


 The Ipswich Society
NEWSLETTER

JULY 2004

ISSUE 156

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Editorial: Two Big Issues

This Newsletter contains the Society's responses to several important planning applications, but there's little doubt that the two biggest and most pressing Issues are the proposals for the Cranfield's Mill developments and the Council's forthcoming consultations about the future of arts and entertainments in Ipswich. At the time of writing (mid-June) it isn't clear how the political changes on the Borough Council will affect the Corn Exchange and Regent but, as I see it, the principles which I write about below remain the same.

Cranfield's and the multi-uses of the Waterfront

Pages 6-7 convey some of the Society's views about the Cranfield's development. I hope members will find this interesting even though I quote only parts of our very detailed response to this hugely ambitious scheme. The Society's long-held hope is that many mixed uses of these locations will produce a sustainable future for the Waterfront, which the prospective university premises will help to underpin. And the more people who live or work or enjoy themselves on the Waterfront the more it could link up with the town centre. There is still a danger that we could have two separate communities, and it's true that during the last few decades the docks did become more isolated. (Rather like my experience in Gloucester where I lived for 18 months in the 1950s and didn't even know the docks existed. I believe you couldn't make that mistake in Gloucester now.) However, this perception of the isolation of the Waterfront is gradually diminishing. But, can Ipswich ever have a fully joined up Town Centre / Waterfront while the Star Lane traffic says, "Not while I'm in the way"?

Arts and entertainment

My first hope is that the Borough Council's "consultation" means consultation. The Chief Executive, James Hehir, proudly refers to 300,000 people living within our immediate catchment area of some 15 miles - and that number is increasing quite fast. Such a conurbation surely needs the two different and complementary venues of the Corn Exchange and the Regent. It is indeed a crying shame that these venues are financially subsidised by only about one-sixth of that vast population. But for this very reason, Ipswich Borough Council should be devoting most of its energies to increasing its funding by making more time available and applying for grants, private funding, donors, creating trusts - anything rather than finding reasons for irrevocable closures or redistribution of resources. I say redistributions because one of the most simplistic current mantra is "spend money on people rather than on bricks and mortar". The bricks and mortar are essential if many of the people's activities are to continue.

A possible relocation of Ipswich Film Theatre is already being pursued quite separately, the earlier hope of moving to the Cranfield's site having been thwarted. If the Film Theatre does move, that could have either of two opposite implications for the Corn Exchange. It could free up the Corn Exchange, especially the Robert Cross Hall, for more frequent and possibly more lucrative uses, which at present can't often happen because of noise leakage into the Film Theatre. On the other hand, it could reduce the amount of opposition to closure of the Corn Exchange - which, in my opinion, would be short-sighted and very damaging.

Disposing of the Corn Exchange would represent the loss of a centrally located, transport accessible community facility, serving it is said some 80 organisations which regularly use it, a facility which

could never be replaced, even if the Council's income increases as the population increases and even if local government were to be radically reorganised.

So, my final hopes are that the Council will think long-term, take its time, and seek every possible means of obtaining external, extra funding for both our main arts venues to flourish.

But whatever views you hold as individual members of the Society, please consider conveying them to the Borough Council when public consultation begins.

I shall be very pleased to receive your contributions to the next Newsletter by 20 August.

NEIL SALMON 16 Warrington Road, Ipswich, IPI 3QU

Members' Social Evening

Garrett Memorial Hall, St Margaret's Church Centre, 1 April 2004

John Norman must really enjoy watching people puzzle over his superb photos of little corners of Ipswich - doors, roof-lines, sculptures. Why otherwise would such a busy man make so much time to explore the by-ways of our town with his camera? But there's no doubt his time is well spent. Members of the Society who come along to our social evenings clearly enjoy the challenge - and, more importantly, enjoy discussing the photos and places with others!

On this occasion, John had also provided a large set of photographs of architectural and other details from the wider county. These also evoked a lot of interest. And we were able to have a close look at models of the three architects' proposals for a foot bridge/cycle bridge across the dock. You may remember that the January Newsletter contained photographs of these models.

