

From the Editor

2020 has been a year in which we have learned many things about our community and the importance of working together. Friends have found new ways to keep in touch. Businesses have had to think outside the box. Most of us have learnt to use Zoom, whether we like it or not. It has been a year of learning and change. There have been exciting developments such as the progress on the Assize Court and St Mary's Church projects.

Independent traders in Devizes have got together and signs pointing out that 'Devizes is Open' have appeared throughout town. In August, we were able to take advantage of the Eat Out To Help Out initiative and in early September, we enjoyed indieDAY with its farmer's market and special promotions in many shops.

As Christmas looms, it will be important to continue to support our shops, cafes, restaurants and pubs as they struggle to keep going. There is very little that you can't get in Devizes from alcohol to curtains, pet supplies to woodburners, ethical clothing to car accessories and compost to jewellery. We have the brilliant Devizes Books which has kept going throughout and offers the sort of service that you will never get from Amazon. We are lucky that we have very few empty shops. Let's keep it that way.

2021 will, hopefully, be a year in which we can start to get back to normal, whatever that is. Let's not forget what we've learned in 2020. We should be proud of our town and the way that we have reacted to everything that has been thrown at us. Long live Devizes!

Philippa Morgan

Land at Coate Road - new proposals

A public consultation



A map of the proposed development

Not unexpectedly, Devizes Town Council has recently received a letter from Pegasus Planning Group with the news that they are preparing a planning application for outline planning permission for the development of land at Coate Road Devizes for housing. The letter goes on to say that before the planning application is finalised for submission to Wiltshire Council, they are seeking the views and comments of the local community.

Some of our readers will remember that a previous planning application for this site was dismissed by Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in October 2014 after a long and difficult local campaign. Claire Perry, our MP at the time, our county and town councillors, the members of the Neighbourhood Planning team and many local people were involved in the successful campaign.

The site for the proposed development is to the north east of Devizes, immediately to the north of Coate Road and to the south of the Kennet and Avon Canal. The new proposal provides for around 255 residential units, with dwellings fronting the canal. The 2013 application was for 350 dwellings, but history suggests that, once outline permission has been granted, the numbers might well be increased.

The Trust objected to the previous application on several grounds, but most importantly we pointed out that the application was not within the former Kennet District Council's designated area for Devizes development nor was it within

areas proposed for development in the emerging Wiltshire Council Core Strategy (CS).

It would have been an extension of the continuous urban area of Devizes onto outlying greenfield areas and would bring the outlying village of Coate closer to incorporation into the Devizes urban area. It remains the case that the area involved is not within the Devizes Neighbourhood Plan.

The Trust Committee will be considering our response over the next few weeks. We urge you to look at the website which contains more detail about the new application and is available here

<https://www.coateroaddevizes.co.uk/>

You can send comments to

coateroaddevizes@pegasusgroup.co.uk

Please note that the date for comments has now been extended to 11th December 2020. We would appreciate any views you have on this very important planning application.

A leaflet was distributed by Pegasus to addresses close to the site. The Trust has put a copy on our website; go to

<https://tinyurl.com/CoateRoad2020>

If you don't have access to the internet, you might be able to ask a friend or family member to print out the leaflet for you.

Details of the 2013 application can be found on Wiltshire Planning website

<https://tinyurl.com/CoateRoad2013>

Devizes Between The Wars

Remembered by Jim Page

Following our article about the town criers in the last Trust News, we have received the following memories from Jim Page, now of Bradford-on-Avon.

Having been born and brought up in Devizes in 1930 I remember after Mr Dowse retired a bench was bought with a small metal label on the back in his memory. It was set up, together with one for my parents, William and Mary Page, outside what was then Handel House, a significant piano and music shop. My parents' bench was later moved to an area by a secondhand bookshop off the Little Brittox, I don't know what happened to Sidney Dowse's bench.

On another matter from the previous Trust News you asked for any photos of sub post offices. I can't provide photos but have strong memories of Townsends post office, having lived in Mary's Cottage opposite the Black Horse pub. It was run by Derek and Ralph Townsend under their father whose name escapes me, together with their sister Audrey. The last collection (this would be prewar) was 6.0pm. I would often rush round at about 5.55pm to post for my father to be greeted by "Them that's nearest is always last!"

