

# HARLOW CIVIC SOCIETY

After an uneasy peace during the summer, two important issues affecting the Civic Society and the whole of Harlow are in the news again.

Some of our committee members met the Gilden Way developers and learned about their plans for the site, which they confidently expect to be started this year. Robin McCartney covers the meeting. And County Councillor Rodney Bass, Head of Essex Transport in Chelmsford, dared to set foot in Old Harlow twice in a week. We report briefly on these public meetings at the ARC and the Baptist Church.

We also talk about local Heritage Lists, new Town Park developments, the Civic Society website and plans for three Civic Society events to take us over into the New Year.

Our contact details are on the last page. Please contact me with comments or news of interest to our readers.

**Barbara Burge**

## **M11 Junction 7a - Two meetings and a defiant 'No'.**

County councillor Rodney Bass came to Old Harlow as the guest of Old Harlow's Conservative councillors, to talk about the proposed Gilden Way junction. Those in attendance at the first of these two meetings, at the Arc, although not very large in numbers (there had not been much advance publicity) were of one mind.



*Harlowbury Chapel  
Next to the Gilden Way site*

We were presented with a map of the area bearing a dotted line from Gilston to a point north of Harlow on the M11 very close to Gilden Way. Cllr Bass explained that this line represented the probable choice of a northern bypass route, were such a thing remotely possible. Unfortunately, the government would never agree to such a thing because of the exorbitant cost. However, if the plans for the new development north of the Stort came to fruition, at some stage in the future the developers themselves might see the necessity of such a route and build it. In the meantime the only route to be considered was the Gilden Way junction.

As the northern bypass was nothing but a dream, there seemed little point in raising it, but it was probably intended to show the people of Harlow that ECC's heart is in the right place, and if they had access to the funds they would certainly build it. No one was convinced by this, and the speakers following Cllr Bass stressed in great detail the reasons for local opposition, ranging from the shock and disruption to the lives of those living in East Park and the Oxleys, the current plans to build on land along Gilden Way, the increase in traffic towards the new junction, and the certainty of further gridlock at specific times of the day.

It seemed to me that the only reason for the meeting was to emphasise the absolute necessity of this route, and to show that Gilden Way might play its part as a possible future junction with a pie-in-the-sky northern bypass.

We await the promised further consultation over the coming months with fortitude and determination.

**LATEST NEWS Junction 7 has come in for £50m funding for 'improvements' in the Chancellor's autumn statement. What does this mean for Junction 7a? We hope to be able to clarify its significance in the next issue.**

**Barbara Burge**

## **Local Heritage Lists – A practical way to protect Harlow's assets**

Harlow Civic Society is affiliated to Civic Voice, which is the national organization for the civic movement. Two years ago, Civic Voice initiated a national campaign for civic societies throughout England to press local councils to establish a Local Heritage List. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is also encouraging local authorities to compile such a list. English Heritage has issued a pamphlet entitled Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing, which outlines the purpose of the list and gives examples of good practice. You should be able to find it on the English Heritage website.

The introduction to the Good Practice Guide, contains the following definition of a local heritage asset: "The NPPF defines a local heritage asset as 'a building,

monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest”. Local heritage assets include listed buildings. Harlow contains over two hundred and Harlow Council has a schedule of them, not all buildings actually because it includes features like the Water Gardens in the centre of the town. Along with this Statutory Listed Buildings Schedule, Harlow Council also holds a short Locally Listed Buildings Schedule, which is a list of about twenty buildings of local interest, which do not necessarily have Grade Listed status. Harlow also contains ten conservation areas. Most of them, localities whose history precedes the foundation of the New Town, although the Town Park with Netteswell Cross is one of the conservation areas.

*Harlow Playhouse*



Harlow's Locally Listed Building Schedule is its Local Heritage List but with a different name. It is not very long. About ten of the buildings on the list, and they are all buildings, are in and around Churchgate Street. Most of the rest are in Old Harlow. The New Town seemingly contains no local heritage assets. It must be obvious that with only twenty buildings on its list, Harlow has some way to go. What is missing is protection for what is worth keeping in the New Town, estates like Bishopsfield, areas of open land like the Green Wedges, or buildings like the Playhouse and Harlow Museum. A Local Heritage List would go some way towards looking after these assets and asserting the value they deserve.

Being on the list does not guarantee the survival of the assets but it does mean that councils must take the asset into account when it considers any changes that might affect it. Councillors and council officers often assert their devotion to Harlow's heritage, and listing the contents of it would be a further statement of their intentions. The status that being on the local heritage list might give the building or the place would go some way towards preserving it at a time when so much seems threatened.

**Robin McCartney**

## Localism – What next?

A recent edition of Civic Voice included a piece about the Meeting of the Parliamentary Select Committee at which members of Civic Voice gave evidence regarding prospective changes to the Localism Act. This is an issue of great interest to all Civic Societies as it becomes clear that protection from developers in all areas, including the Green Belt, is being steadily weakened. The following is a list of the main prospective changes discussed.

- 1) Extension of the moratorium period for the Right to Buy from 6 months to 9 months;
- 2) Business Rate concessions to properties registered as assets to the community;
- 3) A separate planning class for pubs;
- 4) An appeal system for applicants refused asset listing;
- 5) Government guidance for local authorities to ensure ACV listings are considered when planning applications are decided.

These proposals all seem hopeful. We wish the Civic Voice delegates luck.

**Barbara Burge**

## Meeting with the Council Leader and Chief Exec

As many readers know, the Society has an annual meeting with the Council's Leader and CE to discuss some of the town's most pressing issues.