But the evening was essentially an informal one with time and space to chat, with some good food and drink, and Ron Vaughan's piano accompaniment. We hope to provide more opportunities for social gatherings in the future.

The slight disappointment was that only a few of the many newer members came along. Your committee is considering what else we could do to involve new members. We realise that many of you are quite happy to support the Society just by joining and receiving the Newsletter - and that's understandable. But there may be others who would like to do a little more and are not being given the right openings.

Chairman on Current Affairs

Summer is with us once again! As I write we learn that May has been one of the driest for many years - will the summer produce serious droughts?

Last month saw the AGM held again at Suffolk College and sponsored by the College. There was a good turnout and the evening was a great success with the usual superb catering by the College. (I overheard one person remark that he came mainly for the food and drink!) The speaker was John Lyall, the architect of the development at Cranfield's Mill on the Waterfront. There was so much interest and so many questions that we were somewhat late in finishing, and I'm afraid we kept the catering students beyond their finishing time. We hope to do better next year.

A massive scheme for the Waterfront

The proposals for Cranfield's Mill are, of course, a major development, and after prolonged discussion the Society's position has been made clear in our letter to the planners. (See the separate report in this Newsletter.) We strongly support the concept, the mixed uses, the open spaces and the wonderful new home for Dance East. We do, however, have reservations about the height of the main block. Although we realise that such a development depends critically upon the economics of it all, we do feel that further consideration should be given to the maximum height. What I am quite certain of is that when the scheme is finally built it will be a wonderful addition to our Waterfront and we shall be proud of it.

Also last month IBC held a prestigious meeting at the football ground about how it is tackling its housing needs. In the afternoon there was the opportunity to visit Ravenswood on the site of the old airport. In the morning there had been much discussion of the Government's policy on "affordable housing". I am still unsure that I have a clear definition of this, despite the speakers' efforts. It seems to me to be a purely relative term - housing which costs less than more prestigious developments and usually built by a housing association, perhaps on a partowned or gradually-owned basis. If one looks at the problem the other way round, however, and take a person on a salary of, say, £20,000 p.a. (the rate of very many people, particularly those in the public service), mortgage companies used to loan up to 3x annual income, which would be £60,000. Current prices of "affordable houses" are vastly more expensive than this.

Progress at Ravenswood

With this in mind I was most pleased to go on a tour of the Ravenswood scheme with John Stebbings, who is the Council's liaison man with the development, and the senior person with the firm doing the development. Whilst we were on the visit, I had in mind the possible development at Westerfield which will be about the same size. Ravenswood has both private and "affordable" housing - the latter built by a housing association - and I was very interested to see how the two kinds of properties compared and co-existed. The housing association chose to use the same builder, which certainly helped, and it was fascinating to see one part of the development where the two kinds of properties were separated and one part where they were intermingled. It was most gratifying to find that in many cases it was impossible to tell which was which.

Learning from Ravenswood

More generally, the layouts and finishes were pleasingly varied and there is a very welcome system of dealing with waste water in the development. Although The Ipswich Society objected strongly to the closure of the airport before an alternative site was found, I have to say that I was pleasantly surprised at the high standards of the Ravenswood scheme. If we come to develop the Westerfield site there are many ideas that should be copied and hopefully improved on. One decision which was made at an early stage and would certainly apply to Westerfield is to lay out the bus routes before building begins, so the prospective owners and tenants could see where the routes would run. I

would hope all of you who have not visited Ravenswood would do so. If there was demand we might even arrange a Society trip What do you think?

Tidying up our roads

At the AGM we asked for ideas about activities and campaigns. One idea is that the Society should have a campaign against street clutter - mainly road signs. The Committee is very keen on this and is considering such a campaign, initially in the town centre. Other towns have been very successful in such schemes. It would require carefully noting and photographing such signs as evidence to the appropriate body.

