

BOURNEMOUTH CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2016

By the time this newsletter arrives through the letterbox Christmas will have passed and the New Year celebrations have also flown by. We trust you have enjoyed good Seasonal Festivities and that 2016 will see you happy and healthy. As you turn the pages of this latest Newsletter you will find a review of your Committee's work on planning and conservation issues over the last six months together with accompanying details of a wide range of talks and visits you can take part in the coming months. We especially hope to see you at our AGM on 6th April.

Town Centre Developments

We were sorry to learn in November that the Odeon and ABC Cinemas in Westover Road had been sold to developers for possible housing. Cinemas have operated from these two landmark buildings for almost ninety years but with the decision of Odeon to sell them to Libra Homes and open new facilities during 2017 in the West Central development currently being built on the former bus station site in Exeter Crescent means an end of this tradition. We regret the loss of the large screens in Westover Road and are far from convinced that their replacement by the smaller multiplex offering in West Central is a good deal for the town. Likewise we ponder how the ABC and Odeon, both vast purpose-built and very imposing buildings with important street frontages and internal features could be sensitively converted to residential use. As yet no plans or details have been revealed so it is difficult to see how the change of use might work practically, assuming the Council accepts the principle of change of use in the first instance. We are heartened that both buildings, despite not being listed, are protected by polices in the Town Centre Area Action Plan, the recently adopted Town Centre Development and Design Guide and the Bournemouth Local Plan but we continue to press the Council to extend the Old Christchurch Road Conservation Area so these buildings are brought within its boundaries.

Across the Lower Gardens from Westover Road the builders have been very busy and so the Hilton Hotel in Terrace Road has just been completed and seen its official opening. This new landmark building with its multi-coloured elevations is certainly a real boost for the quality hotel provision in town and a vote of confidence in the local economy but opinions are divided on its aesthetics. Nearby the West Central development of multiplex cinema and shops, cafés and leisure attractions rises from the former bus station site of Exeter Crescent. Its sheer size and impact is already being felt on streetscene of Exeter Road and even more so when viewed from the Lower Gardens. We objected to this scheme in its original and now much amended form when at planning application stage and continue to believe a much less bulky and more elegant scheme should have been brought forward.

Sadly along Exeter Road and opposite the Bournemouth International Centre, the Punshon Church has now been demolished and its cleared site stands ready for a mixed residential and hotel apartment development that we consider really unworthy of this prominent site.

Good news came in November with the new plans for the Winter Gardens development being shown in the publication of the latest Development Brief for the site by the Council and its new preferred partner, The Bournemouth Development Company. The plans show a far less massive and blocky range of buildings and very importantly frontages pulled well back from Exeter Road and indeed the creation of new public space so that the natural cambers and openness of the route to and from The Square and The Pier are not compromised. We look forward to seeing the planning application for the mixed use leisure and residential scheme during 2016.

Plans to develop new residential flats at the Berry Court car park in St Peter's Road have been approved by the Council. We supported the scheme since the existing car parking provision will be maintained and the new flats are well designed. However, we have commented that the elevations as proposed should be what is eventually built as we have seen several developments built that have been harmed or seen their appropriateness watered down by changes to materials or colours in elevations. A Design Brief has been published for similar development on a car park at the end of St Stephen's Road and that appears generally acceptable but we will check further when the planning application is submitted.

Up at the Lansdowne we have supported in principle the Council's ambitious plans for new development, improvements to the streetscene and public realm, together with changes to the private and public transport routes. Plans have been commented on by us have been generally supportive, for new teaching and residential accommodation by Bournemouth University around Lansdowne and Holdenhurst Roads together with a vast redevelopment at Oxford Road/Holdenhurst Road and St Swithun's Road. We continue to lobby the Council to chase Bournemouth and Poole College to clean up the sadly shabby elevations of the grand Lansdowne College, a fine Edwardian Baroque listed building, especially to deal with the plants and buddleia bush growing out of the upper levels.

Talbot Village New and Old

During Autumn we supported the Talbot and Branksome Woods Residents' Association's objections to Poole Council's proposals for extensive development at and adjacent to the Universities' sites off Wallisdown Road. Contained within the many pages of a Supplementary Planning Document were outlines of new buildings, uses, facilities and routes that would impact hugely in terms of visual impact, environmental harm and traffic congestion on people, places and their homes mostly in Bournemouth since the sites, although in Poole, are largely bounded by Bournemouth homes in Talbot Village and Talbot Woods. Bournemouth Council thankfully sent a very detailed letter of objection to Poole.

