

THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870



www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org

NEWSLETTER

No. 129
November 2018
Congratulations!

We are indulging in some self-congratulation in this issue as we celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of our Society with contributions from our current and past Chairmen. We also extend a warm welcome to all our new members.

Joan Roberts and Barbara Stovold



President Margaret Collins, Mayor Rex Whittaker and Chairman Nic Beale Cutting our 50th Birthday cake at the A.G.M.

Annual General Meeting 2018

A warm welcome to the Town Mayor, Councillor Rex Whittaker, members and visitors was extended by our President, Margaret Collins, (D.L.) she quoted from Michael Leppard's introduction to his 50th Anniversary edition of the Bulletin of the Society, as she felt that this encapsulated everything the Society stood for:

“The Society was founded in 1968 to protect and improve the amenities of East Grinstead and its environs. The town has a long history and a unique architectural heritage, entrusted for the time being to the hands of our generation. It should be our concern that such contributions as we in turn make are worthy of the past and a fitting bequest to the future”

Chairman's Report

Well, what has happened since last October?

After a very rigorous examination, the **District Plan was finally adopted by the District Council at the end of March 2018**. There is still a shortfall in the gross number of houses required from the District. The District has committed to preparing a **'Site Allocations Development Plan Document' to identify further sites for housing** to enable the Council to meet its full, objectively assessed housing and development land need.

It also has to prepare and publish a **Brownfield Land Register**. They have therefore made 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 from the previously published SHLAA and other sites suggested by councils, developers and landowners. It is worth noting that one such developer's site that is being actively promoted is at **Imberhorne Farm. The promoters of the site are emphasising the contribution that this would make to the shortfall in housing numbers**. The results of this call for sites will not be known until late next year.

It is worth emphasising that the **District Plan** makes no comment about **Infrastructure Plans to solve the severe transport constraints on the A22/A26 strategic road network**. This incorporates the A22/A264 Felbridge junction. There are no adequately funded highway infrastructure plans to mitigate further major developments allocated in the District Plan nor in overcoming the present severe traffic congestion in East Grinstead.

On housing numbers the **District Plan will trump the Neighbourhood Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework will trump them both. The Town Council is seeking to set up an Infrastructure Working Group to monitor the situation with interested neighbouring local authorities.**

The final comment I intend to make about District Plans relates to our neighbours, **Wealden and Tandridge**. They work on a slightly different calendar starting in 2018. Each has a large requirement for additional housing and they are both exploring substantial developments to provide a way of meeting some of their numbers. **In the case of Tandridge some 4000 houses at South Godstone, which would, of course, have implications for the A22**. Wealden may be considering an even larger development at Hailsham.

Turning now to more **local matters**, **your planning sub-committee have continued to meet on a three weekly cycle to consider current planning applications and to make their comments on behalf of the Society to both the Town Council and the District Council.** We have reviewed nearly 370 this year but you will be delighted to know I do not intend to go through them one by one.

Some of the applications seem to drag on for years. It is pleasing to report that the **Travelodge has finally opened** and the area around the old **Caffyns site** has been cleaned up. **Martells** are in their new premises and the development on their old site should be finished in about a year's time. We have been urging improvements on the owners of **Queens Walk**, which is looking pretty scruffy.

There is another eyesore in the town which looms over the ring road near the Esso garage and that is **Farringdon House** in Wood Street . Application has been made to convert the derelict offices into flats and add a further floor to the building. This, of course, raises the familiar cries of inadequate parking etc but is probably the only solution for that site.

On other longstanding sites, there may be some movement on **Bellhammer and the site between KFC and Specsavers in London Road** has had some interest shown in it. Another epic saga is the **Threadneedles** site in the High Street. I understand that this may become an Italian restaurant. If anyone has the time they might like to count the number of different cuisines that are available in the town. East Grinstead, the gastronomic capital of Sussex!

The prospective developers **of Hill Place Farm finally won their appeal** after it had sat on the minister's desk for an inordinate length of time. This, you may remember, was for outline planning approval for the site on the **Turners Hill Road**. We now await the full planning application.