On a personal note, I have been so concerned at the recent spate of white paint on our roads that I have made enquiries at Borough and County level and discovered that they are not (as I feared) at the behest of Central Government but are purely home-grown! I have in mind particularly the rash of double broken white lines up the centre of roads with hatching between them. On right turns the point at which you should move to the centre is rigorously marked with more hatching. When I discussed this with the local official and suggested his paint budget was too generous, he remarked politely that I could always ignore them (which I usually do). It was very interesting, after this exchange, to learn that elsewhere, too, there are campaigns to rid our roads of all this clutter - some recent research claims to show that less clutter of this soil reduces accidents!

Let me finish by welcoming summer weather and hoping it is kind for our river trip on 13 July when I hope to meet many of you again.

JACK CHAPMAN

Convenient Bus Stops

Ipswich now has three Park and Ride routes operating from terminals established close to interchange points on the eastern and western by-pass A12/A14 roads. The Martlesham service makes intermediate stops at Ipswich Hospital, providing visitors with an alternative to parking on the hospital site, and also at St Helen's Church to serve staff and students at Suffolk College.

On reaching the centre of town the buses make a circuit of the main shopping and business areas with stopping places at frequent intervals, at each of which passengers can either alight or board for the return journey. The locations of these stops are:

- Museum Street/ Westgate Street
- Friars Street/ Queen Street
- Old Cattle Market/ St Stephen's Lane
- Upper Brook Street/ Butter Market
- and either Northgate Street/ Central Library (Bury Road and London Road services)
- or Great Colman Street/ Northgate Street (Martlesham service).

The London Road P & R service has additional stops at Princes Street/ Greyfriars to serve the local business area and the football ground. The Bury Road service has an additional stop at St Matthew's Street/ Berners Street.

Many of the town bus services and those from rural areas use all or part of the same town centre gyratory system so that passengers can choose where to get on or off depending on which part of

the town centre they are visiting. Previously most passengers had to go to Tower Ramparts terminus whether or not it was convenient. This considerable convenience for passengers is beginning to be more widely known and appreciated.

RUSSELL NUNN

Ambitions for Cranfields

The sheer scale and importance of these proposals mean that the Society has responded at some length. We feel sure that members will be interested to see quite a lot of what we've said.

"The Ipswich Society would like to congratulate the architect and developer, and IBC's planning officers, EEDA, the Arts Council and CABE in producing and shaping such an exciting and comprehensive set of proposals for the Waterfront It is not our intention to compromise the commercial viability of the scheme, rather to constructively suggest what is, and in our considered opinion, what is not acceptable in Ipswich. The proposed development is in a Conservation Area, will have an impact on Listed buildings including St Mary at Quay Church and should therefore have sympathy with its neighbours, particularly in terms of height, scale and massing."

We then make brief comments on the two areas north of Key Street, those around St Mary at Quay Church. One would include a public open space at the east end of the church. The other area, further east, could include a hotel where we would be concerned about car parking. We also express concerns about pedestrian access to the Waterfront from these two areas.

Going on to the proposals for the main Cranfield's Mill site, we say:

"The Ipswich Society is impressed with the quality and variety of materials proposed and the mixed uses planned. We particularly like the piazza and the opportunity afforded to businesses to face both externally on to the Waterfront and internally on to the square ... The retention of the colonnades is to be applauded and they will provide a focal point for lunchtime and evening activity ... We don't agree with the retention of the railway tracks. They are a health and safety hazard ... and in our opinion are nostalgia taken too far.

"The architect is keen to allow vehicles along the quayside, suggesting that they bring people, light and movement, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. The Ipswich Society takes a different stance and believes it is very important to reduce vehicles on the quayside, limiting access for deliveries during the working day. This will allow a cafe culture to develop with alfresco dining, particularly under the colonnades. The architect is proposing some modern and novel materials for the apartments fronting the piazza and after some discussion we applaud his choice...

