

Coventry Museum Service

- The Road Ahead, with Damien Kimberley and Steve Bagley



is the subject of our next meeting.

on Monday, September 9 at 7.30pm

at the Shopfront Theatre, City Arcade

Visitors welcome £1 to non members

Bayley House - latest

Following the City Council's refusal to grant planning permission and listed building consent to convert the historic Bayley House to student flats, there seems to be an opportunity to talk to the owner about other alternatives that might just result in the formation of a trust.

We understand that the building is in urgent need of major work to its fabric and the burden of repairs might well be difficult to achieve in private hands within current use constraints. This reinforces the need for the Council and the Voluntary Sector to work with the applicant to bring forward alternative proposals.

Speaking at the planning meeting Paul Maddocks said: "The Society is mindful of the fact that such an historic building has high maintenance and restoration costs and whilst in private hands must pay for itself through rental income. We also have some sympathy with the applicant as the lack of parking and low rental levels for offices in city centre may well make the current use marginal in viability terms. This is clearly what is driving the proposals for the change of use, but there must be a better way."

We understand that the owner will be disappointed at the refusal, as working in isolation this may be his only economic solution. We do however believe that he has the best interests of the city at heart and if supported can work with partners to bring about a far more suitable proposal for this important building. We shall be asking that the applicant defers any other action regarding this change of use proposal for a period of six months to allow joint talks with the city heritage community and the council to explore better alternatives.

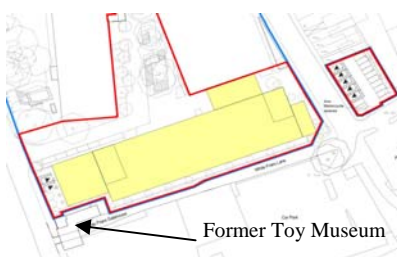
The Society feels that, for buildings as important as this, the most appropriate future is a transfer of ownership to a trust, which would remove the drive to maximise revenue and allow access to sources of funding for restoration that are available. This would also allow public access and produce the maximum benefit to the visitor economy.

Bayley House is simply the most important heritage building that we have in the city in private hands and its sympathetic future use must be safeguarded.

Gatehouse written off?



The view from Much Park Street



The development in plan view

One of this year's projects for students on the Architecture Course at Coventry University was to incorporate the Merchant's House ruin in Much Park Street into a conceptual design for a new John Laing Building. What a pity the students were not asked to look at the possibility of producing a similar scheme that incorporated the Toy Museum.

Back to reality, outline permission is now being sought for a new Science Building on Whitefriar's Lane that appears to have written off the heritage value of the former Toy Museum. Clearly the proposal should either be well clear of the gatehouse or be integrated with it. There is a precedent for integration in Gosford St where the student block Callice Court is linked to the Calcott brothers car factory. If this solution were adopted at the gatehouse, the part of the uni building closest to the gatehouse should not be above eaves height.



coventrysociety

September 2013



Heritage Open Days

takes place on Saturday and Sunday, September 14-15, (10-4) and the Society will be opening up St Mark's Church for the public to see the superb Feibusch Mural.

During the weekend we shall also put on a display of our work and look forward to recruiting a few more members.

Please try to get along to support our worthy staff!

Craven Crusts

The Board of Directors of Craven Crusts announced last month that offers of investment received fell well short of the minimum required to consider proceeding with the project (less than 10% of the total). They were therefore obliged to close down and return investors' monies.

Their target had been to raise £350,000 to purchase, renovate and re-open the old Pails Bakery building on Craven Street in Chapelfields as a community owned and run bakery, café, art studio and community meeting space.

A sad end to what could have been a very good community venture.

Contacts

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If Twitter is your thing, you can follow us at <https://twitter.com/#!/CovSoc>

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

Friargate

Members joined with committee in August for a briefing by the City Council's Traffic and Transportation Manager Paul Boulton



on the first phase of Friargate that will see massive changes to the road system near the rail station. Changes noted include: A new road layout with no right turn from Warwick Road onto the Ring Road. The present elevated roundabout will be demolished releasing more land as part of the development. The current gyratory into the station from the roundabout will go. A new temporary road from Warwick Road into Eaton Road will be created. Only buses will be allowed to proceed from Warwick Road into New Union Street and from Greyfriars Green to the Ring Road. The Manor Road exit from the station will be retained and Park Road opened up for taxis and possibly buses.

