

HARLOW CIVIC SOCIETY

Our autumn newsletter comes at a critical time for the Town, with development on every side. Gilden Way developers are asking for permission to build a total of 593 houses on the site originally intended for 400 odd, meaning loss of open space; houses are being squeezed into every available nook and cranny all over the Town, with the Council's approval; some areas of the Town are taken over by crowds of revellers at the weekend, with drugs, drunkenness, fighting and noise. The Marquis in Old Harlow has been a centre for such activity, and a local diary is being kept by residents. On a brighter note HADA will be holding its awards ceremony on October 13th, we are all invited. A new road sign for the Roman Temple has been proposed; HCS members have suggested a project to mount a plaque on the building which will eventually stand where the Square stood, commemorating the history of that unique music venue, and local citizens are being asked to keep a list of their preferred local areas to send to the Council to feature on a list for preservation from development.

This edition contains John Curry's first impressions of the Local plan and the Town Centre plan, pieces on our PHE England site visit (with pics), the HADA awards ceremony (with invite); and Moot House in its new incarnation.

We hope you enjoy this edition. Please let us know what you think by emailing b_a_burge@yahoo.co.uk.

Barbara Burge

Our Trip to Public Health England at the Pinnacles

On a hot Friday in June a motley crowd, mostly retired, assembled in the gatehouse of the old GSK building at the Pinnacles. They were members of Harlow Civic Society and were there by invitation of PHE, to explore the building which will become the HQ of Public Health England.

The complex will become the Science Hub campus, with the major part of PHE's scientific facilities, and the HQ of the New Frontiers Science Park. Up to 2,750 staff will eventually be working on site.

The Science Hub will bring together experts in cancer, mental health, diet, nutrition, smoking, alcohol, diabetes and dementia and other long-term conditions, as well as environmental hazards and climate change. When all project proposals and designs have been set up PHE will apply to Harlow District Council for planning permission.



Artist's Impression of the Re-developed Site

Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive, told the group in the superb Committee Room that PHE wants to make Harlow its home, and to ensure that the town benefits from its presence. The Science Hub will provide jobs, training and education opportunities for Harlow's population.

After a choice of beverages, served with very plain biscuits – chocolate being out of bounds for the Public Health HQ, the group were taken to the very top of the complex, with its stunning views over a green Harlow. What surprised us all was the immaculate state of the building. Cleaning and maintenance staff come in every week to keep up the standards. The refectory seems to be waiting for workers to stroll in for lunch or afternoon tea. The office spaces are fitted with every necessity – the chairs, desks, lamps and sofas were pristine, and when we heard that much of the GSK furniture and fittings will be sold off when PHE takes over, there was considerable interest in the possibilities of acquisition. The use of materials was especially impressive: slate and marble tiles, polished brass rails, beautifully finished bevelled wooden edges to desks and doors.

The former GSK labs are now empty, apart from fitments, and will become state of the art spaces for scientific experiment (there will still be some animal experimentation, which Mr Selbie said was unavoidable).

We left after an hour or so, very impressed, both by the building as it stands, and the prospective changes. Mr Selbie is an ardent and convincing advocate for the project. He has since done the Water Tower abseil to promote the organisation and was propositioned to do a parachute jump in the same cause by Mag Barrett.

The lasting impression was of the incredible spaces we passed through, and the quality and high spec of everything from the loos to the handrails. A lot of care and money had been spent on the building last in use 10 years ago. Will its future live up to its past? If our reception is any guide, we are confident it will surpass it.

Barbara Burge

Two Local Plans considered

2018 Harlow Local Development Plan Pre –Submission Publication

We have not been able to respond in detail to all of this document given the timescale and our limited resources. We have therefore restricted our comments on elements of the 'Local Plan' to the following items:

Housing Strategy and Growth Locations

The table on Page 57 – HS2 Housing Allocations - lists 21 sites where development is considered possible within the existing built and green environment. In general, we accept the proposals. Indeed, we consider that all but four of these sites are eminently suitable for re-development. In particular, we suggest that the 'hatches' listed could become subjects of architectural competition, thus following in the tradition of appointing up-coming architectural practices with interesting locations to work on within the existing townscape. The four sites that we would not wish to appear on this list are:

1. Land east of Katherines Way, west of Deer Park (69 dwellings)
2. Land east of 144-154 Fennells (23 dwellings)
3. Playground west of 93-100 Jocelyns (12 dwellings)
4. Stewards Farm (10 dwellings)

These sites are all green spaces and, with the exception of No. 19, are open areas used for casual recreation by local residents. We believe that it is the Council's responsibility to ensure that such sites are retained. Too many open spaces have been surrendered for development purposes to the permanent detriment of Harlow's green credentials. To continue this piecemeal and insidious use of our green environment is sending out the wrong message. They are not essential to the Council's duty to meet housing growth targets. They must be kept green.

With particular reference to Stewards Farm, this historic link to the town's rural history is a clear geographic focal point that enables residents to identify with our past. While its current function will not go on indefinitely, it should be possible to develop the site in future in a way that gives future generations that link with our past which is so important.

Strategic Infrastructure Requirement SIR 1 – 1

N – S Sustainable Transport Corridor (STC)

The Policies Map and Para 11.9(e) show an STC that goes from north to south through the centre of the town. South of this, the indicative route passes through the north/south Green Wedge from the town centre to the southern boundary.