"We are opposed to a 23 storey tower, and have further concerns about the scale of the 17 and 14 storey supporting structures in Foundry Lane. We feel that for this context a maximum height close to that of the existing silos is appropriate. Even if the proposed heights are reduced the fenestration is unsatisfactory and we would like to see alternative proposals ... Members have expressed to us spontaneously similar views in unequivocal terms. Previously several applications for buildings taller than the existing silos have been refused, including proposals for Paul's burnt-out maltings site, and the initial proposals for the Burton's site. We accept that each application should be reviewed on its merits and that the Waterfront can accept tall buildings, particularly adjacent to

open water but believe that this proposal is too high. It should also be noted that the tower is not adjacent to an open aspect, rather the narrow neck of water at the extreme western end of the dock. "It is important to consider the impact of the proposed heights from viewpoints in other parts of the town, from where the tower will draw the eye ... There is a certain ambience of the treelined horizon viewed from almost anywhere in Ipswich, and existing buildings, with very few exceptions, do not break the skyline, a townscape scale we can live with and live in.

"Wharfeside's proposals will create a massive development that has the potential to truly link the town centre and Waterfront ... In principle the scheme should progress. However, some of the details, and in particular the height of the taller buildings, need modification."

Major Planning Matters

Anglesea Road/Ivry Street, erection of 3-4 storey preparatory school

"The Society is delighted to see these entirely new plans for the Prep School on a new site; we feel that this is a much better solution than trying to expand Victorian houses in Henley Road. Overall we are impressed with the design of the new buildings. We are, however, concerned by the relative anonymity of the main entrance in Ivry Street. It is a sound architectural axiom that a fine building has an obvious entrance. On the other hand, the glass tower containing the staircase is over-emphasised and has the best views. We would like to see fresh thought given to this aspect of the design."

151 St Helen's Street, erection of 14 flats

"The proposal to replace the attractive 1930s garage, a two storey building with strong horizontals, with an interrupted three storied apartment block with pitched roofs is particularly badly thought out There is a failure to turn the corner into Palmerston Road and the elevation presented to St Helen's Street is unacceptable. This proposal should be refused on grounds of a design quality that is too poor for one of the main entrances to the town from the east."

16-20 Stoke Street, convert vacant retail premises into 12 flats/maisonettes

"These so-called plans should be rejected; there is no clear thought to the site layout and they are attempting to squeeze a quart into a pint pot on this site. They should give more care to regeneration in the area ... and that approach would prove more profitable as well as being more aesthetically satisfactory in the long run."

Bramford Lane, change of use from allotments (part) to public open space

"It is appreciated that a full consultation exercise has been carried out with local residents ... Provided representations of the residents are fully met - support."

Yarmouth Road, TA Centre, erection of 4 blocks of flats between 4 and 5 storeys high

"We have inspected the fresh application; ... access from Yarmouth Road, the provision of pathway and cycle track and the elevations have been improved. We now feel that planning permission should be granted, subject of course to the Council's officers' approval of details."

Crown Pools: new pay & display car park on existing lawn

"This scheme simply increases car parking spaces ... There is a massive multi-storey car park adjacent that is more than adequate for those who choose not to use sustainable transport into the centre of town. The lawn contributes to the open space aspect that is important to the setting of this fine building The Ipswich Society recommend refusal."

Former Christchurch Hospital: 37 residential apartments

"The scheme has merit ... The division into separate units has been designed with sympathy ..removal of portico and intrusive windows is to be applauded but further alterations to recent additions would be beneficial. In particular there is an opportunity to restore symmetry in number 61. [We]would welcome more trees on the front boundary even if this results in a loss of a car parking space .."

31 Stoke Street: 6 dwellings

"The Ipswich Society notes the considerable improvements made to the proposals but suggests it is still over-development of this site ... We are disappointed that the indicative elevations are twee and that there is no reasonable allowance for car parking..."

Spring Road former reservoir site: 24 residential apartments in 3 storey block

"This application is premature. What is required for the area of under-developed land north and south of Spring Road (mainly allotments) is planning guidance. We understand the Outline Permission was for 8 houses. This development for 24 units is considerably more demanding in terms of car parking, vehicle movements..."

Ipswich Co-operative, Carr Street: new entrance doors to no.36, new fascia rear elevation nos. 38-68

"[We] are disappointed by the aesthetic quality of work currently being carried out to the Carr Street elevation, in particular the automatic doors on the curved frontage at the junction of Cox Lane and Carr Street ... Although we accept that the rear elevation to Co-operative House is not as important as, or of similar quality to the front, these buildings form an important feature in the street scene, particularly the 1884 drapery store."

