

Chairmans' Thoughts

I write this as Autumn turns to winter, the clocks have gone back and we look forward to the Christmas season and the end of 2023. It has been a difficult year in many ways with the economy flat lining and consequently both individuals and organisations short of money. At a local level this means that there are cut backs to Council budgets affecting service provision from street cleaning to toilets to grass cutting.

We held a successful Garden Party in August despite the weather driving most people indoors! We had a profitable auction for a bottle of House of Commons English Sparkling wine donated by our MP, Sally-Ann Hart for which many thanks. A number of people joined the Society at the party and we hope to see you in the Rye Town Hall for our Christmas Gathering on 8 December.

Paul Goring, Rye Town Crier, will open the Christmas Gathering in traditional fashion at 6.00pm, during the evening there will be a raffle for a couple of excellent prizes including a bottle of single malt whiskey. Entry includes a glass of wine and a mince pie, see enclosed notice.

I and all the Committee would like to wish you best wishes for Christmas and for 2024.

Colour Matters



Of all the issues that people approach me about, I think that colour schemes are among the most contentious. There is a misconception that no colours other than black or white are allowed, at the same time, it does not seem to be known that a change of colour on a residential building in the Conservation Area always requires planning permission. Being designated a Conservation Area means that changes to buildings including colours are most likely to need Planning Permission. As illustrated by the cartoon, taken from Private Eye, this is not merely a local

issue but changes permitted to buildings appearance within Conservation Areas are laid down by Parliament.

As the Conservation Society our prime objective is to ensure that the historic nature of the town centre is preserved in accordance with Conservation Area rules and thus we bring possible breaches of planning rules to the notice of the Rother Planners and enforcement staff. The granting of Conservation Area status has been one of the key ways in which our historic buildings have been protected. The Citadel (wholly within Rye's Conservation Area) is covered by an article 4 direction which it appears makes reference to painting of the exterior of a building. As such any change to the colour of the external decoration would require Rother planning permission if the property is not listed and if listed then listed building consent would also be required. Clearly the impact of changes affecting the appearance of the Conservation Area is the key factor.

New Housing Development

There has been little large scale housing development within the Rye Parish since the opening of Valley Park. Where there have been new buildings, they have been small scale developments such as the Martello houses on the riverside and the apartments on the site of the Horizon Club in Ferry Road. There are sites which were identified by the Rye Neighbourhood Plan as suitable for development which could provide a larger number of units.

One such is behind the Queen Adelaide Pub, between Tillingham Avenue and the railway line referred to as the Lower School Site. Planning Permission was granted in 2019 for a housing development which will shortly lapse, but we understand that proposals for a revised scheme are likely to be submitted to Rother for approval. The Society opposed the previous scheme which involved a raising of the overall ground level and reducing the number of trees screening the railway. There were also reservations about the height of the properties and the impact on neighbours. Finally we were concerned at the lack of any social housing for local people. We shall look constructively at the latest proposals.

A second site which could provide much needed housing is the Tilling Green site around the Community Centre. Planning Permission was given for development but the costs associated with building on the flood plain proved too difficult to overcome to make any return. There has been no news of any further progress.

A smaller site which has recently received Planning Permission is on the Rye Yacht Club land owned by the Environment Agency but leased by the Rye Partnership. A mixed development of housing and commercial buildings has been approved which generally were considered an improvement on the existing run down units. There is still some concern about the impact on the historic Ferry Cottage which sits at the entrance to the site.

Finally there are two other sites that could produce significant numbers of housing units, the land west of Winchelsea Road and the Freda Garnham school site off New Road. Both sites suffer from being on a flood plain which significantly increases the cost of any development and it seems that there will be a long wait before we see any actual building work.

Committee Meetings

The Committee meets every month to consider planning applications and general conservation matters. If you have any issues you would like us to consider then please get in touch. Recent topics we have had raised include the increasing number of neon lights in displays outside shops and cafes, the number of A Boards on the pavements impeding pedestrians, the poor state of some properties, including listed properties in town and as mentioned above some inappropriate colour schemes.

Sometimes our wish for conservation does not fit readily with other objectives. For example there are no doubt particular difficulties in keeping old buildings warm and maybe there is a case for being less strict about secondary glazing which has been rejected in a number of cases but clearly is still being installed. It seems to us it should be allowed where there is no impact on the external appearance.

Membership Subscriptions

Just a reminder for those who are annual members and who pay by cash or cheque their annual subscription for 2024 is due from January 1st. The Committee are grateful for your ongoing support and loyalty. Membership forms are available on our web site www.ryeconservationsociety.org

Subs remain at £6 for a single person or £10 for joint membership. Could you please drop the cash or cheque (payable to Rye Conservation Society) to Andy Stuart, the Society's membership secretary at: Little Orchard House, 3 West St, Rye TN31 7ES or hand it in at the Christmas Gathering.

Alternatively you can pay us by bank transfer, Sort Code 30-90-28, Account Number 00710394