Our attentions have not been solely on planning matters. We have made representations to West Sussex County Council about the provision of **Day Care facilities at Glen Vue and their possible relocation elsewhere.** The consultation was very poorly advertised and we are concerned both for the users of the facilities and their carers and for the implications about the continuing viability of the Glen Vue Centre which is owned by Mid Sussex District Council.

A subsequent appearance at a WSCC County Local Committee meeting by the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health added very little further information. We still await the conclusions of the consultation, although we fear that the service may be moved to Crawley, which would diminish the benefit to both users and carers.

We are also monitoring the proposal to amalgamate the **Judges Close and Moatfield surgeries.** We are particularly concerned about the ease of access for patients to the expanded **Moatfield site**, which is not on any bus route and where the parking facilities are limited.

The **traffic calming measures in West Street** were completed this year and seem to be having some effect, although they were simpler than were originally envisaged. Also on the **CLC** front, we are advised that the road safety measures at the junction of the **Oaks development on Imberhorne Lane have been agreed between WSCC Highways Department and the developer, although the work has yet to start.** The Highways Department have been holding a bond to ensure that the work would be done.

The Historic Map in the High Street was vandalised in the summer. To be brutally honest, the frame was on its last legs anyway as a certain member of the Society had pointed out to me on several occasions. I was able to retrieve the map which was undamaged although rather dirty. I am pleased to report that the cleaned map is now back in its original position in a rebuilt frame and our thanks go to the **Town Council** for all their assistance.

The repaired map could be considered as one contribution towards our fiftieth anniversary celebration but any other suggestions from our members would still be very welcome. The Committee did consider a tree or a new seat to commemorate our anniversary but both had their disadvantages. The potential tree site would have been at the back of East Court near the tennis courts, not a very prominent site, and there are many seats around the town and no obvious vacancies.

Mike will mention our stall at the May Fair so I shall not steal his thunder. We also took a table at **the 20th anniversary celebration of the Felbridge & District Local History Group** along with other like-minded societies.

I now come to what I call **internal administration**. You will be aware that I keep saying I am not going to continue in the Chair; enough is enough. It has been hard to find committee members let alone persuade any of them to take the Chair. I ceased to be flattered by my continued re-election long ago, so would someone please step up and volunteer. Ideally, a replacement will be found soon and I shall be able to stand down graciously and I may say gratefully. This does not have to wait until a year's time, we could easily have an EGM to elect a new Chairman.

The members of the Society have been very lucky with this year's committee. I do not propose to name them individually and the newcomers have fitted in well and pulled their weight from the very start. We have recently co-opted **Richard Lawrence** to join us. Unfortunately, **Richard Maynard** is stepping down from the Vice Chairmanship. He wants to spend more time with his Lions, that's Lions with a capital L, but he has agreed to stay on the committee. I am pleased that **Barbara Stovold** has been persuaded to stand as Vice Chairman. **Joan Roberts** is finding it increasingly difficult to attend our committee meetings so she is standing down but promises to continue her present tasks relating to publicity and publications in a non-committee role.

I would like to thank all the **Committee**, whether staying or leaving, for their hard work on your behalf. We have had some very interesting talks this year and the programme for next year is almost settled. However, we would be pleased if any members have recommendations for future speakers. There are also others to whom we give our grateful thanks; the coffee rota organiser, members of the planning sub-committee, and the provider of the Christmas mince pies. Any volunteers to help with these tasks would be most welcome. Please form an orderly queue!

Finally I come to **Margaret Collins, our President**, who has been a tower of strength. Her role is not just a ceremonial, non-executive one. She has worked very hard on your behalf throughout the year and I am most grateful for her wise counsel.

I commend this report to the meeting and shall be very happy to take questions. Questions were asked on – Imberhorne Lower School site; types of houses being built - executive/ affordable housing; impact of additional housing on traffic congestion, speed and pollution; parking issues; conversion of offices to flats and the impact of proposed conversion of the second runway at Gatwick.

Margaret Collins thanked Nic and the members of the Planning Committee (**Mike Lyons, Robin Streatfield and Michael Awty**) for all their work during the year. Town Mayor Rex Whittaker joined the meeting at this point and Margaret welcomed him accordingly.

