



A Registered Charity (No. 1016770)
and Member of Civic Voice

The Newbury Society

October 2021 Bulletin

THE NEWBURY SOCIETY – NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

to be held on Thursday 14th October 2021 at 7.30 p.m. in the Parish Room, St. John's Church,
St. John's Road, Newbury RG14 7PY

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Chairman's Report on behalf of the Executive Committee and approval thereof
3. Treasurer's Report and presentation and approval of Independently Examined Accounts to 30th June 2021
4. Election of
 - (a) Officers

Chairman	Dr David Peacock	Secretary	Graham Smith
Vice Chairman	<i>Vacancy</i>	Treasurer	Mike Hood
 - (b) Committee Members
The following existing committee members are standing for re-election:

Dr. Paul Bryant	Garry Poulson	John Handy
Yolande Fothergill	Chris Marriage	
5. Appointment of Independent Examiner
6. Any Other Business
7. Presentation and Discussion led by David Peacock – Newbury in 2020 and 2021. This will include a review of the proposal to redevelop the Kennet Centre.

Graham V Smith

Secretary

Notes:

The Committee may appoint a Patron, a President and one or more Vice Presidents and details of these are advised to members at the AGM. Currently Lord Benyon is President and Garry Poulson is a Vice President.

All Officers and Members of the Committee retire annually but are eligible for re-election.

Details are as at 6th October 2021. Nominations are invited for additional committee members – they should be made in writing to the Secretary and have the consent of the person nominated. In the absence of sufficient nominations proposals may be accepted from the floor at the meeting.

Copies of the Annual Report and the Accounts will be available for viewing at the meeting or may be obtained in advance by contacting the Secretary

THE NEWBURY SOCIETY – OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 2020/21

President: Lord Benyon Vice President: Garry Poulson

OFFICERS

Chairman, Planning Spokesman and Local History Advisor:
David Peacock 01635 524017 chairman@newbury-society.org.uk
Treasurer and Membership Administrator:
Mike Hood 07775 800183 treasurer@newbury-society.org.uk
& membership@newbury-society.org.uk
Secretary, Bulletin Editor and Waterways Representative:
Graham Smith 01635 580356 secretary@newbury-society.org.uk

COMMITTEE

Dr Paul Bryant
Yolande Fothergill
John Handy (Trees & Landscaping
Advisor)
Chris Marriage
Garry Poulson