On 22 October 2014, as you would expect, top of the list was the proposed route for M11 Junction 7A. The Society remains strongly opposed to using Gilden Way to channel traffic into and out of the east of the town since, as we know, that only leads to more congestion as this traffic heads to the Town Centre and the Pinnacles.

The present view of Harlow Council, as it is Essex County Council's, seems to be that this is the only route for the junction that the country can afford and while we all want the northern route, we should take what we can get as a stepping-stone. We were told it would keep Harlow moving forward and could later evolve into the northern route. The Society feels that the Gilden Way route would bring Harlow's traffic to a grinding halt. We want the town and the county to hold out for the strategically correct solution and not sacrifice quality of life in the town for the sake of ticking a box marked 'new junction'.

Our delegates were glad to hear that the council is intent on preserving the green wedges in the next version of the Local Plan. However, saving green wedges from being built on will mean that meeting housing targets will involve new developments around the fringes - in neighbouring areas. This makes planning

more complex than if it could all be done inside Harlow. The council is expecting to publish a draft Local Plan for public consultation next spring. We're glad about the green wedges and look forward to seeing the plan.

We also expressed concern about the future of local amenities like the paddling pools, Pets' Corner, The Playhouse and the Museum, which add so much to the attractiveness of the town as a place to live in and to visit. For the council these are 'discretionary services' (ie they don't have to do them) so when cuts come along they tend to be vulnerable. However we were glad to learn that an extra £3m has been added to the fund supporting discretionary services. Whether this budget increase will safeguard all the amenities we enjoy is to be seen.

As far as Pets' Corner is concerned, the committee is glad to add that it has recently met Mike Levett, education and volunteer officer, who has a 5 year appointment funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to promote a variety of restorations and developments at Pets' Corner, Spurriers House, the Park water garden, the bandstand, the specimen garden and the rhododendron dell. Mike is organizing several initiatives including volunteer groups such as young historians, guided walks, schools visits, family friendly developments and the Park Run, and bringing together various groups such as U3A under the umbrella of the Town Park Users' Group. The HLF is of course not locally raised money, but Mike Levett's is a timely appointment to go along with the regeneration of the Town Park.

**Paul McLintic**

## **The Town Park – Regeneration begins**

Work has started on the regeneration of our park. Following the exhaustive bidding process that is the starting point in obtaining funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a contractor has been appointed to carry out the landscaping work, and will soon start work on Lookout Hill. Building work at Pets' Corner is also expected to start very soon, with a separate contractor employed to carry out the work.

At the same time as all this physical activity is taking place, the Heritage Lottery Fund has appointed, and is funding for the next five years, a new post exclusively for the town park regeneration programme. Mike Levett has been appointed as Education & Volunteer Officer and has hit the ground running! The Society's committee invited him to one of our committee meetings to explain his new role and his background.



*Ducks in the Park*

He has come to Harlow following on from other regeneration projects such as Barking Park, where the Victorian municipal park recently benefited from HLF funding. Clearly such a park presents different challenges to those of our park, but the experience gained there will benefit the work here. Already Mike has organised a series of free guided walks to help people find out more about the park. These have been well advertised and well attended – if you haven't tried one I recommend that you give it a go. He is also keen to hear from anyone with historical information about the park, and the site before the new town was built.

Volunteering is going to be an important element of this regeneration – HLF put a lot of store in promoting volunteering. Already the old nursery site – now called the walled garden – is being transformed, mostly by volunteers ably assisted by students and tutors from Writtle College. So, if your green fingers are itching contact Mike Levett ([mike.levett@harlow.gov.uk](mailto:mike.levett@harlow.gov.uk). Tel: 01279 446834). He'd love to hear from you.

**John Curry**

## Events

The following is a programme of events organised by Mag Barrett for HCS members. Planning is still in the early stages, but we hope to produce a leaflet with full details in the near future which will be available from libraries, the ARC etc.

1. David Devine will give a talk at the Museum on February 26<sup>th</sup> on the Riley family in Harlow.
2. Christine Manley of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Society will speak at the Museum on 'Frederick Gibberd the Architect' in May, probably the 14<sup>th</sup>. Date to be confirmed later.
3. Matthew Byatt will host a tour of New Hall early in June. Date to be arranged.



*Alison Brooks's housing in New Hall.*

4. Mag is trying to arrange a talk about the Soper family (whose farm lies under New Hall), probably in April.

Look out for our brochure at the ARC and in libraries soon.

## A New Website

Wouldn't that be nice? The old one looks and is desperately dated. You may be wondering why, even if it looks a bit old, we don't keep adding new material (such as this newsletter for instance). Well, it's because the software on which it runs has collapsed, so the site is frozen in time and we have to start again. This is proving easier said than done - or rather, more time-consuming than time available. However, we have chosen a new platform and construction is in progress. If any HCS members have a gift for this sort of thing, or an inclination to learn to do it, then we'd love to hear from you. Meanwhile we're chipping away at this and hope to have something presentable and current to show before too long.

**Paul McLintic**

## 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>

We are working on revamping and updating our web site: The address will be the same as the current out of date one:

<http://www.harlowcivicsociety.org.uk>

### **Harlow Civic Society Committee**

Stan Newens – Chair: 420108

John Curry – Vice-Chair: 425214

Tony Evans – Treasurer: 414015

Paul McLintic – Secretary: 07973  
264176

Mag Barratt –Events and talks:  
429134

Barbara Burge – Press: 427244.

All contributions to the Newsletter to  
Barbara Burge  
([b\\_a\\_burge@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:b_a_burge@yahoo.co.uk))

**Harlow Civic Society welcomes  
new members. For information  
about joining contact the  
Treasurer or email  
[hcs@evanstmd.plus.com](mailto:hcs@evanstmd.plus.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.**