



A Registered Charity (No. 1016770)  
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# The Newbury Society

## October 2020 Bulletin

### From your Chairman

This seems to be a season for consultations, and the sheer number and complexity is almost overwhelming. Nationally, the planning White Paper was published in August, and anyone with an interest in the built environment should respond (see article on next page). Closer to home, consultants Avison Young have produced their report on the London Road Industrial Estate in Newbury (LRIE, or Faraday Road area), and anyone who want to see a sports stadium remain in Newbury should respond. West Berkshire Council's Culture and Heritage department has produced a "Cultural Heritage Strategy 2020-2030," which covers issues such as the protection of Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings (at a time when council services are competing heavily for resources). Then, in the near future, local people will have an opportunity to respond to the creation of the commercial "masterplan" for Newbury town centre, being written by consultants (see article below). Plus (essential if local heritage and character are to be given due weight in the creation of this "masterplan"), they should have a chance to speak up for the character and buildings of Newbury by contributing to a not-yet-agreed Conservation Area Appraisal for the town centre.

Due to coronavirus, the Society has now cancelled speaker meetings for the rest of this calendar year, and, with no meeting in January, we hope to start the 2021 programme in February, meeting as usual on the second Thursday of the month. The first meeting planned is the postponed 2020 AGM; but, as with all such meetings recently, this will depend on circumstances at the time, and we will confirm details closer to the planned date. We hope that members will bear with us, and once again note the new contact details given in this Bulletin. Do get in touch with any news or views.

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## Newbury town centre "masterplan"

Consultants are being recruited to create a "masterplan" for Newbury town centre, as a guide to future development. West Berkshire Council is recruiting the consultants at an estimated cost of £125,000, and they are being asked to focus on the commercial, leisure and residential development of the town.

The masterplan is intended partly as an extension to the Newbury Vision 2026, but with more detail. West Berkshire Council's chief executive Nick Carter was quoted in the Newbury Weekly News "There was always a commitment to refresh the Vision and produce something that's a bit more detailed...." [NWN Aug. 13]



As publicised, the council is looking for a "specialist multi-disciplinary consultancy team to produce a supplementary planning document for Newbury town centre which addresses a series of specific challenges and takes advantage of the emerging opportunities to reposition the town's commercial, leisure and residential offer and ensure it continues to meet the needs of existing and future town users."

The consultants' role was advertised in August, and the deadline to submit tenders passed on September 8.

Although the original Vision paid lip-service to the character and heritage of Newbury, it contained no concrete proposals to protect them, and there is no mention of character or heritage so far in relation to the masterplan.

The whole of Newbury Town Centre is a conservation area, created from 1971 onwards, but it has never had the formal document known as an appraisal, needed to fully protect it. Calls have been made over ten years for the appraisal to be put in place, but essentially (when there has been a response) the council has pleaded poverty: that it does not have the resources to do it.

Now the need is urgent. The appraisal is needed either before the masterplan is drawn up, to help inform it; or as part of the work in the creation of the masterplan. Local architecture, heritage, history and character need to take their full place in anything which guides future planning for the town.

Newbury is still a town with character, in spite of the changes over recent decades; and if West Berkshire is looking at what draws people to Newbury, it needs to give that character a central role in the planning process. Having a "masterplan" with commercial themes which ignores the importance of local heritage will not do this.

# New planning system proposed for England



In August the government published proposals for a radically new planning system across England.

The government White Paper proposes that the public should lose its general opportunity to respond to individual applications. Instead, a scheme should be drawn up for each area, allocating land into one of three categories, growth, renewal and protected. If the land falls into the “growth” category, there would be an automatic presumption in favour of development going ahead.

In addition, a binding figure for housing development in each area would be set at national level. The government sees the system as a way of securing faster planning decisions, and says it will lead to more houses being built.

The White Paper, called *Planning for the Future*, suggests that the scheme for each area, a new form of “Local Plan”, should be created by councils, with input from local people; the key stages should take no more than 30 months to complete. “Local Plans should set clear rules rather than general policies for development,” says the White Paper [p. 20].

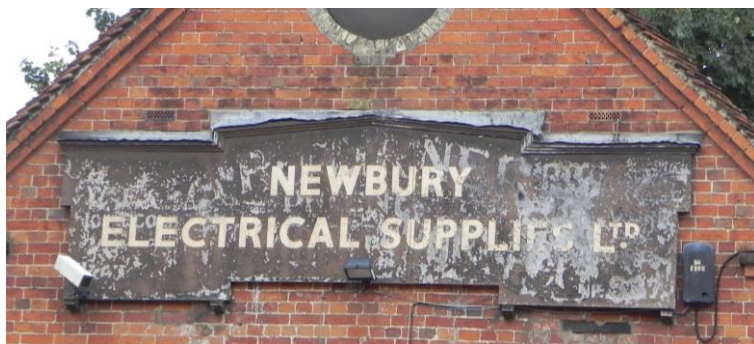
The proposals are complex and the White Paper runs to 84 pages, with additional proposals for “beautiful and sustainable places,” for infrastructure, and for developers’ contributions. There are also proposals to base the new system on the latest digital technology, and to make it visual and map-based.