Kennet Centre revised plans

New Street

Block A

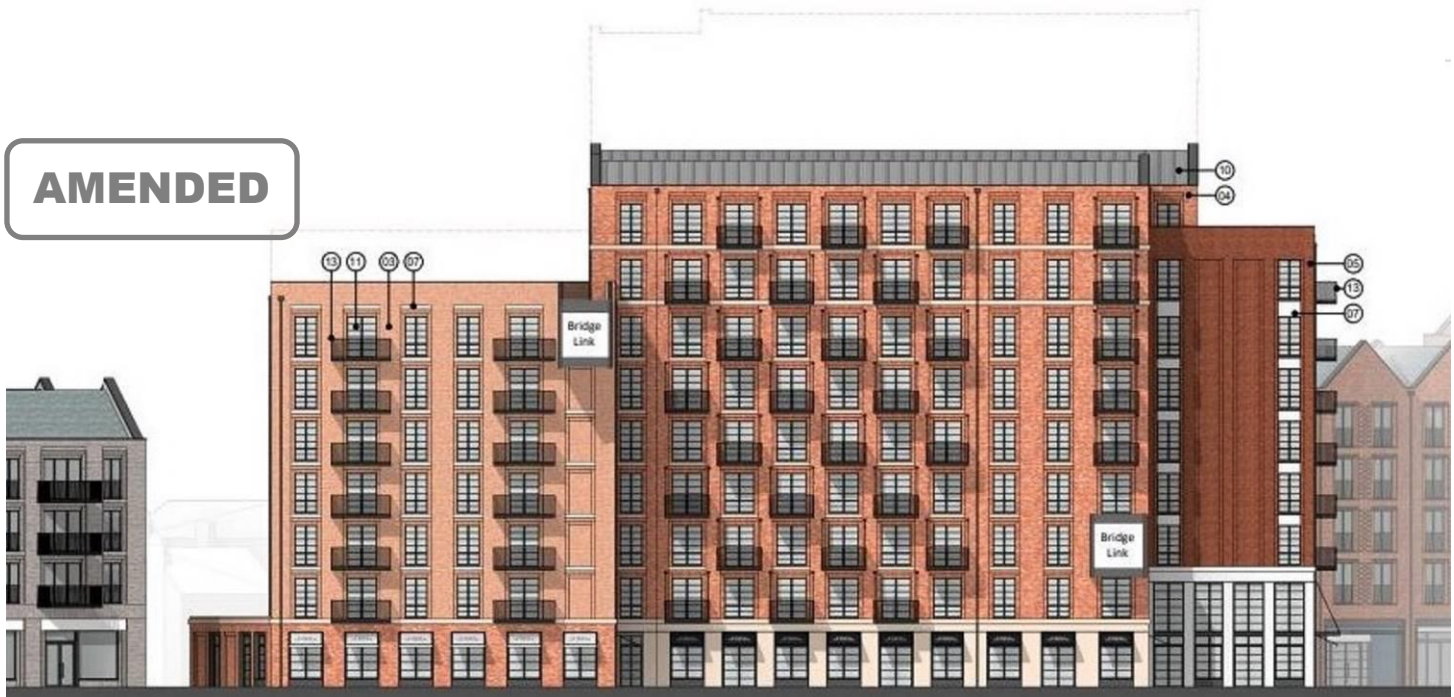
ORIGINAL



Block A – West Elevation original proposal, above: This is the highest part of the proposed development. Its mass is a little reduced by presenting it as three linked buildings, 11 storeys high and 8 storeys high, seen here from the west.

Revised proposal, below: Maximum height reduced to 9 storeys

AMENDED



Well, the revised versions of the plans for the Kennet Centre have been submitted (under the same numbers, 21/00379/FULMAJ and 21/00380/FULMAJ), and there is another opportunity to write to West Berkshire Council with your views, making it clear that your comments are on the amended plans, rather than the originals.

The biggest change is that the two highest blocks of flats have been reduced slightly in height. The original 10-storey and 11-storey blocks (Blocks A and B) have both been reduced to 9 storeys. A wing of Block A has also come down by one storey, from 8 to 7.

Apart from this, the most obvious change is that Block C (facing Cheap Street between “Save the Children” and the cinema) has changed colour. It is now much lighter than it was, an attempt to “reduce its impact within the existing streetscape.” As now proposed, it will be faced with beige bricks instead of red bricks, but it remains five storeys high. The bay closest to “Save the Children” (i.e. nearest to the listed building) has been reduced a storey in height, from four storeys to three.

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Cinema	Block C	Block C (on angle)
Block D (on angle in background)	Block A (on angle in background)	
Market Street	Office (on angle in background)	



Block C – Cheap Street, East Elevation original proposal, above: A five-storey block facing Cheap Street next to the “Save the Children” shop (no. 33), a 17th-century listed building. This Block would replace a poor building, but is significantly higher.

Revised proposal, below: The facing of Block C has been changed and the heights of the bay adjacent to ‘Save the Children’ and of some of the buildings behind have been reduced.



ORIGINAL



Block G – Market Place & Cheap Street, East Elevation original proposal, above: A view of part of the Market Place and Cheap Street, with Block G facing Bear Lane
 Revised proposal, below: The heights of some of the buildings behind have been reduced.

AMENDED



Continued from page 2

Looking at the Catherine Wheel (another listed building) from across Cheap Street, if these plans go ahead, you will now see a 7-storey block behind it (rather than 8), with a 9-storey block behind that.

We have included elevations which most clearly explain the changes. As now proposed, the plans are for 381 flats in buildings rising up to nine storeys, for 1,160 residents. More details are on the WBC public access planning website, with the “amended plans” grouped together, and the elevations the easiest to digest. We can find nothing included to address the lack of parking or affordable housing.

We did not like the original Kennet Centre proposals, which we felt were bad for Newbury. The revised plans show that some tinkering has been done, some minor improvement. But minor improvements to bad plans are not enough to make them positive proposals. However, you should judge for yourselves. If you can attend the AGM, we will be interested to hear your views. Otherwise, please send us a copy of anything you send to WBC

P.S. The amended Kennet Centre plans are due to be considered by Newbury Town Council at its Planning and Highways committee meeting on October 25. If you would like the town council (in addition to West Berkshire) to take your views into account, you may wish to write to them separately.

Horse Chestnuts – vulnerable giants

The Society resumed its in-person meetings in September with a talk on horse-chestnut trees which identified some of the current threats, and highlighted some locally prominent trees and the contribution they make to the character of Newbury.

Before the talk, members' views were sounded on the current plans for the Kennet Centre redevelopment. They were united in opposing the proposed blocks of nine storeys and above, which they felt would damage the character of the town. Instead they felt that development should be limited to six storeys inside the centre, and three to four storeys on the exterior, on Newbury's traditional streets.

