



# Newsletter December 2020

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Dear members and friends,

2020 has without doubt been the most challenging of years. It has been a time when ordinary activity has been put on hold, not just for individuals and families but for societies such as our own.

On behalf of Peterborough Civic Society I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Let us all hope that, in 2021, we can get back to normal and meet again at our regular meetings and summer visits.

In the meantime, we need to have our AGM on 11<sup>th</sup> January followed by Stuart Orme's talk on Oliver Cromwell. This will have to be a virtual gathering via Zoom so we are enclosing the material for that meeting. The link for joining that meeting is at the foot of the agenda.

David Turnock  
Chairman

## UNIVERSITY GO-AHEAD

We were pleased to see Phase 1 of the new Anglia Ruskin University development off Bishops Road receive its planning approval on 12<sup>th</sup> November. A fine three-storey building, it will make a positive contribution to the urban landscape without dominating its sensitive locality within sight of the Cathedral (see computer-generated image). The 5m high lanterns proposed for its roof concerned the Conservation Officer (and some of us) over their effect on views of the Cathedral. These have been replaced with a single rooftop structure running the length of the building at a much-reduced height. A construction start will be imminent.



*Original design showing roof-top lanterns, now removed*

## THE FUTURE OF THE EMBANKMENT

Whilst keen to welcome the start of the long-awaited University project, back in April we publicised our concern that no overall Master Plan had been drafted for the Embankment as a whole. We were therefore pleased to see that the City Council included the request for funding for such a plan in the Town Fund bid to government. That has turned to concern that part-funding for such a plan is being provided by the owners of PUFC who have a major interest in



Photograph, with stadium image added, from 'Peterborough Matters' website

ensuring that a replacement stadium is incorporated on the Embankment. As the brief for the Master Plan has not been published, those of us with concerns that the massive size of the proposed stadium is likely to destroy important views of the Cathedral and generate massive vehicular congestion are left wondering; Is anyone asking the question, "Can the Embankment and the City centre really accommodate such a stadium?". This, combined with the hype coming from the PUFC owners and the leader of the City Council suggests that an Embankment Stadium is all but a done deal. Yet if ever there was a case for some town planning to be entirely led and funded by a public body rather than private interests this is most certainly it.

## WOODLANDS AT CASTOR

Woodlands, the former Pearl Sports centre at Splash Lane Castor, is due to be converted into 24 assisted living units and a care home. The Society was approached with a suggestion that the building ought to be placed on the statutory list as of Historic or Architectural interest. Although not an obvious candidate, it displays some good Arts and Crafts revivalist features and was designed by Chapman Taylor Partners, the architects of the slightly later Pearl Centre at Lynch Wood which has recently been listed. Following a check by our own historic buildings specialist, the Society decided to make an application to list it. The application was turned down by Historic England, but the process flushed out some points of interest.

We were reminded that Pearl's presence in the City dated from 1973 when they moved their computer centre to Thorpe Wood. The Sports Centre was completed in 1991 and helped to attract some 2200 employees to their major relocation complex at Lynch Wood, now on the statutory list.

We were reminded that the criteria for listing buildings less than 30 years old requires exceptional scrutiny. Whilst Woodlands is 'competently laid out and well finished with high quality facing materials..... it does not appear to be innovative in terms of planning, and the historical references are not incorporated with a great deal of inventiveness, originality or wit..... Thus it doesn't meet the very high level of architectural quality that a building of this age would need to demonstrate to be listed'

The building is however of local architectural and historic interest and no doubt will find its way onto the local list. This, for an owner, is a less onerous designation, but ensures that careful consideration is given to its retention.

## THE TOWNS FUND BID

Peterborough was one of the first tranche of towns selected to bid for some funding for capital investment. The Society was involved with Council officers in the final stages of bid submission and in late October we were delighted to hear that the Council has been offered up to £22.9m.

