

## Westgate and West End – by Tony Joyce, Chairman

Close on the heels of the developers' latest proposals for the expansion of the Westgate Centre come the consultations on the future of the whole West End quarter, whose outer boundaries – the railway and the river – limit external access. This quarter relates essentially to the inner city rather than its surroundings; redevelopment must meet the city's needs and enhance its existing character, without adding to its problems.

At this stage, the consultants are proposing an Area Development Framework to guide individual future developments into a new and more fruitful urban design, which could accommodate the relocation of the railway station. Welcome features include the commitment to public open space and the retention of green areas beside the river and along an opened-up Castle Mill Stream, providing an attractive route from Oxpens Road via the castle site to the city centre. The emphasis is on urgently needed inner city housing with the local services to support this, and an enhanced street and footway network to increase access and permeability. The possible inclusion of new cultural and civic facilities and further hotel accommodation is not ignored.

The plans incorporate the extension of the Westgate Centre, on the assumption that this will go ahead in some form. Very sensibly, the developers are currently discussing the principles in depth, before proceeding to a detailed design. This will be a very major development, triple the size of the existing Westgate. It would add about a quarter to the overall retail space in the city centre and move its centre of gravity considerably to the south – with lasting consequences. There would be obvious knock-on effects as major retailers relocated

into the new site from Cornmarket, Queen Street and elsewhere. There might well be changes in rental values and applications for new uses at previously established retail sites.

Crucial to all these plans is the management of the traffic and transport problems which they pose. This is the least accessible quarter of the city, with bottleneck entrances at Folly Bridge and Frideswide Square. An attractive John Lewis and other new retailers served by a well-run car park could generate unsustainable demands on the Abingdon Road, the Park and Ride system and indeed much of the bus network of the city. Eliminating the Westgate bus hub has permitted solutions that meet many criticisms of the previous design, but has introduced its own problems of bus circulation and the siting of bus stops to serve the majority of Oxford's residents, who live east of Magdalen Bridge. Whilst the number of buses in Queen Street could be reduced, full pedestrianisation still looks problematic.

The County, in their role as Highways Authority, has listed over twenty specific measures and conditions to be agreed before they could support a detailed planning application, such is their assessment of all the problems. What is essential in all such major schemes is that traffic control measures are guaranteed to be in place before development gets under way – consider the traffic chaos in Headington.

***For further details, study the Westgate Masterplan at Ramsay House; access the City's and the County's report at [www.oxfordwestend.co.uk](http://www.oxfordwestend.co.uk) and [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk), respectively; and view the West End proposals on display at the Town Hall between 23 November and 1 December.***

## Report from the Planning Sub-Committee

The fate of some undetermined applications mentioned in the July Newsletter, no 98, is as follows:-

Proposals for a large house on part of the garden of **189 Woodstock Road**, and demolition of **27 Northmoor Road** for replacement by 2 houses were each withdrawn in July. Six have been refused: proposals at **109 Oxford Road, Old Marston** to build 10 houses in 2 terraces; the demolition of garages and subdivision of gardens of **52-58 Windmill Road, Headington**; conversion to flats of **1 Ferry Hinksey Road**, and **11 Rupert Road, Lye Valley**; demolition of **86 and 88 Old Road, Headington** and erection of 18 2-bed flats; and (for the third time!) increased parking behind **58-62 St Aldates**. Further amendments are being considered for **574 Banbury Road**, for the **Royal British Legion Club House site, Hadow Road** and for **The Fox PH site, Barton**. Demolition of **Lucy's Eagle Iron Works, Jericho** with redevelopment for 282 units was permitted in August. Plans for the large site near **St Barnabas Church** remain undetermined, as do those for flats on the gardens of **40-49 Juxon Street, Jericho**.

Re-development of Suffolk House, **263-265 Banbury Road, Summertown** has at last been permitted (originally proposed in 1999 but amended, twice withdrawn, refused, then taken to Appeal). It will be replaced by a new building: offices on 3 floors, 6 shops on the ground floor and basement parking for 50 cars.