13 St Nicholas Street: alterations to form restaurant, & external alterations

"Bland, boring, featureless and typical of a national chain applying minimal standards to every restaurant they open ... [We] are particularly concerned with the street scene and the outlets from air conditioning and cooker extraction units ... [We] recommend that if approved there is a condition attached that prevents storage of wheeled bins in the adjacent lane."

Neptune Marina, car park south side of Coprolite Street

"This application appears to be for a hot food take-away, totally inappropriate and undesirable in this location. Whilst we are sure responsible boat owners will respect their environment, evidence suggests others do not, and this type of establishment generates noise, litter and the scattering of food waste which in turn attracts pests. We accept that the application is for a quality establishment but the business could be transferred to other styles of fast food take- away. Approval could set a precedent for other take-away outlets on the quaysides."

Neptune Marina Ltd, operational car parking on Orwell Quay

"Permission if granted must be on the strict requirement of limited time, and permission now should not be taken as permission for further 'operational requirements' (the restaurant under construction will, for example, require extensive car parking).

18 Badgers Bank, felling of sweet chestnut tree

"The Ipswich Society does not usually comment on tree preservation orders but we could not gather the rationale for the removal of this fine tree ... [We] recommend refusal."

Henley Road, telecommunications tower and base station

"The mast will be out of place because of the open aspect ... Masts of this type are better concealed on existing towers, aerials or tall buildings." [113C has refused permission.]

The outcome of previous planning applications

Co-op Bank, Princes Street alterations and moving ATM (April Newsletter). IBC refused application which would "seriously detract from the character and appearance of this well detailed neo-classical building in the central conservation area."

Burton's site, College Street proposed car park (in April Newsletter). Application withdrawn.

St Nicholas Church, convert into diocesan resource centre. IBC has approved conditionally. Burton's site, St Peter's Dock/Foundry Lane, 198 flats, commercial uses and car parking. IBC approved but no demolition until archaeological work done. St Helen's Street/Woodbridge Road/Orchard Street, 36 houses and flats. The Society criticised unimaginative design. IBC refused permission because "the design is of inappropriate standard for this prominent location adjacent to a conservation area and Listed buildings.

Art School for Technology

The School of Art in High Street, just above the Museum, was opened in 1934 with rooms around a two-story octagon with open balcony. An extension was planned but never built; on the north side you can see the concrete lintels in the blank wall and the toothing courses of brickwork on the comers. The whole complex has stood empty since 1997, having been replaced by the new School of Art and Design built on the main Suffolk College campus.

However, work is proceeding which will see some of the building back in educational use by the start of the academic year. Suffolk College with university partner UEA has won a bid for a New Technology Institute, one of 19 in the country. The facilities being created here will be the hub of the Suffolk Institute of Technology, with branches elsewhere in the county.

The Institute will provide a range of opportunities to develop computer skills, including Learn Direct, foundation degrees and an innovation lab where high-flyers can develop new systems, software and communication techniques. The octagon is being renovated to form an ideas exchange where staff and students can explore new technologies. Suffolk College is currently exploring further use of the building with neighbours and partners.

New Listed Buildings

It is very pleasing to know that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has acknowledged the importance of two more Ipswich buildings. The Church of St Mary at Stoke has been re-classified from Grade II to Grade I. The Department's very detailed Schedule refers to it as "A fine 14th-15th century church with an outstanding hammerbeam roof in the north aisle (formerly the nave). The 19th century rebuilding is mostly by Butterfield and there are good fittings and stained glass." St Mary at Stoke therefore joins St Margaret's and the Unitarian Meeting House as Grade I religious buildings in Ipswich.

In addition the DCMS has Listed for the first time as Grade II No. 121 London Road. This is described as "a little-altered small Regency villa which retains original fenestration and many finely detailed interior features." The Schedule points out that this area, known as "Mile End", was laid out in the early 19th century as a small isolated development of 16 houses on what was then the main London road, and the house is marked on the first available map, of 1847.