

The changing face of Oxford **by Tony Joyce, Chairman**

A stroll around the area surrounding the castle site shows how significantly the rejuvenation of this previously neglected quarter of the city is proceeding. Morrell's brewery is now fully converted to residential accommodation and the redevelopment of the British Telecom site is nearing completion. Despite the continuing presence of hard-hatted construction workers, the various restaurants on the castle site itself are opening, the Malmaison Hotel will soon welcome its first guests (and our members – see Programme Notes), the apartments are advertised for occupation and Oxford Preservation Trust's Heritage Interpretation Centre will be ready in the spring. The routes linking Castle Street, New Road and Tidmarsh Lane should soon be open and in Paradise Street, St Peter's new student accommodation is beginning to rise.

The interval between initial discussions on major planning applications of this type and their eventual implementation is usually prolonged, and it is salutary to see these plans, constructively scrutinised by our Planning Sub-Committee, now translated from the drawing board into reality. One result is a welcome increase in the residential accommodation in the city centre – though until the new Local Plan becomes effective, not enough of this is truly "affordable". This is important if more of those whose work or principal interests lie in the centre are to avoid commuters' problems. But living near one's work requires a good night's sleep – not always uppermost in the minds of the misguided proponents of the 24-hour city.

Further south, consultations on the form of the new Westgate development continue, with more

detailed plans expected in the spring. Here too a further element of residential accommodation is incorporated, though convincing proposals to deal with all the traffic implications of such a large increase in retail provision are still required. As in the rest of the West End, we can expect to see major changes in the usage and appearance of the city.

In another key area, an exciting prospect is emerging as the university reveals its masterplan for the Radcliffe Infirmary site. The Tower of the Winds provides a focus for an imaginative development which will further enhance the university's facilities and go some way towards alleviating the Bodleian Library's chronic shortage of convenient storage space.

The Area Development Framework for the West End, on which consultations are proceeding, recommends a mixed range of uses within it. However, in the city centre as a whole, recent and projected development is tending towards rather more segregation into discrete regions: the old university consolidating its position in the north/central area; the centre of gravity of retailing moving towards the south; more residential accommodation in the west; while the hospitals, medical research and Brookes University are concentrated in Headington.

The implications of this trend need further thought, not least in terms of the effects on the city's transport patterns which are already falling under increasing scrutiny.

**SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING
Monday 10 October 2005
Magdalen College Auditorium**

To consider an increase in membership subscriptions, effective from 1 January 2006.

Chairman Tony Joyce explained to the members present that subscriptions were last increased in 1992 and that it is important for the Society to strengthen its financial base so that it might be well placed to represent the membership appropriately.

Gordon Balme, Treasurer, explained that costs (in particular, postage) had risen considerably since 1992 and that funds were needed in order, for example, to finance publications such as "*Visions for Oxford in the 21st Century*". The proposal was to increase subscriptions from £5 for an individual to **£9 if paid by standing order, or £10 by cheque** and for two people at the same address from £7 to **£12 by standing order, or £14 by cheque**. He urged members to switch to standing order if at all possible as this drastically reduces the administration involved in our 1,000 membership.

The motion was put to the membership present and was carried nem con.

The meeting was followed by an excellent slide show given by John Ashdown entitled "*Oxford 1972-2000*" and reflecting on his time as Conservation Officer.



We are very grateful to those members who have promptly responded to our new subscriptions notification letter, sent out on 13 October 2005 immediately following the Special General Meeting. Thank you.

If, however, you are amongst those members who have not already done so, then we urge you to complete and return the standing order form to the Membership Secretary as soon as possible so that all existing orders are amended well before 1st January 2006.

**Report From The Planning
Sub-Committee**

Update on applications mentioned in the July newsletter: Plans were refused for: the **St Barnabas Church** site, and the land behind **40-49 Juxon Street**; the application to demolish **47 Oxford Road, Littlemore**, and replace with new housing, was rejected at appeal. Also refused are: development of the **Dominion Oils site Littlemore**, a proposal for 74 students' rooms at **108 Cowley Road** and Christ Church's application for redevelopment of sites in **Botley Road (the River Hotel, the Westgate Hotel and 1-3 Mill Street)**. The proposal to demolish **22 Summerhill Road** and replace by 4 flats has been passed. Also passed is the proposal at **37A Jericho Street** to replace garages by 6 car-free flats, and the application for large extensions at **8 Charlbury Road**, whilst the proposed demolition of **2 Blenheim Drive**, replacing it by four houses, has been withdrawn.