Treasurer's Report

Hon. Treasurer, Mike Lyons, noted that the end of year balance was up from £3842 to £4230 and that the Society's financial position continues to be healthy.

Key points from the accounts were highlighted:

Income for the year was marginally down by £80.00 with the breakdown very similar to previous years. The **May Fair achieved the best sales to-date with a record amount of £308**. Thanks to all who gave donations.

Expenditure increased by circa £160.00 over last year, with **Lecture Fees** increasing from the previous year's figure of £295 to £415 this year. Our average annual spend has been around £400 but the Society will continue to pay the going rate for interesting and entertaining speakers. **Insurance** costs have been reduced by shopping around, with no impact upon the cover provided. **Sundries** have increased, largely as a result of the work required to restore and reframe the Society's historic town map which is displayed in the High Street.

With no questions from the floor, the motion that the **Treasurer's report for the year ended 31st August 2018 should be adopted was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously**.

As current reserves are sufficient, Mike recommended that the annual membership fee and renewal subscription remains 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 years accounts. Chris confirmed that he is happy to undertake this duty in 2018/19 and the motion that he be **appointed Accounts Examiner was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously**.

Membership

As **Membership Secretary**, Mike reported that the number of members remains fairly constant and now stands at 100 plus 7 honorary members. This compares with average membership numbers of 101 over the last twelve years. There have been 8 new members during the year. New members are always welcome.

Elections: Officers and Committee

Nic Beale, Alan Ward and Michael Lyons have indicated their willingness to continue in their respective posts of **Chairman, Hon Secretary and Hon Treasurer**. **Barbara Stovold** has agreed to stand as **Vice Chairman**. In the absence of other nominations, the **motion that they be elected as Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer respectively was carried unanimously**.

Ann Edwards, Janice Ward, John Collins and Richard Maynard have indicated their willingness to continue on the Committee. There being no further nominations, the **motion that they be re-elected as committee members was carried unanimously**.

Richard Lawrence has indicated his willingness to stand for election to the committee. In the absence of any other nominations, the **motion that Richard be elected was carried unanimously**.

Margaret Collins thanked Richard for agreeing to stand as a committee member. She also reiterated the fact that a new Chairman needs to be found during the year.

Margaret passed on her thanks to Barbara, Joan, Janice and Alan for organising the refreshments that had been laid on to commemorate our 50th anniversary. She also **thanked the Mayor and the Town Council for the use of the Cranston Room tonight.**

Responding, **Mayor Rex Whittaker** said that both he and the Town Council were proud of the East Grinstead Society's dedication to the town and that the Society had become part of the Towns fabric. He thanked Nic Beale for attending the three weekly planning meetings and for the input that he gave, confirming that the Councillors do pay attention and due gravitas to the Society's input. Rex thanked all who had attended the AGM and proceeded to join the Society.

Any Other Business

Mayor Rex Whittaker was asked if he knew anything about the **cemetery in West Street**, which is in an abandoned state and has been fenced off. Rex acknowledged that this is being looked into by the Council and confirmed that it has been made **secure due to its unsafe state: pot holes, fallen headstones and sunken graves.** The damage has been caused in part by **badgers and the Council is looking to have them removed safely, before a plan to enhance the area can commence.** Councillor Adam Peacock is chairing the group that is managing this. It was agreed that the Society would check upon progress.

Dennis Jefferies suggested that a message of goodwill and thanks should be sent to Michael Leppard from the Society. This was received favourably by the members.

There being no further business the President thanked all those attending the AGM and closed the formal part of the meeting. Food and drink were then served to the members in the Cranston Room which had been made available as a 50th birthday present from the Town Council.

Nic Beale passed on his thanks to Margaret for chairing the meeting.

EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY: CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

We invited **John Bridle, former Chairman and member since 1995,** to give us an overview of our past history. He writes:

Our society was formed in January, 1968, following the demolition and redevelopment of a fine 15th Century building, despite attempts by the Urban District Council to resist the planning proposal. This event was the catalyst which brought together a group of residents all interested in seeking to safeguard the town from similar happenings in the future. Some of these residents were architecturally knowledgeable and experienced in planning matters and all were motivated by an interest in EG's history and its origins. A description of the redeveloped High Street house and what happened to it in 1968 may be found at page 31 of M J Leopard's comprehensive "100 Buildings of East Grinstead".

