



# Newsletter January 2019



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## GUILDHALL WALK

We all thought that the pedestrian underpass beneath Barclays Bank on Cathedral Square was a public right of way. So not surprisingly there was a fair amount of indignation when Barclays erected fencing across it (superceded by gates). Whilst we understood their concern to control antisocial behaviour we did not want the public status of the path to be threatened. Our David Jost therefore made application, supported by some 39 users who testified to using the route unhindered for many years, for the route to be included within the Definitive Map of Rights of Way. This was by way of a 'Public Footpath Modification Order' which the City Council helpfully issued to confirm the path's legal status. However, Barclays objected to the Order. This triggered a formal public inquiry whose chair, an inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate, would decide the issue.

The Inquiry was held on 17<sup>th</sup> October. Peter Lee led for the Society ably advised by member Peter Beasley, and we had the valuable witness testimonies from Duncan Hallam, Kem Mehmed, Peter Slinger, Peter Waszak, Andrew Wilcox and Toby Wood.

Unfortunately, Barclays were able to produce both witness and written evidence demonstrating that the path had been chained off occasionally and this was sufficient to establish that no public right of way had been established.

Therefore the inspector declined to confirm the Order and the route remains one that can be closed off. We hope that Barclays will do no more than close it at night, and recognise what a valuable facility this is for the public including their own customers.



## NORTH WESTGATE

You wait for thirty years for a redevelopment plan for North Westgate and two come along at once. The comprehensive scheme by Hawksworth Securities has been around for several years and in its latest form was approved in outline planning form by the City Council in November. It covers the street block between Queensgate and Bright Street and included in the proposals are a large hotel, up to six storeys of offices in a number of blocks, some retail/restaurant units, a food hall a health centre and up to 350 apartments. There will be a basement level car park to serve the whole development. Servicing of shops and offices would be done from the attractively landscaped 'pedestrian' streets. Somewhat controversially there will be a 24 hour ban on cycling in these streets. All bike trips will have to do around the edges of the site. All the architecturally significant buildings within the site are to be retained including the Westgate Church and Brewery Tap. The application was granted approval by the Planning and Environmental Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> November without amendment. Bearing in mind the long gestation period of this proposal and that it follows a 2015 outline approval for a very similar scheme, with the exception of the deletion of the multi-screen cinema, the debate by the councillors was not a prolonged affair.

The rival scheme has been brought forward by the City Council itself and is at a much earlier stage in its formulation. Only limited detail is available to us but it would appear to cover the same site and will contain a similar variety of building uses with the omission of the food hall and no indication of car parks and servicing. One detail it does show is the Brewery Tap demolished and relocated to Westgate Church!

## OUR ASPIRATION – A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

The City Council's plan is part of a package of proposals announced in November for the city centre in a concept document titled, 'Our Aspiration-a Framework for Development'

Peterborough City Council have commissioned local firm Landscape Design Associates (LDA) and Barker Storey Mathews to advise on the potential for development of a number of sites in the city centre. What they have come up with is a vision of how the city centre could look and feel in thirty years' time. Half a dozen sites have been selected to demonstrate how Peterborough could fulfil its aspirations into the middle of the twenty-first century.

Some of the sites are owned entirely by the City Council. The largest of these is what we know as the Embankment, which stretches from the Nene to Bishops Road/Fengate and from the Lido to Frank Perkins Parkway and includes the Regional Pool, Running Track and a number of surface car parks. The Framework document is big on images but short on words but it would seem to be envisioning the whole site being devoted to a University Campus and an Arena. The Arena would be a multi-purpose music venue containing an iconic riverside performance building. Regrettably missing from the lavish images is any sign of our illusive bridge across to Fletton Quays and our other iconic performance space the Posh Stadium. The smaller Council owned site is the covered market which is earmarked for redevelopment as 'a vibrant incubator business zone', start-up offices and workshops, to the rest of us.

Rivergate will become the new home for small and start-up traders. There are images in the Framework giving an impression of a traditional northern town market hall. The affect of relocating the market would not only be an improvement in the quality of the market experience; it would also help to create a shift in the retail 'centre of gravity' moving it slightly southwards towards Bridge Street. This could be seen as a logical move for three reasons; Rivergate needs a boost, the Fletton Quays scheme and potential University development will be accompanied by a massive increase in footfall in the areas on the riverside.