New applications in *July* and *August* included two that were almost immediately refused: these were a proposal to demolish a garage on land next to **24a Albert Street, Jericho**, and replace it with two 2-bed flats; and another to add roof extensions to **138 Morrell Avenue**, which would have destroyed the character of this harmonious and interesting street. Christ Church's proposal to demolish **St Thomas' School, in Osney Lane**, and replace it with a new 4-floor building for 100 student rooms and a new nursery, was met with widespread and fierce resistance, and the application was withdrawn. The proposal was likewise withdrawn to demolish **Trajan House on Mill Street, Osney**, and replace it with 46 flats in three blocks, with a gated courtyard for 24 parking spaces and 90 cycle stands. Not yet decided are proposals for demolition of the **Old School next to Wolvercote Church**, to make way for a block of 12 flats, but details of development on the **Windmill First School site, Margaret Road, Headington** have now been agreed.

September's applications included one for demolition of **41 Harbord Road**, and replacement with a 3-storey block of flats, and another for **23 Outram Road**, for extensive side and rear extensions to be used for an additional house,

but both were quickly *rejected*. An application has just been *passed* to extend and change the use of **367 Banbury Road**, from care-home to guest house with 19 bedrooms.

In *October* an application for a Telecommunications mast in **St Cross Road**, close to New College Sports Ground, was soon *refused*. At **69 Sandfield Road** a very large outbuilding in the garden already in use as hobby room, garage and gym, was declared *permitted*, despite its being constructed without permission and setting an unfortunate precedent in backland development. A proposal *not yet decided* is to build five 1-bed terraced houses in the gardens of **46-48 Oxford Road, Marston**, accessed from a public track much used by cyclists and pedestrians. Another ambitious proposal *awaits a decision* – to demolish a garage at **87 Divinity Road** and replace it by a new three to four-bed house, along with extension and conversion of the existing house into five flats.

At least eight of the applications seen since July could not be assessed because they lacked essentials such as location plans with adequate street names, or site layouts, or details of existing structures, or of context, but perhaps our complaints may eventually bring about some general improvement in standard.

Gillian Argyle, Mark Barrington-Ward,
Kate Miller, Chris Rayson, David Townsend

NOTE : Oxford City Council's "Planning Applications Online" address has now changed to –
http://uniformpublicaccess.oxford.gov.uk/publicaccess/tdc/tdc_home.aspx

Or, simply access it via the Society's website.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 4 March 2006

2.15 for 3.15 pm

This important date for next year's diary (see Programme Notes) offers a welcome opportunity at 2.15 pm to meet the new County Council Chief Executive, **Joanna Simons**, our guest speaker prior to the formal AGM business at 3.15 pm.

A home made tea concludes the session.

Transport Notes

Whilst commenting in the last Newsletter (July 2005, no 101) on the splitting of the old No 2 bus route into two parts, I suggested to the Oxford Bus Company that the new No 2 service should run beyond Magdalen Street East to the Rail Station. Unfortunately, this would require an extra vehicle to maintain the timetable and so would not be commercially viable. The same reason prevents running to Speedwell Street via Queen Street, which would have enabled easy interchange with the No 8 to/from Headington. However, it is good to know that the new No 2 is much more reliable and the Real Time Information displays mean intending passengers know how long they will have to wait.

One of the reasons for the congestion in Headington that caused the route split in the first place is the extra traffic generated by the amount of free parking available on-street. This can only be resolved by extensive residents parking zones and it is encouraging to note that the County Council is accelerating the programme by about 2 years. The Headington and Marston areas should all be in place by 2008 instead of the previous dates. The threat of charging for permits still hangs over these new areas; County Councillor David Robertson has stated: "*To enforce Controlled Parking Zones you need the resources and one of the ways that can be achieved is by charging for permits.*" Of course, another way of raising £700k per year would be to maintain charges for on-street parking in the city centre in the evenings and on Sundays!