I'd like to add that Michael Leopard has a special place here as one of the founding members; the editor of the East Grinstead Society Bulletin and valued contributor to so many aspects of the Society, including as past President.

We are indebted to Michael and the other founders of the Society. They raised awareness of the town's architectural heritage; defined the town's conservation area, identified historic buildings at risk, mounted exhibitions to foster knowledge of local history and worked for the benefit of the town generally.

The Society's objectives are set out in its Constitution: "The Society is established for the public benefit to educate in the area's geography, history and natural history; to encourage high standards of architecture and town planning; and to encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest."

EARLY DAYS, THE 1970s AND 80s

Being at the start of things, the new Society's executive committee had much to do; preparing the Constitution, publishing an Academic Bulletin and the Newsletter; managing the Town Museum housed at East Court; attracting new members; holding regular meetings and educating interested residents about the town's history.

Soon the Society had reached 400 members, including, in 1979, a youth section whose enthusiasms included town surveys and street tidying activities.

This period saw the development of **Town Trail Walks for visitors**. A stall at the annual **May Fair** raised funds and encouraged people to join.

Through its expertise and planning knowledge, the Society was invited to comment to the District and Town Councils on the 300 or so planning applications per annum.

THE MIDDLE PERIOD, 1990 TO 2009

In re-examining this period's archive papers I've been struck by the range of issues dealt with by past Chairmen, Officers and Committee Members. Some issues had successful outcomes, some less so but all required time and effort.

To mention but a few of the topics dealt with:

Advertising signs in the High Street; pavement obstructions; bus services; history of the Zion Chapel; consideration of CCTV cameras following a visit to the police authority; Heritage Open Days as part of the national event; commenting on the District Council's Local Plan; the flats-over-shops issue; the beginnings of the conversion of offices to apartments; commenting on WSCC's Structure Plan; the state of some High Street buildings; the High Street millennium project; High Street pedestrianisation; Queen's Golden Jubilee events; the High Street clock; Schools Essay Competition, debate, judging and awards; history exhibitions; Railway Approach planning; setting up the Society's document archive; inner relief road; and traffic planning consultation.

A major project in 2001 was to apply dendrochronology techniques to confirm and in some cases establish the dates of several High Street medieval buildings.

The Society, in association with the **EG Post Referendum Campaign**, also mounted a major campaign in opposition to the **WSCC's Strategic Plan to build 2500 houses at Imberhorne**.

2010 TO DATE

We continue to monitor development and planning, as well as maintaining a watching brief on our historic heritage.

To celebrate the **Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, a Local Heritage Week** was organised, with the help of the Town Library and contributions from other groups.

The High Street War Memorial 1922 was also listed at this time.

REFLECTIONS ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY.

In 1968 concerned individuals responded to a bad planning decision by forming a society to seek to guard against it happening again. **Future challenges are, I suspect likely to be more of a strategic nature.** Should these occur, an active society will be able to provide constructive comment or opposition as necessary. But in any event, whilst day-to-day planning and other issues continue to surface and concerned residents continue to want to be involved, **I see an active role for the EG Society continuing well into the future. It is a unique and valued presence in the town.**

Fifty Years on, we are fortunate indeed in having a President, Chairman, Officers and Committee, who continue to meet the Society's original objectives.

John Bridle

East Grinstead Society Bulletin

The editor regrets that he has been unable to produce an Autumn edition of the Bulletin as usual. Moving house, and needing longer than expected to unpack all the boxes (still in progress) has meant that there has been no time in which he could deal with it. He sincerely hopes, however, that Bulletin 121 (Spring 2019) will come out as reliably as usual; there is no shortage of material, though it may be slimmer than recent numbers.

It is gratifying, though, that members received two issues in 2018, thanks to an extra number, as its contribution to the Society's Jubilee Activities.

Michael Leppard

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

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

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