The talk on horse chestnut trees followed, by John Handy, one of the Newbury Society's committee, who has a long professional expertise dealing with trees in the Newbury area. He had chosen his subject long before he heard that horse chestnuts were one of about 400 trees and shrubs which have been placed on the endangered list by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

The horse chestnut – *Aesculus hippocastanum* – can live to be 300 years old, but trees of that age are fairly rare and generally in a decrepit state. It was introduced into this county in the late 16th century. It is not a woodland tree and the timber has little commercial use; instead, it is generally an amenity tree – planted for its appearance.

He explained two main threats specific to the horse chestnut at the moment: one is the horse chestnut leaf miner – *Cameraria ohridella* – the pupae of moths, which creates brown patches on leaves in the summer, usually extensive enough to kill the whole leaf. Although this can weaken horse chestnuts and slow their growth, this does not generally kill the trees.

The other, more serious threat, is bacterial canker. This arrived in the UK about 20 years ago, and can be identified from black crusty deposits on the bark and areas of dead bark. It is this pathogen which is more likely to lead to structural weakness and possible death, and is spreading. As examples of trees affected by the disease he showed pictures of local horse chestnuts, one on the corner of Andover Road and Buckingham Road, and a row of three on Enborne Road, on the edge of Newbury, where there were once five.



The Horse Chestnut on Kennet Road (outside 'The Maltings'), viewed from the west end of Gloucester Road in 2014

Among the prominent horse chestnut trees John highlighted were a large tree in Kennet Road, Newbury, about 250 years old and visible from a distance; and the tree next to the A339 where it crosses the Kennet and Avon Canal, in a corner of Victoria Park. This latter tree is immensely important in acting as a screen, blotting out lorries and other heavy traffic from those in the park, and crucial in maintaining the park's character.

John talked about some of the work undertaken over the years, which had included bracing and strengthening trees with steel cables and more modern materials, and questions from the audience followed.

A call for volunteers

The plans for the Kennet Centre highlight the role of the Newbury Society, and the need for the Society to thrive if the character of Newbury is to be protected from unsuitable development. To continue to do this, we need more members, and more people to volunteer to take on a range of roles.

To highlight the town's heritage, it would be good to have a co-ordinator for the heritage open days, so that Newbury could become a destination again each September. We want someone who is prepared to liaise between different owners, and help publicise the openings as a joint event. Support can be offered; the main skill needed will be that of organisation, along with an interest in making this happen.

We are also still looking for a transport advisor: someone who is very familiar with roads and/or rail transport around Newbury, wants to see it improve, and is articulate. This could involve all aspects of transport, or split into several positions, with someone specialising in railways, another in issues affecting cars, and so on.

We need people with an interest in Conservation Areas, or in local sports facilities; and it would be helpful to have some who can take charge of publicity. There are many different roles which could help to make the Newbury Society a continuing success. Do you know someone who could help?

Mrs Jacqueline Webb

Mrs Jacqueline Webb, who was one of the last of the original committee set up when the Newbury Society was founded in 1973, died on July 7th.

Mrs Webb lived in Streatley, Goring and Pangbourne before moving to Newbury with her husband Donald in 1963. She was very community-minded and was a parent governor of John Rankin School while her daughters went there, as well as a founder member of Newbury Yacht Club.

The Newbury Society was formed following controversy about plans for a large hotel in West Mills and its early aims included improvements to Victoria Park, and better design for the Kennet Centre. Fellow founding committee members included John Gould and Hilary Hinchliffe.

Mrs Webb and her husband were also members of the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust, and supported the work to restore the canal.

As a recognition for her work over many years, she was appointed a Life Member of the Newbury Society, continuing until her death, although she became less active following her husband's illness and death.

If anyone would like to get in touch with the family, daughter Fiona Webb can be reached on 07783 421181, or email fionawebb7@gmail.com.



Dates for Your Diary – 2021/22

(all subject to confirmation due to the Coronavirus pandemic)

Talks are held in the **Parish Room, St John's Church**, St John's Road, Newbury RG14 7PY. Admission is free for members or £2.50 for non-members. **Visitors are most welcome.**

Thursday 14th October, 7:30pm – AGM + Newbury in 2020 and 2021

Newbury Society chairman David Peacock will be reviewing the past two years; talking about Newbury today, some of its attractions, and the range of challenges it faces.

Please contact the Secretary if you would like to receive copies of the annual reports and the accounts in advance of the meeting

Thursday 11th November, 7:30pm – Mike Robinson: Changes in Agriculture since the Great War

This talk will cover agriculture over the period from after the end of World War 1 up to the present day, with some references to local agriculture; and will therefore cover the period that most people are able to relate to. It will include references to the foundation of the industry, and a review of the future of the industry, with challenges from global warming and changing dietary preferences.

Dates for talks in the first half of 2022 (all 2nd Thursdays) are 10th February, 10th March, 14th April and 12th May. Details will be in the next Bulletin or Newsletter.