

Feasibility study

Birmingham architects PCPT has been commissioned by The Higgs Charity to carry out an outline feasibility study for Drapers Hall. The charity would like to use the Grade II* listed building as a performing space especially for the young of the city. Trustees of the Higgs Charity see it as a good investment that will bring great benefits to the people of our city. After the years of neglect we look forward to seeing this early C19th treasure with its a remarkable suite of rooms and magnificent top-lit ballroom, brought back into community use.

Priorities for the coming year

After a summer of activities that saw outdoor visits to several Warwickshire villages, CovSoc moved to the Shop Front Theatre in the City Arcade for its series of autumn and winter meeting. In many ways it was a visible sign of your committee's commitment to an even greater involvement in the future development of our city.

When we came to review the activity and work that transpired it was decided to produce a comprehensive report of the year and for the first time each member will receive the



information in the form of a fully illustrated four-page newsletter. Instead of the normal report presented at the annual general meeting it will provide a graphic account of the year.

Looking forward to 2013-14 your committee would once again like to canvas your opinion. What should we put our efforts into? There are so many possibilities. They range from the future of conservation areas to the business of

providing us with a better range of small speciality shops. From transport around the city to the stewardship of our historic buildings. We can't cover everything and for that reason we shall be asking you 'what are your priorities for this coming year?'

The annual general meeting formal business will be followed by a committee led discussion with pictures on the big screen to help you concentrate on some of these important issues. Until the 8th!

The Annual General Meeting Monday, April 8 at 7.30pm

The Shop Front Theatre City Arcade. Kerbside parking nearby.

Come along and help shape the programme, campaigns and work of the Society for the remainder of the year and into next year. Volunteer to help the society.

A Special Invitation: We have been invited by The World Monument Fund to a meeting entitled 'New Discoveries and Future Plans'.

Speakers will be archaeologist and author George Demidowicz, who will speak on the subject 'A new analysis of the history of St Michaels', and Jonathan Foyle CEO to the World Monument Fund, Britain who's presentation is entitled 'The Cathedral Quarter-What's it worth to Coventry?' The meeting takes place on Tuesday, April 30 in the Nave of Coventry Cathedral. Arrive at 6.30 for the 7pm meeting. Drinks at 8pm. Please register attendance with Anthony.Dixon@CoventryCathedral.org.uk subject line: '30 April'

Summer programme

May 13 A tour of the Engineering and computing building at Coventry University. An opportunity to see the Harrier Jump Jet at close quarters.

June 10 Tour of Far Gosford Street to see how the restoration and re-use of old buildings is already changing the face of this historic suburb.

July 8 Tour of Princethorpe College. We have seen the impressive historic complex from afar. July is a unique chance to see the college at close quarters.

August 12 By popular demand we have laid on a visit to the Charterhouse, and hear about the progress since the Trustees were handed the keys to the building.

August also sees us heading out of the city on a special Sunday visit to Aston Hall, Birmingham.



coventrysociety

April 2013



Hotel Leofric

The city centre's landmark hotel, once called the Hotel Leofric will close in May after its current owner Travelodge decided to move out as part of a financial restructuring to offload its considerable debts.

That's another mighty blow to the fortunes of the city centre. Travelodge is very much central to our major attractions—the Cathedral Quarter with the new and old cathedrals, the Parish Church of Holy Trinity, Herbert Art Gallery and of course the Transport Museum.

But it looks as though the promotion of our city wasn't enough to keep the occupancy rate of Travelodge's 120 bedrooms in profit.

When the Leofric first opened on April 1, 1955 local people were drawn to its comfortable lounges and restaurant, the Black Eagle bar. The Leofric was famed for its cocktails. This resulted in it being the place to stay for luminaries playing at the Hippodrome — names like Morecambe and Wise, Ruby Murray, Jimmy Jewel, Bill Haley and his Comets, the Goons.

It was a sad day when the Leofric went down market to become a budget enterprise. It's even sadder to see that fail as well.

