

THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870



www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org

NEWSLETTER

No. 127
November 2017

Good News!

At our recent A.G.M., we heard that the Society is going from strength to strength with increased attendance at all our meetings and improved finances. More good news was the recruitment of three more members to our committee – a warm welcome to Ann Edwards, John Collins and Janice Ward and also to new members : Stephonie Clarke, Sundari Heller, Mark Berry, David Whitlock and David Sykes.

Joan Roberts & Barbara Stovold

2018 : Fifty Years of the East Grinstead Society

The Society was founded in 1968, following the demolition of a 15th century house in the High Street. This caused such an outcry, that the Society was formed to protect our historic heritage. The committee would like your views on how we should celebrate this milestone birthday.

Some ideas put forward so far:

- A social event for all the members: a Birthday Cream tea? Wine and cheese evening? Spring Soiree?
- Something to improve the environment of the town?
- A series of events related to the history of the town and the work of the Society?
- Commemoration of some local event?

Any other ideas? Please pass your suggestions on to our Chairman Nic Beale,

Annual General Meeting 2017

Mrs Margaret Collins DL, President of the Society, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Following concern that as not all members are on the internet, they had not received copies of the minutes of the last A.G.M. via email, she assured everyone that in future the minutes would be posted to those not on-line.

Chairman's Report

Nic presented his annual report, commenting that the **Neighbourhood Plan covering the period from 2014 to 2031** was the subject of a referendum the day before our last AGM. It was **approved by a large majority of those voting** and subsequently was deemed to be "made" by MSDC. This meant we have an adopted local plan, which could be cited when planning applications were being considered and would restrict developers and the like from claiming that there was no current plan.

This is not quite the end of the story as on strategic matters we have to comply with the requirements of the **National Planning Policy Framework and the District Plan in terms of housing numbers**. The District Plan has been the subject of a very rigorous examination.

The examiner was concerned that the original plan did not take sufficient account of the requirements of neighbouring districts and could not demonstrate a five year rolling land supply.

As a result the housing numbers that are required from the District that were in the report last year have been increased to 876 dwellings per annum up to 2023/24 and thereafter 1090 dwellings per year until 2030/31.

The **modifications** suggested by the **Examiner relating to housing numbers**, the certainty of the **five year rolling supply** and a **commitment to working with neighbouring authorities**, are currently being consulted upon for soundness and legal compliance over a six week period. There will also be an amendment to the **Transport policy** to ensure that applications for developments which generate significant amounts of traffic movements are supported by a **Transport Assessment or Transport Statement**. **After the final Inspector's report it is hoped that the District Plan will be adopted by MSDC by next Spring.**

When these gross numbers are confirmed by the acceptance of the modifications, they will be distributed over **Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath**, and all the other parishes and hamlets, after taking into account the housing numbers that are already allocated via the Neighbourhood Plans.

The East Grinstead element of the total for the District of 16,000+ in the period 2014 to 2031 is 2,445; 1,020 to 2023/24 and 1,145 thereafter. The District Council has committed to preparing a **Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) to identify further sites for housing and development** to enable the Council to meet its housing and employment land need. The District Council also has to prepare and publish a **Brownfield Land Register by December 31st 2017**. To inform the Site Allocations and the Brownfield Register they are undertaking a **Call for Sites, which will be incorporated into a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, to be known as a SHELAA**. This will include unused sites, which appeared in the previously published SHLAA and new ideas from councils, developers and landowners. **This will be published in Spring 2018.**

The **numbers of local planning applications are fairly stable** year-on-year and your planning sub-committee have considered about 350 this year. There continues to be applications relating to the **conversion of office space into flats** under the fast track permitted development legislation but there are **fewer than last year**. More often than not, we get a subsequent application to such premises to add an extra floor, move into the attic space or reduce the number of parking spaces, which require a full planning application but seem to slip through, particularly if they are near the town centre so parking facilities are deemed to be unnecessary.

The Town Council was concerned about the loss of office space and asked MSDC for an Article 4 exemption for East Grinstead, so that permitted development applications would require full planning applications rather than the restricted ones. **Unfortunately, this request was rejected.**

The developer of the Travelodge scheme in King Street has gone into liquidation. The latest news is that the twelve flats at the back of the site in Little King Street, where the land is in separate ownership, are being fitted out and will be completed by Christmas. A contract has at last been signed for the remainder of the site, i.e. the hotel and the retail unit. We are told the work will take forty weeks.

The old Martells site is being redeveloped by Weston Homes to provide 129 flats, some ground floor retail units and 133 parking places. Demolition of the old buildings is underway.