We lived immediately opposite the Black Horse and one day my older brother, aged about 14 noticed smoke coming from the pub. He promptly phoned the Fire Brigade. The pub owner Mr. Eden was cross because he said he could put the fire out, and didn't like the publicity as he was a prominent councillor at the time.

With regard to the bench in memory of my parents, it was labelled William and Mary Page residents of Devizes 1918-1981. They came to Devizes newly married at the end of the war when my father was severely wounded losing both legs, and my mother was the last to die in 1981.

Jim Page. Now in Bradford on Avon.

Thank you Jim, we really enjoyed reading your story!

Do you have memories of Devizes? We would love to hear from you. Write to the address on page 4.

Air Quality

An update from Philippa Morgan, who represents the Trust on the Devizes Air Quality Steering Group

One of the benefits of Covid 19 has been the improvement in air quality as people have driven less and flights have reduced drastically in number.

In the Devizes area, we are now in Band 1 of the banding system approved by the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP). This means that the effects of air pollution in Devizes are unlikely to be noticed even by those who are sensitive to air pollution.

It is obviously good news for those with heart and lung diseases, including asthma, and it means that we should be able to enjoy outdoor activities without worrying about its effects on our health.

The challenge that we face is for the level of air quality to remain low when travel restrictions are relaxed and there is greater freedom to travel.

The Devizes Air Quality Steering Group

has met on Zoom during 2020 and will be responsible for local implementation of the latest Wiltshire Air Quality Strategy as it develops.

Some of the challenges we face as a county are the higher than average car ownership due to the region's rural nature, the need for more housing and economic growth and our poor access to public transport.

The Devizes Action Plan which was written in 2015 is now due for an update. Some of the aims of the Action Plan have been achieved with improvements to the towpath, support of cycling routes and greatly increased home deliveries by supermarkets.

The Steering Group will review the action plan in coming months with a view to setting objectives and targets for the next five years.

Devizes Heritage Open Day 2020

A day like no other!



Visitors To The Assize Court on Heritage Open Day

In the August 2020 edition of Trust News, we announced that we had commissioned a project to digitise part of the Devizes Town Trail. The first part of the project was completed in time for us to launch it at the Devizes Heritage Open day on 19th September. You can look at it here:

<https://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/devizes-town-trail/>

The Open day also featured a public outdoor exhibition at the rear of the Devizes Assize Court.

More than 150 people attended and the resulting feedback was very positive. If you weren't able to be there and would like to find out more about the emerging plans, you can do so here:

<https://devizesassizecourt.org.uk/our-ideas>

The Planning White Paper

The Trust's response

The Trust has recently responded to the Government's consultation process. This is a summary of the comments we made:

In the Trust's view, spatial planning should be primarily a function of local government, with most policies and decisions taken locally, by a local democratic process. Central policy and decision making should be limited to setting a consistent framework, setting strategic scale and distribution of development, and avoiding inconsistencies and anomalies (eg postcode lottery).

It is crucial that important decisions on the sustainable development of our cities, towns and countryside are taken democratically, and as far as possible, locally. Democratic accountability is more important than speed.

We support the Paper's focus on design and quality, but the proposals seem disjointed, rather than offering a coherent strategy. Energy efficiency should be a key objective of the drive to improve design and quality.

This objective should be included in an update/upgrade of the Building Regulations. It is likely to bring better design and better materials with it.

It would be a mistake to break the link between development and infrastructure. Although there are administrative advantages in treating the infrastructure levy as a flat-rate tax, it is important that communities see particular developments providing individual items of infrastructure and

affordable housing. We need more housing, but it should be in better, more sustainable locations (where jobs are) and a better mix, determined chiefly by affordability.

Planning should encourage the selection of genuine strategic locations for growth (eg Swindon), and discourage the present practice of 'smearing' housing development across smaller towns (like Devizes).

The process should be driven by coherent spatial strategies, not by 'predict and provide' inertia. We need a proper democratic process to identify 'growth', 'renewal' and 'protection' places.

We accept that household projections are still the 'least bad' basis for housing strategies. But they need to be moderated at the local level, particularly to relate better to the distribution of jobs, and to take better account of affordability.

We conclude that there are some good and some not-so-good proposals. It is all rather unfocused, and looks more like a wish-list than a strategy. Difficult decisions will be needed as the reforms move forward.

The government should make sure that 'build better' does not lose out to 'build quickly'. The reforms will need a major new Planning Act.