A lot more cycle stands are planned for the city centre – sites for 182 have been agreed by the County Council's Transport Implementation Committee, with a further 48 possible. Another 136 places are being provided in connection with the Cowley Road Improvement Scheme. All figures assume two cycles per stand, one each side. Other cycle measures include a new section of the West Oxford Cycle Route that has just been opened and a new route is planned between Hill Top Road and the Churchill Hospital, along the northern boundary of the golf course.

Some cycling commuters have been com-

plaining about *FGW Link's* decision to ban cycles from peak hour trains to/from London. One solution to this problem would be to do what the late Roger Dudman did 30 or 40 years ago – leave your Oxford bicycle at Oxford Station and keep another one at Paddington!

Finally on trains, there is good and bad news for the Bicester line. From the 11 December timetable change the services will be concentrated in the morning and evening peak periods which is good news for commuters but not very convenient for shopping or leisure trips in the middle of the day.

David Townsend, Transport Secretary

The state of Oxford's streets

A year ago, we started to survey the signage in central Oxford but quickly realised the problems were more complex. Responsibility for the street environment is divided, and there is little overall co-ordination, which is one reason it is difficult to get anything done. Indeed, English Heritage chose Oxford as their prime site to launch and to illustrate their Save Our Streets campaign; this is not good news for such a famous and potentially beautiful city.

The City Council commissioned and endorsed a Public Realm Strategy for the city centre in September 2000, so it is time we started to see some improvement in the state of our streets.

We don't just have problems in the city centre but right across Oxford, so if you have a particularly good example to add from your own area, please contact Rosamund Weatherall or Paul Cullen (01865 426805), or via e-mail at ros_weath@ntlworld.com. We don't promise to cure the problem but it will add weight to any talks we have with officials.

Committee member, Ros Weatherall

Oxfordshire Community Partnership

OCP is the Countywide Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which brings together Oxfordshire organisations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to focus their efforts on those things that are important to people who live, work and visit the County and, more importantly, to do something about it.

The OCP has adopted the following vision statement in which to guide its work: *"We want Oxfordshire to be a thriving county which adapts to a changing world but remains a special place in which to work, live and visit."*

The partnership has identified, through consultation, 8 key priorities for the county on which to focus. These are:- Key workers and housing; Safe and Supportive Communities; Transport; Economic Prosperity; Education & Lifelong Learning; Environment; Health & Well-being; Recreation, Culture & Leisure. Eight ambition groups are responsible for the progression of these priorities.

In addition to the countywide LSP there are the 5 district based LSPs developing community strategies for their areas. The Oxfordshire Community Partnership concentrates on countywide issues whilst district strategies reflect the particular needs and aspirations of local areas.

Highlights of success to date have been: the Cleanest County Campaign; an increase of over 25% in schools' recycling; working with business reps to promote the benefits of workplace travel plans; real time bus information available at 20 on-street displays; Oxfordshire Broadband partnership established.

For further information on the OCP and the Community Strategy please either visit www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk or contact the OCP team through Claire Evans OCP Manager/Claire Phillips OCP Officer, SPED Unit, Speedwell House, Speedwell Street, OX1 1NE; 01865 816029 or via email at oxfordshire.communitypartnership@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Conservation Areas under appraisal

Oxford City Council is currently undertaking appraisals of all 16 designated conservation areas within the City. Each conservation area was designated in recognition of its special architectural and historic value, to help preserve and further enhance these areas for both the present and future generations to enjoy.

Central Government now requires that Local Planning Authorities undertake thorough appraisals of each designated conservation area. The overall aim is to provide a brief historical

outline of the area's development; to fully define the individual elements that combine to create the special character; to understand the significance of such areas; and to enable informed decisions regarding future change to be made whilst ensuring that the special interest is retained. Conservation area designation does not prevent change from taking place but it does require change to be carefully managed. A conservation area appraisal assists in the future management of such areas. It is hoped that the document will be used by local residents, developers, architects and others when considering the submission of planning applications and also by the Planning Department when determining such applications.