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We also have our own page on Facebook. You can also follow us there at <http://www.facebook.com/CoventrySociety>

More news and views on our website: www.coventrysociety.org.uk

Conservation area matters

From time to time inappropriate development adversely affects our conservation areas and currently we are facing two unfortunate examples. These last weeks the Society has been campaigning to overturn a planning committee consent to demolish rare Victorian buildings off Spon Street. Their replacement would be a four-storey block of studio flats to accommodate students. Coventry Society asked for the proposal



to be turned down when it came before planners three years ago. We considered it out of scale with neighbouring buildings in Lower Holyhead Road. Now we have other objectors—the new owner of The Rising Sun Pub and the Funeral Service, both bordering the site. At the end of last month renewal of consent for demolition of buildings on the site (pictured left) was considered by planners once again, and Chris Patrick, the City Council's Conservation and Archaeology Officer recommended the application be refused. He said: 'The modern shed structures fronting Lower Holyhead Road are in poor condition and have a negative impact on Spon Street Conservation Area, but behind them are a row of earlier cottages'. Our research indicates that 100 years ago

they housed a funeral supplier and shroud factory. A historic site, yet consent was granted subject to the earlier cottages being properly recorded! The other issue centres on the corner of Hay Lane and Bayley Lane where the new owner of a restaurant about to open, has painted the ground-floor walls of the sandstone building a matt black!



Pocket Park

Work has already started to transform the derelict plot of land at the corner of Bishop Street and Corporation Street into a temporary park. The area will be landscaped with grass, an ornamental shrubbery, footpath and benches. For years the future for this site has been uncertain after plans to build flats and shops fell by the wayside in 2006. In more recent times the entire jumble of shops, including the former Oliver Twist takeaway, the long-empty Lynes Stores, and the closed down Bengal Cottage, were eventually knocked down. The pocket park will certainly help to create a better setting for the Old Grammar School over the road.

Group formed

At the end of last month the Coventry Charterhouse Association was formed, its main purpose being to promote the Charterhouse, and help conserve it and its environs. As a local interest group it will help to justify the all important funding necessary to repair and equip the building for public use.

Membership will not be limited to Coventry people, as Charterhouse has national importance. The suggested membership looks like being £5 per year. Jon Plumley who led the meeting will write up the new group's constitution to be presented at a further meeting. It will take place on April 11 at 7.30pm in the Charterhouse Club.

Museum to save old school

After years of neglect it has been announced that the Old Grammar School will be transformed into an exhibition, education and event space. Behind the plan is Coventry Transport Museum. Already planning permission has been given along with listed building consent, although work can only go ahead when a substantial grant has been approved. In the Coventry Telegraph Gary Hall, Chief executive of the Transport Museum, was reported as saying: "Getting planning permission is a good step towards making the funders realise we are serious. If we get the funding we'd be looking to start work sometime in 2014."

Planned work includes replacement of the floor in the main hall of the building and a small extension, allowing disabled access.

The main door onto Hales Street would also be replaced while the medieval choir stalls will be maintained.



Home extensions

During a Lords' debate on the Growth and Infrastructure Bill March 25, Lord True, leader of Richmond Council, introduced an amendment to allow local councils to opt out of the measures to introduce extended permitted development rights. The amendment called for local authorities to be given the option of rejecting the planning rules for extensions in the event of their being adopted at a national level. Lord True told peers "*The government has suggested a world where, in close suburban neighbourhoods, people can put up a six-metre or eight-metre back garden extension and people in the house to which they may be attached have no right to say or to object. It is not hard to imagine the shock and dismay that some people will feel if they ever find out that it is happening to them. They will feel powerless and they will feel angry. This proposal is not about growth - it is ludicrous to argue that a few back-garden extensions would kick start the economy*". Peers voted by 217 to 211, a majority of six, in favour of Lord True's amendment to the Bill, which passed its third reading stage and now returns to the Commons. The Department of Communities and Local Government has already said it will look to overturn the amendment in the House of Commons. Civic Voice will be stepping up the campaign against the extended permitted development right proposals. It will be asking civic groups to once again communicate with their local MP to support this amendment when it is debated in the House of Commons.