Incidentally, we note that the Government is proposing to reinstate national top-down targets, ten years after Eric Pickles announced that he was scrapping them on 6 July 2010!

STOP PRESS: St Mary's Church

Further to our story on page 4, as we go to print, we have heard that the St Mary's Trust has been given planning permission for Wiltshire Council for the project to go ahead.

Approval has been given subject to conditions which will ensure that the significance of the building and the conservation area are protected.

We are delighted that the project can now move to the next stage.

More details about the conditions can be seen here:

https://www.stmarydevizetrust.org.uk/images/st_marys_church_decision_notice.pdf

Museum News

A selection of forthcoming events

At the time of writing, Wiltshire Museum is closed due to the lockdown which is due to come to an end on 2nd December.

The Museum will be holding a number of online events. Details can be found on their website:

https://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/whats_on/

Bookings and enquiries:
www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk

Or call 01380 727369

**You can now search the
Museum's Collections
database online**

www.wiltshireheritagecollections.org.uk

The Devizes Assize Court Project; an Update

Following a nationwide competition which attracted many high-quality submissions, the Assize Court Trust has appointed Purcell, an award-winning architectural practice based in Bristol.

Purcell are developing ideas for the restoration and adaptation of the historic Assize Court as well as planning a new extension fronting onto the Kennet and Avon Canal. The brief for the architects outlines requirements for exhibition galleries, café, shop and museum storage as well as community spaces, including meeting rooms and a large event and lecture space.

Additional work will be undertaken to identify how the building will be used for education, as a venue for local people for functions and perhaps weddings, and for tourists who can learn about the history of Wiltshire and the Assize Court itself as they sit in the very place in which trials for the misdeeds of some of its citizens took place.

It is intended that this regeneration will help to put Devizes on the map as an important destination for tourists.

St Mary's Church Project

An update



Since the last edition of Trust News, we have managed to reach an agreement with the St Mary Devizes Trust that the refurbishment of the church's two sets of Grade II listed gates will be included in the development project. We were concerned that the gates had not been specifically included in the project, and we have now been assured that they will be dealt with as part of the overall scheme.

The reason for our concern about the gates can be seen in the photographs above and below. It is high time that they were given a rubdown and a coat of paint, at the very least!



Dates for your diary

There will be no Christmas Social this year. The Trustees wish you and your families a Happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.



Seating In The Market Place

A welcome addition to the street scene



An attractive and useful feature

If you have strolled through the Market Place over the last few months, you will have seen the new outdoor seating near the Estcourt Fountain.

This has been installed by Devizes Town Council in response to the need for social distancing and, particularly, the need for people to be able to meet friends or family outdoors.

The area has become very popular,

particularly during the summer and has been a great option for a meeting place.

It has clearly shown that the Market Place provides a very valuable outdoor space and the Trust would be very happy for this to be expanded further.

It is clear as we come to the end of 2020, that there will continue to be a need for outdoor seating even when Covid 19 becomes a distant memory.

Seat makes critics fume

TRAFFIC fumes will drive people away from a new town centre seat, critics have claimed.

Last Tuesday a circular wrought-iron and wood seat was placed in Devizes round a birch tree near Budgens at the junction of Sidmouth, Maryport, Monday Market and Sheep Streets.

"It's a lovely seat but I can't think of anybody who's going to sit there with all the traffic coming round," said Jenny Harrison, of Roundway Gardens.

"When I first saw it I exploded with laughter. Nobody's going to take a breather crossing that bit of road. The pollution level must be extremely high."

Mrs Harrison said the money would have been better spent on recreational parks.

The seat is part of the county council's general refurbishment of the Monday Market Street area which includes traffic calming and diverting measures.

A similar seat is planned for the area outside the nearby post office.

Devizes town clerk Julian MacDonald said the decision to site the seat at the crossroads was taken jointly by the town, district and county councils.

He said he did not believe traffic would be a problem and added: "The volume of traffic is substantially reduced since the refurbishment scheme has been implemented."



HEALTHY SPOT? Devizes student Lucy Bland tries out the new seat outside Budgens

From The Archive

It was ever thus

This article is from The Devizes Gazette & Herald, April 13th 1995. The seat in question is outside Sainsbury's (Budgen's at the time) and the article notes that the area is subject to heavy traffic and pollution.

It has become a popular spot for weary shoppers, suggesting that the traffic has not put them off!

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