An essential element of the appraisal process is local community involvement. By living and working in these areas, local residents have a wealth of knowledge and can often provide details that are not found in the history books – helping to identify the separate elements of character.

Meetings with residents will be organised in due course to explain the appraisal process more fully. In the meantime, any available local history or relevant information could be passed to grsmith@oxford.gov.uk or 01865 242104.

Gemma Smith, Conservation Officer, OCC

Local community news

Representatives of 17 Community Groups, the Chairman, and various members of the committee met on Wednesday 28th September at St Michael's at the North Gate for our second networking session of this year. As before, this was a lively, enlightening and helpful session covering the predictable and perennial issues of planning, transport/traffic and licensing laws embracing a wide range of detailed concerns. The following 4 articles from residents' groups introduce a new feature to the newsletter, covering local issues as they are raised with us. We welcome this opportunity to strengthen our working partnership whilst contributing to the resolution of some difficult local problems.

Please let Liz Grosvenor know if your area RA would like to become involved via membership@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk (01865 765453) or 15

Lime Walk, Headington, OX3 7AB. Also, contact the Editor, Pauline Martin, 112 Bridge Street, Osney Island, OX2 0DH – ocsnewsletter@aol.com (01865 250870) – to contribute to our next issue.

Liz Grosvenor, Membership Secretary &
Community Groups Liaison Officer

Osney Island Footbridge Closure

The controversial closure, on 1st September, of the towpath footbridge south of Osney Lock, for up to 13 weeks, has been exercising the minds of some Osney Island residents. This is a public right of way and is part of a major national footpath/cycle route – “The Thames Path”. The Environment Agency perceived a need to replace this bridge and duly applied to the Highway Authority for temporary closure. There are reservations on the way the County Highways Department carried out the closure procedure but the Islanders' principal objections centred around the need for such a long period to complete the work, together with an inconvenient diversion route. Although the provision of a ferry was considered by the agency, this was dismissed as having too many “Health and Safety” implications. The agency was made aware that a ferry was provided when, in similar circumstances, the “Rainbow” footbridge at Medley, 1 mile upstream, was refurbished some years ago.

For Island residents, this is further evidence that “consultation”, in the interpretation of the EA and the County Council, has a different meaning from that they have a right to expect. Merely informing them of what is going to happen is not good enough. Input from the people most affected must be sought, considered and where appropriate, accepted and acted upon.

Tony Roberts, OIRA member and webmaster
askoira@osneyisland.org.uk

The Friends of St Sepulchre's Cemetery

St. Sepulchre's cemetery is situated down a lane just off Walton Street, between the communities of Jericho and Walton Manor; extending to about 1 hectare, it dates from 1850. It is the resting place of many former Oxford parishioners, and such notables as famous Master of Bal-

liol College Benjamin Jowett (1870-93); and Thomas and Martha Combe, the donors of St. Barnabas' Church, and patrons of the Pre-Raphaelite artists. (Holman Hunt's painting The Light of the World was left to Keble College by Martha.) St. Sepulchre's was closed to new burials around 1950 and is now managed and kept up by the Oxford City Council, although its ownership resides with the Anglican Diocese. The cemetery is entered on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England.

The departure of the Lucy's Eagle Works Foundry (which opened in 1760) prompted the recent formation of the Friends of St. Sepulchre's Cemetery. Tall factory buildings surrounding the cemetery on three sides are soon to be replaced by overlooking apartments. Such development is seen as a chance to draw this oasis of green into community use as was never before possible. Key to this is the significant number of new and doubtless vigilant residents soon to be living immediately along the entire length of the site.

The Friends of St. Sepulchre's Cemetery see it as their objective (in active rapport with the City Council, the Diocese, residents of adjacent communities and the descendants of those interred) to ensure that this once hidden asset emerges and serves into the future: first, as an accessible and safe park-like amenity for local residents; second, as a fine outlook for the new development; and, third, as a historic, atmospheric and tranquil attraction for visitors.

Contact Peter Strong, (01865 553749), 79 St. Bernard's Road, Oxford, OX2 6EJ or via email at javelindart@javelindart.free-online.co.uk if you would like to join the list of friends.

Peter Strong, Chair, Friends of St Sepulchre's

Oxford in the 21st century?

