

Tewkesbury Civic Society

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023

Founded May 1965

Registered Charity
No: 246466

Patron
The Earl of Wemyss
and March

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Talks

Dear Members,

Having just completed our Tewkesbury Civic Society (TCS) AGM and it being over a year since our last newsletter, it seems an appropriate time for another.

CHANGES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

There is a broad cross-party consensus that there is a need to build more homes in England, in order to ensure availability and affordability of housing. The Government has a commitment to delivering 300,000 net new homes per year by the mid-2020s.

To achieve that target the Government sets out its national planning policy for England, principally through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which local authorities must consider when devising local plans for housing and other development in their area.

Since the 2019 general election the Government has made differing proposals for reform to national planning policy. This is likely to reflect, in part, the fact that there have been six Ministers for Housing since the start of the Parliament—five of those since the start of 2022!

The Government has proposed reforms to national planning policy that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced in December 2022. The reforms have been proposed within the wider context of planning reform as part of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill

A very readable, but lengthy, review of the Bill is to be found here: <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/our-work/levelling-and-regeneration-bill>

You can follow the Bill's progress here: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3155>

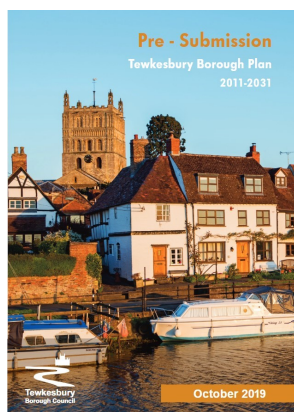
With all the changes in proposals one sympathises with those who have to work with and conform to the requirements of the legislation when enacted. Our concern is that in the worthy quest for planning reforms to facilitate increased house-building, standards are not lowered and developers not permitted to circumvent local planning.

CHANGES CLOSER TO HOME

In May this year the political complexion of Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC) changed. There is no overall political control now, however Lib Dems are the majority party and provide the Leader, Cllr. Richard Stanley, and Deputy Leader, Cllr. Sarah Hands. All the nine portfolio holders are either Lib Dems, Independents or Greens, two of those are local town ward councillors.

A new Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Alistair Cunningham OBE, took up the post at TBC last July. There is also a new Associate Planning Director, Nick Grant. In addition, we understand that a new "Director of Place" is recruited.

So, new people to determine policy, practice and community engagement.



The bridge!



Tewkesbury
Garden Town



M5 Junction 9

At the Parish level there has been change too, a new Tewkesbury Town Council (TTC) with a healthy mix of new and renewed councillors. This new Council seems refreshingly more enthusiastic than previously about setting itself some useful targets/ambitions beyond the unavoidable, although we don't yet know what they are?

Anyway, lots of changes. We now await their effects, if any, particularly on the work we do and our TCS priorities.

MAJOR NEARBY DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS.

An important milestone was passed in June 2022, the Tewkesbury Borough Plan 2011-2031 was finally adopted, see [HERE](#). Good news for lots of reasons not least being the reduced risk of developers winning approval, possibly on appeal for applications on land not formally designated for the purpose sought in an adopted plan.

Normally our interests are confined to the Conservation Area but there will be developments and proposed developments in the surrounding area of sufficient size to impact significantly upon the centre of Tewkesbury and/or the setting within which the town sits. We are interested in these too.

Tewkesbury Garden Town

The “bridge to nowhere”, as it became known locally, across the rail line was designed to give road access to and thus open up for housing development potential, land to the north of the MOD Ashchurch site as part of the Tewkesbury Garden Town project. It was permitted in March 2021, challenged but confirmed in a Judicial Review in January 2022, then rejected in a Court of Appeal judgement in February this year. Read more here: <https://www.landmarkchambers.co.uk/the-bridge-to-nowhere-appeal-succeeds-in-the-court-of-appeal/>

What will happen to the bridge idea now is unclear.