As mentioned earlier North Westgate is also included and described as 'the Central Business District' where a 'new way-lifestyle' can be enjoyed, where one will be able to live, work and flourish. Strongly connected to this reborn inner city area would be a revamped gateway to the city at the Station Quarter. This might involve an extension of the ticket office and a new civic plaza enclosed by Waitrose, the station and the Great Northern Hotel. This plaza would lead people across Bourges Boulevard into north Westgate. There is no recognition of the long held aspiration to create a west entrance to the station from the Midland Road side. Not included in the Framework but reported in the press is the possibility of demolition of the Great Northern Hotel which the Society has strongly resisted in the past.

One final aspiration to note is Riverside Park. Recognition that the river is a great asset which is should be brought into use to link the city centre to the vast range of facilities for leisure and relaxation in Nene Park including the freshly mooted national standard climbing centre, named the 'Beacon'.

In his Peterborough Telegraph column on 6<sup>th</sup> December, City Council leader, John Holdich, invited public comment and directed us to the council's website where the Framework would be published within the week. At the time of writing this is yet to appear. The Civic Society will, of course, to offering its opinion and should you wish to make comments through us please get in touch.



## KIOSKAGEDDON

Planning appeals have been made to the Secretary of State against the City Council's refusal to grant Prior Approval (a kind of simplified planning permission) to ten Solar Powered Telephone Kiosks in the city centre. The kiosks proposed are in Bridge Street, Long Causeway, Hereward Cross, Church Street, Cathedral Square and Cumbergate.

All the applications were refused by the City Council for four reasons:

- The kiosk would add to street clutter which would interfere with numerous activities which enhance public enjoyment of the streets.
- They are sited on important desire lines of pedestrian movement.
- They would not preserve or enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area.
- The kiosks would interfere with visibility for CCTV.

These reasons for refusal echo, in greater detail, our own comments and objections to the applications. The kiosk applications were submitted by Infocus Public Networks Ltd under the Prior Approvals procedure of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, which means that approval is, in fact, granted by this piece of legislation and the local planning authority can refuse permission only with respect to the siting and appearance being appropriate to the locality. The stance of the City Council is to be applauded in refusing the applications.

The appeal is being dealt with by an exchange of written statements and our previously made objections will be taken into account by the Planning Inspectorate. Closing date for further representations is 4<sup>th</sup> January. As it stands PCS does not intend to change or add to our original objections.

## BRITISH SUGAR, OUNDLE ROAD

Along with the national Twentieth Century Society, we made strong objections to a planning application for the demolition of the award winning Ove Arup designed office HQ of British Sugar, part of a scheme for a Lidl Foodstore and residential development. There were over sixty individual objections to the application on a very wide range of matters regarding; damage to existing shopping centres at Sugar Way and Orton Centre, traffic, lack of open space, too many houses and flats, overlooking existing homes, inadequate consultation as well as our objection on loss of a significant landmark building.

At the City Council's Planning Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> December, the application was refused despite a recommendation to permit by the PCC officers. Your chairman made a heartfelt plea to the committee to refuse permission in order to retain the Arup office, or at least the glass box part but in the event the sole reason for refusal is that it does not conform to policy regarding affordable housing. The applicants offered 10%, negotiated up to 15% by the planning officer, but the committee were not persuaded and are insisting on the full 30% as per Local Plan policy. Clearly affordable housing is a vital issue but we were disappointed that architectural quality played no part in the decision especially as we understand that there are examples elsewhere of Lidl stores being housed in reused buildings.

The refusal provides more time to seek action to protect the building. We will be investigating the steps we could take to get a stay to the demolition but without the support of the City Council, action to secure Listing is a very long shot. Yet again another notable part of the City's industrial heritage is likely to be lost; particularly significant as this building is the last reminder of the sugar refining industry in the city.