A highlight in July was the application by the **Pitt Rivers Museum, South Parks Road** to build a 4-storey extension creating facilities for research, education and visitors in space currently occupied by an old workshop. Re-development of the **Kings Cross Garage site, Kings Cross Road** was finally permitted: proposed in 2003, withdrawn and several times amended, this is for conversion of a barn to 2 houses, with 10 flats and houses in a 2- and 3-storey building.

In August, an application at **138-140 London Road, Headington** for a building of up to 4 floors, with a shop on the ground floor, and offices and 14 flats above was refused. In Pullens Lane, **Plater College's** proposal to demolish a house and build ten 2-bed flats on 2- and 3- storeys (whose traffic

would have overburdened the unusually narrow access by Pullens Lane) was refused. A proposal to demolish **47 Oxford Road, Littlemore**, a pleasant stone cottage in a Conservation Area, was soon withdrawn after protests.

In September came permission to demolish **371 Banbury Road**, to replace by a terrace of four 2- to 3-storey houses, with 4 or 5 beds – the third identical application for this site (twice previously refused). Extension and rebuilding of the **Carfax Gardens Café** was proposed, and permission gained, with seating indoors and out, and on a roof-terrace. A prefabricated shed was proposed at **10 Cordrey Green, Iffley**, visible from Church Lane, as was the alteration of a warehouse to make 4 flats at **21 Cave Street**.

In October, an amended application was made for **4 Mill Lane, Old Marston**, without reduction in number of units. Six tiny houses would crowd the plot of **1 Finch Close, Headington**. Demolition was proposed of **The River Hotel, Botley Road** for replacement by 17 flats on 4 storeys, and of **The Westgate Hotel** and **1-3 Mill Street** nearby, for replacement by a 35-bed hotel.

*Mark Barrington-Ward, Kate Miller, Chris Rayson,  
David Townsend.*

## Transport Notes

One disadvantage of the old system of having separate summer and winter railway timetables was that people wishing to make travel arrangements for summer holidays were unable to book tickets until the publication of the summer timetable in May each year – a little late for an early holiday. This problem will be solved by the new arrangement of just one version each year, starting in mid-December and thus effectively covering a calendar year.

Sunday 12 December is the date this year which, as well as being a new departure in temporal terms, will also mean a change to long-established departure times for the trains themselves.

Up to now, the change of operator from 'Thames Trains' to 'First Great Western Link' has simply meant a new name on trains and tickets, at least as far as most passengers are concerned. But the integration of services to and from Paddington has enabled a new timetable to be devised. The main dif-

ference for travellers from Oxford to London will be the introduction of 125 mph, 5 car, 'Adelante' trains in place of 90 mph, 3-car, 'Turbos' on the express services, stopping at Reading and Slough, which will complete the journey in 52 minutes. The stopping services will still be 'Turbos'.

The express services will leave Oxford on the hour and half hour, instead of the present xx15 and xx45, while the returns from Paddington will be at xx22 and xx52, instead of the present xx18 and xx48. About a third of the express services will be extended along the Cotswold Line, usually to Great Malvern. So – faster trains with more seats and an improved interior ambience.

The *Virgin Trains* services between the South Coast and Midlands will continue to provide the connection between Oxford and Banbury whilst, unfortunately, Tackley, Heyford and Kings Sutton will all suffer cuts to their services, due to alleged lack of demand. Incidentally, the Virgin services are more reliable now that the re-signalling between Banbury and Leamington is complete. Trains can now run at 3-minute intervals instead of 7-, while at the same time providing increased capacity for freight thus helping to keep yet more lorries off the A34.

*David Townsend, Transport Secretary*

### **City Centre Signage – an update**

The lack of eager volunteers led to a new approach to our planned survey whereby we used a video camera on a car roof rack to survey the principal roads in the city centre, instead of trudging the streets with clipboards. We are now writing a report that will be sent to councillors and others responsible for the state of our streets. It will also be made available to Civic Society members.

Coincidentally, English Heritage launched a campaign to clear up street clutter (*Oxford Times*, Oct 22). Thanks to extensive visual intrusion of signs, bollards etc, Oxford was chosen as their prime target for the launch resulting in considerable media coverage of our cluttered city centre. This, then, is a particularly good time to clean up our streets, so as to stem the blight of traffic signs, street clutter, telephone boxes, empty posts etc.