A short while later Bournemouth Council published its own Management Plan for the historic Talbot Village Conservation Area on the other side of Wallisdown Road and a world apart from the Poole side. This suggests some very limited but sensitive residential development, a focus on protecting the natural aspect and woodland setting and enhancing the historic buildings, nearly all of which are Listed Buildings.

Boscombe and Pokesdown

We welcomed the Council's Management Plan for Churchill Gardens Conservation Area and look forward to the policies aimed at reducing the number of HMOs, restoring historic features, tidying the streetscene, nurturing artistic and community life on and around the green and working with landlords and resident groups to make the area really desirable. The Plan will also better enable the Council to bid for monies from the likes of Heritage Lottery Fund to improve the area. We have been asked by the Council to become involved in a new local and neighbourhood planning initiative in Boscombe and Pokesdown so have welcomed the opportunity to build upon our Pokesdown Characterisation Study, completed and submitted to the Council some years ago. We have good links with both these areas and maintain regular contact with the Pokesdown Community Forum that has done much to raise awareness of the charms and history of the area and improve the facilities and buildings here.

Windfarm in the Bay

We were delighted to hear in late Summer that the Government had rejected the proposals from Navitas to create a large windfarm and even more so when not long after the promoters announced they would not appeal this decision. Readers know from previous Newsletters of the Society's stance and we acknowledge the huge effort made by the combined residents' and amenity groups who opposed the plans and thank John Soane who submitted detailed papers to the Inspectorate and attended the local hearings on our behalf.

Bournemouth in Bloom

We have long admired the works of the volunteers who serve on Bournemouth in Bloom and who over the years have done so much in cooperation with the Council's parks teams and all the businesses, traders, hoteliers and residents who work to make Bournemouth the beautiful place it is.

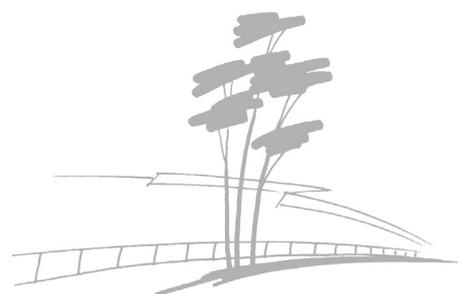
This year sees the Rev Chris Colledge as new Chairman of Bournemouth in Bloom and we were delighted that Beryl Parker, who already does so much for us as Social Secretary and even more for so many other community groups, agreed to be our representative on the BIB Committee.

We will feature updates on in Bloom themes in future newsletters but do take a look at their new website.

Bournemouth 2026

Recent meetings of Bournemouth 2026 have seen presentations on the Seafront Strategy, Pop up Planetarium and tips on successful bids to Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery.

The usually bi-monthly meetings supported by a wide range of Council, public and private sector organisations, voluntary groups and charities are generally attended by our Elaine Cooper.



John Walker RIP

We were so sad to learn in late December of the death of local historian and an active member of our committee John Walker. John, Ken remarks, was mad about Bournemouth and loved its history, its setting, its traditions and its ways. He was a much acclaimed town guide, wrote many booklets and features on Bournemouth and was always at the centre of civic events. He served on the Lower Gardens Trust and was an unofficial historian to St Peter's Church.

Our condolences and love were extended to John's widow Jacquie and members of our Committee were among the very many who attended his Funeral at St Peter's Church in January.

Talks, Visits and Activities

No Newsletter, especially one being written as one year ends and another is about to begin, should fail to acknowledge the work of our Social Secretaries Beryl Parker and Keith Barnes. Between them they have given us a host of opportunities to hear fascinating and amusing talks, visit places of historic and architectural interest and enjoy the company of other civic society members all whilst raising funds to keep our primary role of local amenity society afloat so helping ensure membership subscription rises are few and far between!

Both Keith and Beryl have had serious illnesses during 2015 so in thanking them for all they have done in 2015 trust 2016 will be much better for them. If you are interested in helping them on any of the activities planned for 2016 please do contact Beryl who will be delighted to hear from you.

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Details of all the Committee Members for 2015/16 and copies of monthly meeting minutes, comments on planning applications and past Newsletters are available on our website.

The views of contributors are not necessarily those of the Society.