At present the routes along this Green Wedge are reserved for walking, cycling and equestrian traffic. We are therefore extremely concerned that the indicated STC might in fact become a vehicular highway. If our concerns are correct, then this policy is wrong. The north/south Green Wedge would never be suitable for a road of any description.

You can find the Plan document and Policies map on the Council's website at: <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/local-plan-publication>

John Curry

Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) HCS response August 2018

Having read the Area Action Plan – Issues & Options Report we believe that the 'high intervention scenario' would be the correct solution for the future proofing of Harlow Town Centre. This scheme will ensure that the historic structure of the town centre is retained, and that the pedestrian-centric nature of the original concept will be maintained. However, we are concerned about the suggestion that the original east – west road link to the south of Market Square be re-instated, as this could compromise the pedestrian dominance that is essential to the town centre.

If it is accepted that this road be re-opened, great care will be required to ensure the safety of the public and the ambience that pedestrian-only areas provide. It is vital that Wych Elm and associated locations to the north of Fourth Avenue be integrated into the town centre. The calming of Fourth Avenue will play a vital part in this, so it should be a wholehearted transformation, not just reduced speed limits. In this regard Harlow Civic Society produced a scheme in 2005 in response to the David Lock Associates' town centre review of that time. Our scheme bears a very close resemblance to what is now suggested for this part of the town centre.

In this regard we would suggest that, whenever possible, new build on sites such as Wych Elm could be subject to architectural competition so as to encourage the construction of exciting buildings. Blandness should have no place here if we are to encourage people to visit and to live in Harlow. Visual surprise and excitement should be mandatory.

Overall, we are very pleased that the Issues & Options Report addresses the future prospects for Harlow Town Centre with vigour and with due regard for the views aired by those who attended the Workshop in 2017. We commend this document and urge Harlow Council to adopt the measures recommended, subject to the outcome of further consultation.

John Curry

HADA 2018

The Harlow Architectural Design Awards for 2018 will be presented on Sunday 13th October at the Harlow Rugby Club – the winner of the 2017 Non-residential award.

This competition is intended to celebrate the very best in local building design and encourage a higher standard of architecture for future developments in Harlow.

Organised by the **Harlow Civic Society** and sponsored by **Places for People** and **Architecture & Design Services**, the Harlow Architectural Design Awards are split into two categories – to recognise the best in Residential and Non-Residential building in the town.

The nominations this year are:

Residential:

2 Icen Square
Kingsmoor House
29 Kingsmoor Road
4 Forebury Lane

Non-Residential category:

Gates Ford
Kao Data One
Smiles Montessori Newhall

Voting has now closed, and the winner will be announced at the event on Sunday 13th October; you will have received an invite to this. We hope to see you there!



Tony Evans

Zig Zag Bridge

Ever since I saw the footbridge over the railway – linking the two parts of the Town Park – I have been intrigued by it. I'm sure that it's unique. I would like to know;

- Who designed it?
- Who built it?
- How was it built?
- Are there any records of its construction – photos etc?



Harlow's Zig Zag Bridge

My interest has been heightened of late due to the condition of it. The metal railings are in urgent need of maintenance. There is some minor spalling of concrete on one of the supporting columns. So, what is going on within the beams is anyone's guess.

If there is anyone reading this who can help with my quest I would be most appreciative.

John Curry

Moot House – then and now

Moot House began its life in Harlow in the early 19th century as the vicarage for St Mary Latton church, which in those days before the Stow shops and houses were built was clearly visible from its windows. With the New Town the house became the Town Hall and a centre for community life. Later Derek Fenny as Community Education Officer for ECC ran a Youth Training Scheme on the premises and the land became the horticultural unit. The soil was good – it had been the vicarage garden.

In 1985 there was a disastrous fire and the ceiling fell in, fortunately the precious wooden floors were protected by lino. Essex County Council wanted to demolish the building, but it was protected by its Grade 2 listing, so it had to be restored. Walt Tingle asked Derek to become President of the Community Association, and in charge of its preservation. Derek's long-term project was to buy the House from Essex County Council, but in the meantime maintenance costs were incredibly expensive, and the ECC showed no signs of shifting its position. Eventually, after 5 years of fruitless effort, the CA employed a solicitor and a price was agreed, the ECC offering a low price as it deemed Moot House to be 'surplus to requirements. Pat Mountsteven, Dr Shaun Firth and Gordon Hewlett were the three holding trustees. The deeds were held by Duncan Gadsby.



Since the government's Austerity programme in the late 2000s funding has been almost impossible to gain. But eventually application was made to the Heritage Fund, which allowed Moot House to improve the outside appearance of the building and its surrounding space, which will attract social events. The vicarage kitchen also needs renovation to provide catering facilities.

Derek spoke to our committee in the Summer, asking us to do our best to promote Moot House activities and help to raise its profile. Moot House has very good relations with the Museum. It has a website, and its contact person is Val Cullen, 01279 424074. If you are thinking of booking somewhere for a wedding, christening or other celebration give them a call. We wish this new phase in the history of Moot House every success.

Barbara Burge

Harlow Civic Society is Online

The Civic Society is on Facebook and Twitter.

Please like us on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/HarlowCivicSociety>

and follow us on Twitter:

<https://www.twitter.com/@HarlowCivicSoc>

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All contributions to the Newsletter to Barbara Burge

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Harlow Civic Society welcomes new members. For information about joining contact the Treasurer or email harlowcivicsociety@gmail.com If you are reading the edited version of this on paper, why not send us your email address to get the full version, and help us keep our costs down