There has been a range of responses:

- The Royal Town Planning Institute has said that the changes would require considerable extra resources for planning departments, and asked for guarantees that it would deliver affordable homes.
- The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is highlighting the risk of community voices being lost in the reorganisation, and, while it supports increased digitisation, emphasizes that this is not the same as increased democracy. It has launched a petition against the White Paper, saying “Ministers want to take decision-making powers away from communities and local councils, and hand them over to housing developers and Westminster officials.”
- The Town and Country Planning Association has launched a strong attack on the proposals, arguing forcibly that it is not the planning system which is to blame for the current housing crisis, highlighting instead a failure to invest in social housing.

In the White Paper, housing minister Robert Jenrick states “These proposals will help us to build the homes our country needs, bridge the present generational divide and recreate an ownership society in which more people have the security and dignity of a home of their own.” [p. 8]

The deadline for responses to the proposals is October 29.



Not within the normal definition of ghost signs (see article on next page), but the signboard on this building at 50 Bartholomew Street (originally a Phoenix Brewery building) has some ghost lettering on it. The building is expected to be converted to residential use (planning application 20/01775/FULD currently under consideration) and the board is unlikely to remain: the text looks as though it may relate to the business of A R (Arthur Richard) Turner, a plumber who was based hereabouts in the 1930s.

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## **THE NEWBURY SOCIETY – OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 2019/20**

President: Richard Benyon Vice President: Garry Poulson

### **OFFICERS**

Chairman: David Peacock 01635 524017

Treasurer: Chris Marriage

Secretary: Graham Smith 01635 580356 [newburysoc.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:newburysoc.secretary@gmail.com)

(also Membership Administrator, Bulletin Editor & Waterways Representative)

### **COMMITTEE**

Dr. Paul Bryant

Yolande Fothergill

John Handy (Trees and Landscaping Advisor)



# Ghost Signs – part of our heritage

Advertisements painted by hand directly onto the brickwork of buildings were once a common sight all over the country. The development of other forms of signage led to their decline but some still survive, often faded. These 'Ghost Signs' provide a window into the past and evidence of the craftsmanship that once went into their production. However, they are disappearing fast, often due to weathering but also as a result of property development. The History of Advertising Trust ([hatads.org.uk](http://hatads.org.uk)) has catalogued many, though by no means all.

Most members will be aware of the 'Povey & Wade' sign painted on the side (Kings Road West) wall of 55 Cheap Street and some may even remember the shop. The business was there between the 1920s and the 1970s or 1980s – it moved to Thatcham before eventually closing down.

If you look closely at the signage, you'll see that a reference to a previous business, Turk & Son, has been overpainted. Their name is also just discernible on the building to the rear (pictured below) that was later occupied by Marsh Engineering (the two companies do not appear to have been linked).



Others we're aware of within Newbury are on the front of the former Black Boys Hotel (62-63 Bartholomew Street, closed 1955, right above) and the gable end of the Park Street offices now used as the Conservative Party constituency base (below). There the remnants of an advert for Alphonse Cary, a music business that closed in the early 1960s, can just be made out (perhaps the current occupants would like to consider refurbishing it?). Coincidentally, those offices also feature a hoist that was made by Turk & Son; Turk & Son's name may also still appear on a few drain covers around the area – do you know of any? (The one photographed was in York Road until it was resurfaced in about 2017.)



Are you aware of any more ghost signs in or near Newbury? (There are some good examples on the A4 in Woolhampton but the village is outside the Society's remit, and there are a couple of modern refurbishments / replacements of painted signs where the businesses still exist – at Griffins Butchers, 2 Bridge Street and the Nag's Head, 91 Bartholomew Street – but these don't count!)



# The Changing Face of Newbury

Flats continue to go up across Newbury. The “urban village” continues to take shape between the railway station and Market Street, rising to six storeys at the southern end. A new multi-storey car park is also emerging here. Flats are also rising on the old Sterling Industrial Estate off Kings Road, a development which will include a new road and also lead to two-way traffic on the bridge taking Boundary Road over the railway. The flats on the Iceland/Pearl Building site at 11-15 Bartholomew Street are nearing completion, and members will be able to judge for themselves whether the Society was right (bearing in mind that this is near the heart of Newbury’s conservation area) in describing this design at application stage as “1970s shopping-precinct-on-a-mediocre-estate architecture.” Work has paused on new flats at 31-34 Bartholomew Street (the site of the old Primitive Methodist Church, opposite Market Street) and the developer appears to be exploring the possibility of adding an extra floor to the frontage.



Above: 11-15 Bartholomew Street



Right: Flats rise on the Sterling site

Below: Part of the "urban village" takes shape next to the railway station

Below Right: 31-34 Bartholomew Street



## Dates for Your Diary – 2021

(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 11<sup>th</sup> February, 7:30pm – AGM + Newbury in 2020

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

**Thursdays 11<sup>th</sup> March, 8<sup>th</sup> April & 13<sup>th</sup> May** – details to be advised: we hope to be able to reschedule the talks we had planned for April 2020 onwards for dates in 2021.