Initially a new pedestrian crossing will be created leading from the station via Eaton Road but ultimately pedestrians will have to negotiate two road crossings when the final road works for the whole development is completed, one from the station [at the end of Eaton Road] and one to access Greyfriars Green. The planning application was submitted in July and will go before Council within 12 weeks. A number of concerns were expressed including: the creation of a new bus gate, the loss of the right turn onto the ring road and the method of road modelling. The Friargate reserved matters application can be found on the Council's portal reference no. RMM/2013/1339

HS2: What do we really need?



Opinions vary. Let's look at the alternatives.

1. "Electronic communications have made travel unnecessary". We've had internet for 15 years and while it has revolutionised communications, rail passenger numbers have risen dramatically. No-one forces people to use rail; they vote with their feet. Road travel also increased every year until 2008, from when it has gone down. This appears to be a reaction to fuel prices and the recession. Fuel price is volatile but with increasing world demand and reducing reserves, the trend can only be upward. Rail takes a small part of the travel market so a 5% reduction in road travel leads to a much bigger percentage increase in rail travel. People complain about rail fares yet they use rail in ever greater numbers. If we don't respond to demand we will reap the economic consequences. A rising population will increase demand and congestion even if there is no economic expansion. While the need for a new railway cannot be proven, it does seem most likely.

2. Improve the existing lines by: adding more trains (there isn't the space), lengthen the trains (it's already been done and further lengthening would mean rebuilding some stations if there is the space to do it), adding more tracks to West Coast Main Line (desirable where there are only 2 tracks e.g. Brinklow to Nuneaton but this will not make a lot of difference. WCML winds its way around obstructions and to add more tracks would make it even more windy, unless you demolish those obstructions. Either way it would be expensive and disruptive for modest benefits), reclassifying some first class carriages as standard (it's already the custom to allow standard class passengers to use first class when there's an overload, and when the first class seats are all occupied is when the train companies make their profits. The change would have been made if it was commercially advantageous).

Even if every possible tweak were made to the existing congested main lines (West Coast, Midland, and East Coast), there may still not be room for all the passengers and freight that want to use them in 15 years time. It doesn't seem a good idea to plough resources into all the tweaks then find we need the new tracks as well.

3. Restore the Great Central Line. A seductive idea for many, but the route is built over in Rugby, Leicester and Nottingham, and the parts of the route that are available are too windy. While restoration of old lines looks easy it's a new problem for neighbours, and the lines don't necessarily run where the demand is.

4. Build a new line connecting airports. Air passenger numbers

are a tiny fraction of rail passenger numbers so it would be a mistake to hijack a new railway for an airport delivery service. While airport rail access can be improved and connected to a HS line, particularly at Heathrow, the tail must not wag the dog. At International we already have a station perfectly positioned between the airport and NEC. Trains running off a sensibly-routed HS line can serve it as well as Coventry, New Street and Wolverhampton.

5. Build a new railway along the M40 corridor. Too windy and hilly and doesn't go where the major demand is. Mark Bostock, the engineer credited with changing the route of HSI in Kent to the one that actually got built, advocates this route with a station "near" Heathrow. Passengers do not want to be dumped where they have to get another form of transport to get to Heathrow. They want to get on a train in Glasgow, Manchester, Coventry, or wherever else they live, and get off the same train IN Heathrow. This is perfectly feasible by running trains from existing city-centre stations via a high speed line and the north London line, through Heathrow and onward to the south coast, the west and Wales. Air passengers alone will not fill these trains, but when you add those bound for central London via the Old Oak Common interchange and those going from midland and northern towns to southern and western towns, the connectivity is multiplied manifold.

6. Build a new railway to follow the M1 and M6. This is the option favoured by Railfuture (and the author!). It is the option that would serve Coventry as well as other places disadvantaged in the HS2 plan such as Wolverhampton, Leicester, Stoke-on-Trent, Nottingham and Derby. The principle is a spine and spur route. The spine will follow M1 and there will be spurs to Birmingham via M6 and to Manchester via Sheffield and the disused Woodhead route. Trains will run off the HS line to existing city centre stations rather than dumping passengers at parkways out of town. The number of town-to-town connections will be three times that of HS2 with a shorter route and less tunnel (tunnels formed a quarter of the construction cost of HS2 before they started getting longer). Objections will be a tiny fraction of those to the government's route because no-one lives beside M1 and those that live close accept the noise and the visual intrusion.

There is every possibility that the current plan will be shelved by the end of this year, but whether this happens or not you can expect a high-profile launch of a better alternative this autumn. That alternative will be better for Britain and better in particular for Coventry.

Les Fawcett