*Rosamund Weatherall and Paul Cullen*

### **Helen Turner**

Helen Turner, who died suddenly on August 28<sup>th</sup> aged 74, devoted her great energies and drive to improving the environment of the communities in which she lived.

Oxford Civic Society owes her a particular debt of gratitude. She was one of its three founders in 1969 – the others being her husband, Professor Gerard Turner, and James Stevens Curl.

They were disturbed by the erosion of the city's character and campaigned successfully to stop destructive plans for inner relief roads and to give priority to public transport instead. She served as chairman and did



much to build up the society in its early days.

She completed a remarkable double by moving in 1983 to be, for seven years, a very active secretary of the Oxford Preservation Trust, of which she remained a trustee until her death. When the local authorities said they had no money to repair Magdalen Bridge properly in stone, her most outstanding achievement was to lead a successful appeal by the Trust to raise the necessary £250,000.

*Mark Barrington Ward, President*

### **Councillor Mike Woodin**

The untimely death of Councillor Mike Woodin on July 9<sup>th</sup> at the age of only 38 has deprived the city and the wider political world of a tireless champion for the quality of the environment. He led the Green Party to a position of significant influence on the city council, where his trenchant and logical views were always constructive and widely respected by his colleagues in all parties.

***Read again his contribution to our "Visions for Oxford in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", 'Questioning the Growth Assumption'. Mike will be sorely missed.***

*Tony Joyce, Chairman*

Our very attractive, full colour card **Oxford Coots**, 6" x 4", carries the seasonal greeting – *With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year*

Including envelopes, postage & packaging, it is available for **£5.50 per 10 ~ £12.50 per 25 ~ £23 per 50 ~ £42 per 100** ~ from

**Mrs Sally Roberts, 1 Bridge Street,  
Osney Island, Oxford OX2 0BA**

### **Oxford Milestones**

The London–Oxford–Worcester turnpike road was opened in 1771. At first the section from Wheatley to Oxford ran via Shotover, Old Road, and Cheney Lane, but in 1788 a new London Road was cut through the fields of Headington.

Turnpike Trusts were required by law to put up milestones to show travellers that they were getting full value for their tolls. An uninterrupted run of ten milestones survives on this road between Wheatley and the top of the Woodstock Road, all of them Grade II listed structures. The first five are at Wheatley (47 miles from London), Holton (48 miles), Holton (49 miles), Sandhills (50 miles), and the Thornhill Park & Ride (51 miles). Then there are four stones within the ring-road which readers might care to identify for themselves? *Clue:* a further two are outside 243 Woodstock Road (56 miles) and 385 Woodstock Road (57 miles).

**For full-size pictures and information on these milestones, see [www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk) (News page).**

*Stephanie Jenkins, Civic Society webmaster*

### **Membership**

We now have over 900 members, including a growing number of corporate members. Thank you to all who pay their subscription by banker's order. Those who prefer to pay by cheque are re

minded that subscriptions are due on **1 January 2005** at a minimum of £5 per individual and £7 for two people of the same address (although some members kindly support us by contributing more).

**Please note this date in your diary now, and so help make our administration simpler and less costly by not having to send out reminders. Thank you.**

*Julia Carlisle, Membership Secretary*

### **Membership Secretary**

The Civic Society urgently needs someone to take over this important role from Julia Carlisle, and in the near future.

**Please make contact through the PO Box or telephone number listed below if you are familiar with database applications and would like to help.**

### **Our 100<sup>th</sup> Issue, March 2005**

Our next issue will be number 100 in the series, and will take the form of a special edition celebrating a significant moment in the Society's history with reference to some early documentation and articles from founder members.

**We would welcome further contributions from members for inclusion in our next issue in the form of reminiscences or comment on current issues. Please write to the Editor before the end of February 2005.**

### **“Mind the Gap .. “**

Can readers help to fill some gaps in our records:- Committee Meetings – Minutes after March 1972 and pre June 1980. Publications – *Street Lighting in Oxford* (provisional edition) by Thomas Braun, 1971; *Let's Save Oxford* (no author), 1979?

Further notes of gaps in the records and the present-day location of publications will appear in subsequent newsletters.

*Christine Butler, Civic Society archivist*

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