by the Town Council in December following consultation. **Mid Sussex District Council** confirmed that it met the legal criteria required. A **further Consultation** began on the 3rd February and finishes on 16th March, when it goes forward to external examination. Once that is completed, hopefully without any major alterations, the date of the **Referendum** will be set for June or July and, if passed, the Plan will be adopted.

However it must be understood the District is still the planning authority, so that they have the final say on applications unless the disappointed applicant wishes to pursue the matter further by appealing to the Planning Inspectorate.

The **District Plan** is still going forward, having received certain 'focussed' amendments, regarding an increase in the housing provision to meet the needs of neighbouring authorities. This has resulted in the annual housing provision for the period from 2014 to 2131 being increased from 600 to 850 p.a. They hope to meet this requirement by developing a 600 house site at Pease Pottage and increasing the density on other sites. **This will delay further the adoption of the District Plan, possibly into 2017.**

The relevance of all this is brought home to us when we learn that Linden Ltd are appealing against the refusal of their application to build 200 houses on **Hill Place Farm**.

One of the grounds for their appeal is because, as the **Neighbourhood Plan** is not yet in place, little weight should be placed on the aspirations in the draft plan and consideration of their application should be based only on the **2004 plan** which is demonstrably out of date. Naturally we have repeated our previous arguments that the site is outside the town's built-up boundary; it creates considerable problems in respect of traffic and other infrastructure deficiencies and it would adversely affect two listed structures and an historic railway. We have also listed the major policies of our emerging Neighbourhood Plan, which conflict with their scheme, to reinforce the original refusal of planning permission.

There are also some other less substantial appeals, which appear to be trying to exploit this window before the Neighbourhood and District Plans are finally adopted.

Your Committee have also been pursuing the question of **parking in East Grinstead**. You will recall that when the alterations to the **Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ)** were introduced over three years ago, we were promised a **review** in six to twelve months to consider the effects of the changes. Nothing was heard of this review for a while in spite of the matter being raised by our President and myself at several meetings of the **North Mid Sussex County Local Committee (CLC)**. On-street parking is a County matter.

After an abortive attempt to take this matter forward at the last CLC meeting, there were two drop-in meetings to explain the latest thoughts from Chichester on the CPZ. I must admit some sneaking sympathy for those seeking to ameliorate our problems and balance the competing claims of residents, commuters, visitors and shoppers but they are going about it in a cack-handed way and only considering part of the town, with several major areas outside the scope of this review.

I am sure many of you know this already as Friends of the Museum, but for those who are unaware, the **Trustees of the Museum** have made an application to the **Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to extend their facilities. The 'Rebuilding Bodies and Souls' initiative** is intended to provide space for the substantial **McIndoe collection of artefacts and memorabilia** that they are holding but have nowhere to display. We were very pleased to provide them with a letter of support to further their cause.

Nic Beale

Hill's History of East Grinstead

Jeremy Clarke reports that a new illustrated edition of the classic 'History of East Grinstead' by W.H. Hills, originally published in 1907, will be available in hardback in April from the 'Bookshop' in the High Street.

Further details from Jeremy Clarke 01342 715830

MEETINGS 7.30pm, Main Hall, East Court - £1.00/member, £3.00/non-member

*Friday 8th April The Farnham Town Crier, Jonathan Jones will speak on his job

Friday 15th April 'Shadows of the Second World War' a talk by Margaret Nicolle

Monday 2nd May May Fair : Society Stall in the High Street 10.00 – 4.00pm

Friday 20th May ' Villains and Victims of the Past' a talk by Phil Armstrong

* This is a meeting of the Friends of East Grinstead Museum, but members of the EG Society are welcome to attend (8.00pm Main Hall East Court, £2.50 per person)

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EXTRA COPIES : Newsletter back issues may be ordered for £1.00 each from Mr J.W. Bridle, 7, Dexter Drive, East Grinstead, RH19 4SU

NEXT NEWSLETTER : Closing date for contributions for the November 2016 issue – 25th October 2016

JOINT EDITORS : Joan Roberts peterandjoan958@btinternet.com ; Barbara Stovold barbara@stovold.fsnet.co.uk

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