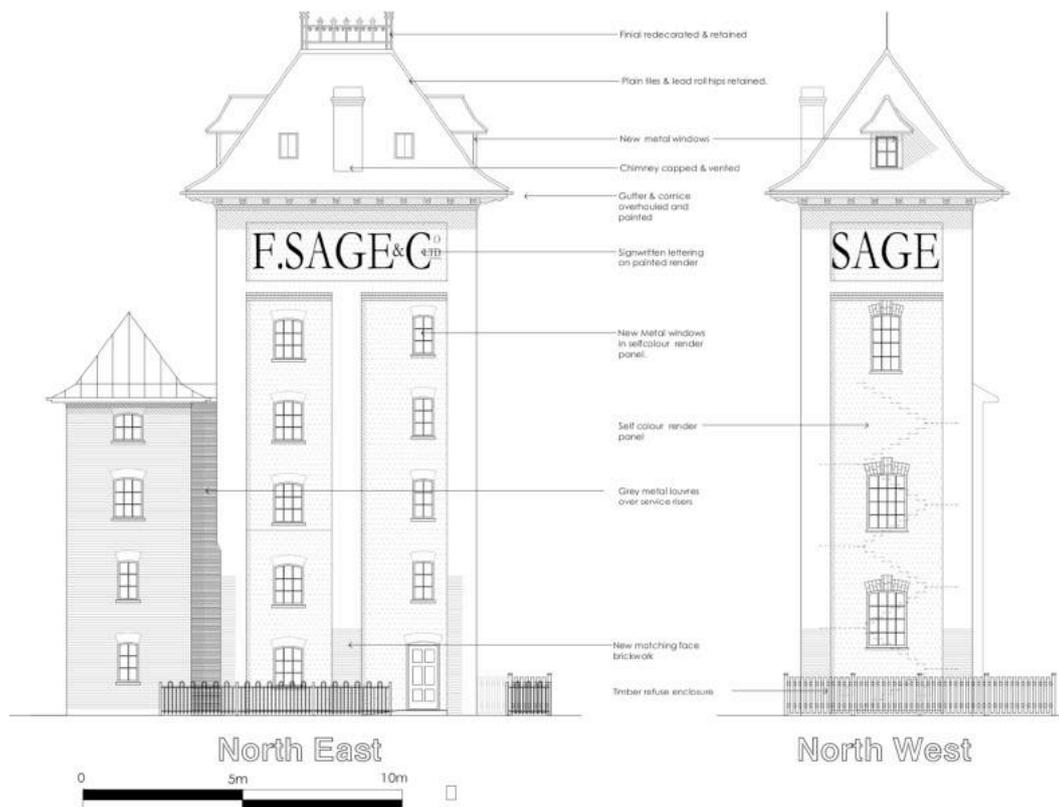


## SAGES TOWER PROGRESS

The Sages water tower in Walton is a landmark for travellers coming south on the East Coast main line. It fell into disuse along with the remainder of its factory site in 1985. The factory had manufactured shop-fronts from 1910, (e.g. D'Arcy's in Westgate), aeroplanes during WWI, munitions in WWII, and was part of Perkins Engines until 1985. Despite its fascinating history neither the Tower nor the factory qualified to be on the national list of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest. So whilst Westleigh Developments acquired the site and built 117 houses on most of it, they wanted to demolish the Tower. The Civic Society pressed for its retention and inclusion in the City Council's list of Buildings of Local Importance and was successful.

The tower was sold in 2014 to the present owners, Azar Iqbal and Mohammed Amjad. At that time our member Kem Mehmed met the new owners with suggestions for how the tower might be brought into residential use. We are delighted to see that they have now submitted a scheme closely related to Kem's proposals (below). The four apartments proposed over its seven floors make good use of the building, even, it seems, retaining the Sage name.

We hope that the conversion works take place soon to initiate a new lease of productive life for this unique building.



## LOTTERY WINNERS

The Society's annual Lottery was drawn at the December meeting. The lucky winners were as follows:

£60	John Westcombe
£50	Kem Mehmed
£40	Martha Powell
£30	Rex and Anne Birchenough
£20	June Baker
£20	Marcus Horrell

*Thanks to everyone who entered the lottery which raised £242 for Society funds.*