It is intended that, in broad terms, this money will be used to boost regeneration, sustain jobs, improve connectivity and stimulate economic growth and, the Government states will *'lay the groundwork for low carbon living, supporting healthy lifestyles and encourage enterprise and innovation'*. The five workstreams (Riverside development, including a pedestrian bridge over the Nene, for which we have previously lobbied, new/improved cultural attractions, Station Quarter access, Enterprise and skills infrastructure and green initiatives) each have several projects with the potential to revitalise some of our major development areas and cultural assets.



The Civic Society will continue to support the implementation of Peterborough's Town Investment Plan, and seek to ensure that, wherever possible, the local community is involved in the decision-making process.

Our concern, and it is now more serious than ever, is how these investments and the City's services as a whole can be supported by the necessary revenue funding to pay for staff salaries etc. Behind the offer of new capital funds, the relentless campaign of successive governments to cut local authority spending has continued. In attempting to make a viable budget for next year many Councils, including ours, have reached a crunch point.

## NORTH WESTGATE



We are pleased to have been invited to a meeting with Hawksworth, the potential developers of this area north of Queensgate. It is not an enviable time to be planning a development. In previous times it was expected that a predominantly retail development would be led by a major department store. Then Marks and Spencer was to be the 'anchor'. Then a multiscreen cinema, until Queensgate stole the lead. And now what? Clearly thinking is now fluid and creative. And some truths are clear. The only way a major office scheme, for instance, could work is if there is a pre-letting. (It is telling that the only office scheme now under construction in the city is the

Government Hub building in Fletton Quays.) But there is no shortage of creative thought going into how to create a community with some vitality, with residential as one, but only one, of the potential elements. Our idea of a Westgate House Market Hall seems to have hit the buffers, so it would be good to see a modern international cuisine food hall and a quality general market incorporated.

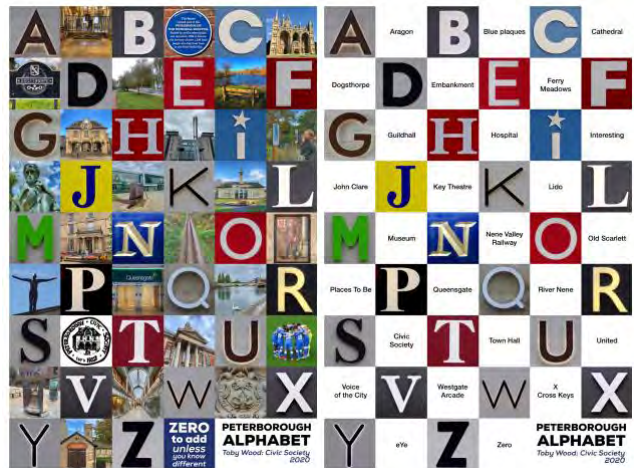
## BLUE PLAQUES



As many of you now know we completed the latest phase of our Blue Plaques project earlier this year. The Society has now installed a total of 36 plaques in and around the city centre. Funding has come from the Society, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Peterborough City Council and Charles Wells Brewery. We have also produced an updated Blue Plaques booklet, a downloadable copy of which is available on our website. Of course we will soon be bringing hard copies to our meetings once they begin again.

## PETERBOROUGH A-Z CARD

Accompanying this newsletter is an A-Z of Peterborough card produced in a private capacity during lockdown by our vice-chairman, Toby Wood. Once the Covid-19 situation is resolved it is hoped that the card will be available to the general public in the Visitor Information Centre. A post-Christmas activity for all members might be to think about your own Peterborough A-Z suggestions!



## GIFT AID

For members who pay income tax, if your programme label shows 'Gift Aid-yes' then you are gift aiding your subscription, which is appreciated. However, if you no longer pay income tax then please inform Ian Webb, our Membership Secretary, so that he can remove you from the scheme. You can of course withdraw from the scheme for any other reason.



***Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year  
to all Peterborough Civic Society members***