After a pause for a “Gateway review”, the Tewkesbury Garden Town project continues, possibly under a new name and, it seems, with a changed management structure and greater community and stakeholder engagement. Read more here <https://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/news/a-vote-for-a-new-approach-to-tewkesbury-garden-town>

There was a website devoted to the Garden Town but that is unavailable presently. Presumably there will be some sort of replacement to inform the public of progress?

It is stated that TBC's required five year housing supply is unaffected by any pause or changes in the Garden Town project management so the risk of unwanted and piecemeal development on undesignated sites elsewhere is not increased. That is a relief!

M5 Junction 9 and A46 (Ashchurch) transport scheme

Even without the Garden Town and its requirement for additional road and junction capability there are issues at Junction 9.

The M5 Junction 9 and A46 (Ashchurch) Transport Scheme is a proposal to develop a new or reconfigured M5 junction near Tewkesbury and re-route the existing A46 around Ashchurch to Teddington Hands roundabout. A wide variety of route options are currently being considered and technically assessed for suitability.

A non-statutory public consultation, originally scheduled for late 2022, will now take place in late 2023 at the earliest (dates tbc)

Read more at: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/major-projects-list/>

M5 Junction 10 Improvements scheme

This scheme will undoubtedly have an effect on Tewkesbury and presumably on the scheme options for Junction 9. A statutory Public Consultation completed in February 2022, the results of that and more detail of next steps can be read here: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/major-projects-list/m5-junction-10-improvements-scheme/>

Mythe

This seems a classic example of a development application on land not designated in the Borough Plan for such use that would still be vulnerable to such development should the Borough not be able to demonstrate it has that five year housing supply! But TBC has that supply we are told and this land is not designated for such use in the adopted Borough Plan, so that should really be an end to the matter in our view!

The first application, made by Miller Homes in 2015, for 250 houses was withdrawn in 2016 but the same applicant made a new application within a few months for 205 homes, that was refused in July 2017. There was an informal public consultation in 2021 by the Pegasus Group for 235 houses then in May 2022 Robert Hitchins made application for 235, before modifying it in June 2023 to 165 houses on the same core site. It awaits a decision.

One could judge this as a example of “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again”?

TCS has objected to this latest application as it did the first two. We hope and trust that this application like the second is refused by TBC.

More can be read here: [22/00610/OUT](https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/major-projects-list/m5-junction-10-improvements-scheme/)

Bredon Road

This is an application being dealt with by Wychavon District Council (WDC). The land is within Wychavon despite it’s proximity to Tewkesbury Town.

There are many good reasons why, in our view, this application should be refused; environmental damage in Tewkesbury, inadequate infrastructure, damage to the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, increased flood risk for town properties and creeping urbanisation being some of them.

An application in April 2018 for 500 houses by “Barratt Development Plc, Mac-taggart & Mickel, The North Tewkesbury Landowners Consortium, Stewart Pearman and the Croom Estate Trustees” was refused in May 2022, appealed and dismissed in November 2022. Now this new application in April 2023 by the same applicants also for 500 houses has been made and awaits a decision. Land in the same ownership, we understand, has the potential of adding another 500 houses!

The first refusal was by the WDC committee largely, but not completely, on Strategic Planning grounds (not in the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP)) but the appeal dismissal we understand was largely on grounds of effect on local highways.

Since then the site plus the extra land has, we understand, been included in the SWDP and these 500 of the potential 1000 houses agreed as going to TBC for target achieving purposes!

In fact, like Bredon and Westmancote Parish Council, we find it extraordinary that the application was validated and accepted by WDC, being exactly as that previously refused except for a revised Transport Assessment and the conveniently updated SWDP inclusion.



M5 Junction 10



The Mythe—latest proposals



Bredon Road



Ex Healings Mill properties — proposals



BT Street Hub



Charging points

Details can be found here: [W/23/00682/OUT](https://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/23/00682/OUT)

DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA

Ex Healings Mill properties

Corbally Group (Tewkesbury) Ltd, the present owners of the ex-Healing Mill properties have made recent application for development of three Quay Street properties. At the time of writing one has been permitted and two await a decision. Earlier applications on two of the properties were permitted but have lapsed over time.