"A place of vomit and violence between midnight and 3 a.m." (Chief Inspector George Wrigley)

"8 injuries every 100 metres in two Oxford streets." (Dr Phil Hornbrey)

".. in no doubt longer opening hours would mean an increase in violent crime – including rapes, grievous bodily harm and worse." (Circuit of Court Judges)

The new Licensing Act has resulted in the extension of licensing hours for the vast majority of pubs and clubs in the City and suburbs – often against the wishes of local residents.

Too many of us suffer from a disturbed night's sleep or loud, threatening and abusive behaviour in the evening or late at night. Elderly neighbours of mine no longer venture into Oxford City centre after dark for fear of abuse or violence. Too often the City Council appear deaf to these concerns or the police too busy to deal with "low level" crime or nuisance. Whilst anxious to preserve the rights of a few to drink to excess, the rights of the majority to enjoy their homes and neighbourhoods in peace and quiet are ignored.

Whilst it is too late to change the Law we can act and put pressure on the Council, our Councillors and the Police to use the powers they have been given to close establishments and censure problem licence holders. As usual however our voice will only be heard if enough of us express our fears and concerns.

If you are concerned about the licensing hour extensions in your area, or nuisance binge drinking and anti-social behaviour, then please do get in touch with me. With sufficient support from groups throughout the City Council area I will raise the issue with the full Council and work to create positive actions to reduce the nuisance we increasingly suffer.

Please contact me urgently at 13 St John Street, Oxford OX1 2LQ or geoffrey@thedarts.co.uk to add your support to our petition.

Geoffrey Dart, Chairman, St John's Area RA

Summertown Riverside Group

This group came into being about 35 years ago, essentially to preserve the character of the Cherwell valley as a haven of peace, wildlife interest and recreation. The particular issue to trigger its formation was the threat of an illegal caravan park in a field opposite Lonsdale Road with raw sewage to be pumped into the Cherwell. We joined with the OPT in instructing Counsel to fight this scheme.

Many battles have been fought over the years with the perennial ones being the sporadic pol-

lution scares (the Environment Agency acts promptly in these) and navigation problems (increasingly the EA has pulled back from involvement here and expects the riparian owners to do their bit).

For the last 10 years or more we have been fighting to get the safeguarded land in the Cherwell Valley between Summertown and the Vicky Arms returned to the Green Belt. The battle seems to be hotting up, since property consultants Carter Jonas advocated last month that the 3 main areas of safeguarded land – including Summertown – should be built on.

Our interests are primarily the green ‘wedge’ of the Cherwell Valley within the whole city, ie right down to Christ Church Meadow. But we take an interest in events upstream too, and would welcome members from Water Eaton, Islip or Kidlington.

Kit Villiers – kitvilliers@yahoo.co.uk
Joint Secretary, Summertown Riverside Group

The Forest of Oxford (formed in 1991)

The Forest of Oxford is looking for two new recruits for the steering group: one member to report to the Oxford Civic Society and a second to initially help with the draft of the successful Front Garden leaflet (from which the trees and shrubs in the Turrill Sculpture Garden, behind Summertown Library, were chosen).

The small steering group meets at the Town Hall at 6pm for an hour about six times a year, and additionally, by invitation, for tree planting schemes or special projects.

Please contact the Chairman if you would be willing to represent the Society in this way. Or, for more information, please contact Joint Coordinators John Thompson (513528) or Jeanne Bliss (515379) – forestofoxford@oxford.gov.uk

A warm welcome to recent volunteers

Programme Secretary Sheila Glazebrook is grateful for much-needed help with organisation and administration from:

Michael Brown who has spent his career in science and engineering and specialises in major hazards and risk management consultancy. He has recently expanded his interests by becoming a part-time student of History of Art.

Keith Dyke who has lived in east Oxford since 1967. He was a fellow of Wadham from 1970 and held many college offices. Retiring in 2003 as Professor of Microbiology, Keith was elected an Emeritus Fellow.

Alan Hobbs who studied architecture at The Oxford School of Architecture in the 1950's. Following a short spell in London, he joined the newly formed practice of The Oxford Architects Partnership in 1963 retiring as a partner in 1999.