On the other side of Queens Road, there is an application to convert the old educational building, **Queensmere House**, into 14 flats by adding a floor and infilling part of the undercroft parking. Both the Town Council and the Society have objected.

Eldon Housing Association Ltd is seeking to demolish the existing **Lingfield Lodge Retirement Home in London Road** and redevelop the site to provide Extra Care Sheltered accommodation with associated community facilities. **The proposed community tenant is Age UK.** There are still considerable difficulties to be sorted out in terms of access, parking, and the size of the community facilities.

Affinity Sutton is seeking to redevelop Dart Court and Packer Close in Quarry Rise. This would result in the loss of 43 social housing units. This is being strongly resisted by the Town Council, as the proposed rented flats and shared ownership accommodation is not suitable for the elderly and those needing sheltered housing.

Finally, on individual sites, there is still no decision yet on the appeal by Linden Homes against refusal of planning approval on the **Hill Place Farm site** on the Turners Hill Road.

There is an application for the development of a site at the bottom of the **Lingfield Road**. This is in the **Tandridge District of Surrey**. While it is outside our area its geographical location would mean that occupants of houses there would naturally look towards East Grinstead for their public facilities. John Benstead has been pursuing this matter actively, particularly the financial implications for the town. He has involved Sir Nicholas Soames to lobby on our behalf. The final outcome is as yet unknown but it does not appear that this site is at the top of Tandridge's priorities.

There are many smaller planning and heritage matters that have been dealt with during the year. It was established that **Firbank Way, the route to the Sainsburys car park, is unadopted by WSCC.** The ownership of the road is the subject of a dispute between **Sainsbury's and Network Rail** so no-one takes responsibility for the pseudo-pedestrian crossing on that road. It was hoped that something could be done about the extension of the **handrail on the steps adjacent to Constitutional Buildings** but the Land Registry have no record of ownership of the land on which the handrail extension would be placed. **WSCC and MSDC each suggested it was the responsibility of the other authority.** Because no-one would accept the potential public liability insurance risk the handrail cannot be extended. Contact is maintained with the **MSDC officials dealing with heritage and conservation matters to advise them of issues relevant to listed buildings and the Conservation Area.**

Similarly contact is maintained with **WSCC**, both directly and via the **North Mid Sussex County Local Committee about road related items such as the Controlled Parking Zone** and the visibility and appropriateness of road furniture.

One continuing frustration is the lack of an **adequate local paper**. Just because it has East Grinstead on the masthead, it does not necessarily contain much local news or information about forthcoming events. In an effort to improve our communications with our members, **Mike and Alan are revamping the Society's website** with the intention of introducing a restricted members section, so that members can look at our committee minutes and sub-committee reports.

To keep our presence known in the wider community we had a small stall at the **Library at the local Clubs and Societies morning**. We shall also continue to attend the **May Fair** in the High Street.

Last year I indicated that I intended to give up the Chairmanship at this meeting. Your President used her formidable negotiating skills which seemed to consist of severe arm twisting and has persuaded me to put my name forward for one more year as Chairman. However, Margaret's arm twisting has proved successful in other directions and there are three volunteers seeking election to the committee. I am delighted that the remaining members of the committee are prepared to stand again. I am grateful for all the hard work they have put in. I would also like to thank the other members, who do not appear on any list but who serve refreshments or who man our stall at the May Fair and on other occasions.

Finally, let me thank our President for her ongoing interest in our activities and all her hard work in what should really be a ceremonial role.

Treasurer's Report

Hon. Treasurer, Mike Lyons reported that the balance of funds was up from £3,262.35 to £3842.86 and that the Society's financial position remains sound. He then outlined the main features of this year's accounts.

The **attendance at Meetings was very good throughout the year** with an average of 36 member & 7 guests / non-members per meeting.

59 Bulletins and 50 copies of the Town Trails were sold and we received a donation of £71.00 towards Michael Leppard's printing costs.

The move from selling books, to a **tombola**, along with the sale of jams and preserves, resulted in the most successful **May Fair ever, with an income of £260**. Many thanks to all who gave donations and help on the day.

Expenditure on **postage, printing & hall hire was as expected**. **Lecture Fees** were down from the previous year, as a number of guest speakers gave their time freely or asked for a small charitable donation.

Insurance Costs were reduced by shopping around, with no impact upon the cover provided.

There was a large drop in expenditure on **sundries** from the previous year, which included payment for the **Patrick Wood memorial bench**. This year the figure was much lower but boosted by the refund of the Society's subscription to the **Sussex Amenities Association**, which has been wound up.

Mike highlighted the fact that funds were available for the **Society's 50th anniversary in 2018** and ideas on how to mark this event are welcomed.