The Events Group is now seeking help in arranging the programme of summer walks – see Programme Notes.

From the Archives ...

Ten years ago, under the heading: ‘**Getting to know the membership**’ Newsletter no 71 (September 1995) reported that: “.. *the executive committee has designed a questionnaire .. to make fullest use of the membership in the tasks to which we are committed. It will also be used in arranging a programme of activities based on your interests and preferences*”. The salient points were reported in Newsletter No 72 (January 1996): half the total membership responded; a resounding 82% read the Newsletter from cover to cover, wanting it to remain the same size; 87% stated that traffic and pollution were the major issues.

The AGM on 9 March 1996 offered a Members Forum to discuss ideas and issues raised by the questionnaire. In much the same way, today's Committee has arranged this month's Members' Meeting to explore the views and concerns held by our current membership.

Mrs Christine Butler, Society Archivist

Still time to order for Christmas ...

... **Postcards and Christmas cards** featuring this year's colourful *Broad Street* print are going fast, but we still have plenty of blank correspondence cards, which would make a charming Christmas gift.

**Orders/enquiries to Mrs Sally Roberts,
1 Bridge Street, Osney Island, Oxford, OX2 0BA
(01865 721596)**



Your letters page –

**To contribute, contact the Editor at the address shown below,
or email ocsnewsletter@aol.com.**

Copy deadline for our next issue is Friday 10 March 2006.

from Mrs R F S Hamer, 67 Old Road, Headington, OX3 7LA

The Society's Logo

Please do NOT change the present Civic Society Logo – it is clear, simple, stylish and not at all out-dated. Keep it.



from Paul Cullen, Chairman, OxPA ,
8 Richmond Road, OX1 2JJ (01865 426805) or
d_paul_cullen@hotmail.com

Oxford Pedestrians Association

OxPA is concerned that the City (as Planning Authority) and County (as Highway Authority) are unwittingly worsening Oxford's street environment through enabling more and more car parking to take place in the city. Large numbers of off-street parking spaces are being allowed in new developments, even in the centre, as the City continues with residential intensification. This results in ever more motor traffic, noise and air pollution, road danger, and vehicle congestion.

The County however, while encouraging children to walk and cycle to school more, is at the same time reacting to the ever growing competition for road-space by introducing more and more controls into our streets. These increase the frustration of road users, and induce unsafe behaviour such as red light hopping. The city is filling up with cars and the clutter that accompanies them, while those who do not enjoy their benefits suffer a worsening living environment.

OxPA is also concerned that the divided responsibilities and differing policies between planning and highways require greater attention to public consultation by both local authorities. The public are confused, unsurprisingly. While the County has abolished charges at the Park and Ride sites it owns, the City continues to charge at those in its ownership.

The County is to experiment with free on-street parking in central Oxford; the City has increased charges at its central off-street car parks. With such confused divisions between authorities, OxPA hopes that the Civic Society will join with it in pressing for a clearer, more coordinated approach by the two Councils, to public debate and consultation.



from Jeanne Bliss, 37 Meadow Prospect, Wolvercote, OX2 8PP (01865 515379) or
Jeanne@blissgreenprint.freeserve.co.uk

Park and Ride Car Parks

I listened to our Chairman at a previous AGM talk movingly about a campaign to improve our Park & Ride car parks. With their important contribution to the Oxford Transport Strategy, these should be 'state of the art' now, not later.

Thornhill in particular is a most significant gateway to Oxford and I have proposed that the Forest of Oxford would be willing to help in fundraising, if this is necessary, to supplement very desirable environmental improvements. At present, though serving as a major interchange, Thornhill presents some serious challenges to users:- there is confusion in the layout and signage at the entrance, high risk for pedestrians moving between the Pavilion bus shelter and the new bus stops, and limited space with queues in the waiting area for P&R and hospital buses.

We need a modern building with proper facilities and a revised layout as quickly as possible.

The Chairman comments: The County plans to implement major improvements at Thornhill in 2006/7 along the lines of those available at Water Eaton, and the City has planning permission for matching improvements at Redbridge. Extending comfortable waiting rooms, good tourist information, toilets and secure cycle storage to all the P&R sites remains an important part of OCS policy.

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