With no questions from the floor, the motion that the **Treasurer's report for the year ended 31st August 2017 should be adopted was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously.**

As current reserves are sufficient, Mike recommended that the **annual membership fee and renewal subscription remain at £10. This motion was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously.**

Mike passed on his grateful thanks to **Chris McCrory** for the examination and approval of the year's accounts. Chris confirmed that he is happy to undertake this duty in 2017/18 and the motion that he be **appointed accounts examiner** was **proposed, seconded and carried unanimously.**

Membership Report

Mike reported that the number of members remains fairly constant and now stands at 101 plus 8 honorary members. This compares with average membership numbers of 102 over the last ten years. New members are always welcome and it is hoped that the updating of the Society's website will help to encourage new people to join.

Elections: Officers and Committee

Nic Beale, Richard Maynard, Alan Ward and Michael Lyons have indicated their willingness to continue in their respective posts of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Hon Secretary and Hon. Treasurer. In the absence of other nominations, the motion that they be re-elected was **carried unanimously.**

Anne Edwards, Janice Ward and John Collins have indicated their willingness to stand for the Committee, together with **Shirley King, Joan Roberts and Barbara Stovold.** There being no further nominations, the motion that they be elected as committee members was **carried unanimously.**

Margaret Collins thanked the committee members for their work during the last year and welcomed the new members to the team. It was highlighted that two vacancies still exist on the committee should anyone be contemplating joining.

Any Other Business

There being no further business the President thanked all those attending the AGM and closed the formal part of the meeting. Nic Beale thanked Margaret for chairing the meeting.

Following the AGM Nic introduced Shirley King, who gave a short talk about Victim Awareness

Shirley is part of a Christian group that provides **Prison Fellowship at Lewes Prison.** The voluntary work is non-religious and provides a course for inmates reviewing the **impact of crime upon the victim, the victim's family and the local community.**

The prisoners work through an accredited package entitled '**Sycamore Tree**' which is used to investigate the before and after effects of crime and the ripple effects that it has. **Open discussion and roleplay are central to the delivery.** Some prisoners are obliged to attend the course as part of their sentence and it can impact on their probation terms. **Successful completion of the course results in the award of a certificate.** The programme can act as a precursor to the Government's restorative justice system where offenders meet with their victims.

On behalf of Society members, Nic Beale thanked Shirley for an interesting talk.

Alan Ward

Michael Leppard

The Society would like to offer their best wishes to Michael Leppard, who is celebrating his 80th birthday this month. He is a well-known local historian and author of a 'History of East Grinstead' and other publications on the town, the most recent being a 'History of Sackville College'. He continues to produce the Society's Bulletin, which is a much valued historical record of the town. As a founder of the Society in 1968 and past President until 2011, he has contributed a tremendous amount to the Society and we are pleased to wish him a very happy Birthday.

Twittens and Alleys

Twitten is an old Sussex dialect word used in both East and West Sussex, for small passageways leading between buildings to courtyards, streets, or open areas. Its origins are not clear but it may be a corruption of 'betwixt' and 'between'.

Twittens and alleys exist in many towns but many are not on the local **Rights of Way map or on the list of such streets maintained by the Council**. If they are not listed, this may mean that from 1st January 2026, under provisions in the **Countryside and Rights of Way Act, the public will lose the right to use many of the twittens**.

Development in Sussex towns is continuing apace and even unlikely sites, with access via twittens are being considered for potential development. If our twittens leading to such sites are not listed, both the sites and the twittens will be lost forever. Your Society will be pursuing this matter and would like to hear from any members, who could assist.

(Details from 'Sussex Don't Lose Your Way Group')

Joan Roberts

Bob Mainstone

Members were saddened to hear of the death of former Mayor and Society member, Bob Mainstone. There were many tributes for the well-known local teacher and Councillor, who worked so hard for our town and his memorial service at St Swithun's Church was attended by representatives of many local organisations.

Joan Roberts

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

Friday 17th November 2017 A Brief History of William Major and Sons
Nicholas Major on his life as a fourth generation
Jeweller.

Friday 15th December 2017 'O Rare Old East Grinstead' Part IV Michael
Leppard on more voices from the past.

Friday 16th February 2017 Conservation work in Ashplats Wood by Tanya
Hayman, Chair of the Ashplats Conservation Group

DISCLAIMER: Unless otherwise stated, any opinions given may be those of their author only.

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

JOINT EDITORS: Joan Roberts peterandjoan958@btinternet.com ; Barbara Stovold barbarastovold@gmail.com

Copyright: The East Grinstead Society 2017