We welcomed the applications in that they demonstrated renewed interest in making use of these semi derelict buildings. One, the old garage site [23/00331/FUL](#), we wholeheartedly supported. However, we reserved the support we would have liked to give on the other two, on the NW [23/00559/FUL](#) and SW [23/00334/FUL](#) corners of Quay Street, until certain issues of waste/recycling storage and roof design respectively were resolved to our satisfaction. We look forward to being able to fully support these applications.

Once these three properties are sold and developed (Corbally do not develop properties themselves), Quay Street will lose some of that “down at heel” feeling that presently pervades it. Although something will also need to be done about the industrial sized waste bins that sit astride pavements and the ankle endangering gutter that runs down the centre of the northern footpath.

Conversions of significant larger properties.

There has been a continued trend to convert this type of mostly street facing property from current use to multiple residencies (flats and/or cottages). They are the old Riverside Hotel (or Montells) [20/00909/FUL](#), Star Legal (previously Moore, Brown and Dixon) [19/00686/FUL](#), Thomson and Bancks [20/00010/FUL](#), Avonbrook House (previously the High School then the Choir School) [21/01186/FUL](#) and the Abbey Hotel [20/00392/FUL](#).

Our TCS input has mostly been to advise against over development and inadequate storage and management of waste and recycled material.

All have now been permitted, some after multiple revisions, except Avonbrook House which is ongoing.

Welcome application refusals.

BT applied to install two big “Street Hubs”, both in the High Street, outside Badhams (then Lloyds) [22/01344/FUL](#) and The Orange Pig [22/01346/FUL](#). Whilst offering WiFi connection for calls, charging etc. they are funded through the adverts displayed on their large internally illuminated display panels.

They were both refused on several grounds including their inappropriate positioning in the historic context of our Conservation Area, where all internally illuminated signs are not permitted. Different site proposals, like Priors Park and Wheatpieces, might have yielded different decisions?

What seems to have been imposed.

GCC are installing some electric charging points in the High Street opposite the old Riverside Hotel as we understand. No Planning application to TBC seems to have been necessary although there was a public consultation made known mostly to local residents.

TCS certainly approves the idea of providing such charging points but not on the High Street at the cost of several free parking spaces and within the Conservation Area. We wonder why GCC did not work with TBC to place such installation somewhere like the Spring Gardens car-park?

Unapproved works

As previously reported, we identified a large number of unapproved works within the Conservation Area, mostly, but not solely, shop fronts in the three main streets. Some were such that they would be unlikely to gain permission should they have been correctly applied for.

The situation has developed over the years as a result of ignorance of the law or indifference to it perhaps because of inaction from the Authority.

However, things have changed, perhaps because the current officers at TBC are much more attentive to such works than previously. They take a friendly persuasive approach but are prepared to take those not cooperating to Court if necessary. Of course the HSHAZ project (see below) has helped greatly.

Slowly it is becoming unusual for works to be done without permission. TCS, TTC and TBC officers meet every six months or so to review an ever smaller list! Between us we have recognised the need for better education/explanation of the need to apply for such works and are evolving a programme of seminars (TTC already ran one) and leaflet drops/mailings etc.

Works completed successfully, but....

Permitted works at the Black Bear [18/00525/FUL](#) have been completed and the business opened. TCS applauds this restoration effort and wishes them all success.

However a lot will depend on how they run their business. The properties surrounding them are very vulnerable to disturbance from noise so that is a potential problem that we hope management will avoid.

One problem that has manifested itself is the parking of cars on King John's Bridge, almost invariably partly on the pavement. Obviously this is terrible for those disabled in buggies and people with children in prams etc but it also spoils an attractive walk and river viewing area for tourists and locals alike. It seems the leniency (or inattention) given to trades vans whilst the works were in progress is now being extended to customers?

That stretch is a Clearway so cars should not stop let alone park there. However, not everyone appreciates it is a Clearway or understands the Clearway rules. Perhaps it would be better to extend double yellows over the bridge, everyone is aware of what they mean and will avoid.

The Ward councillors are pursuing the matter but we know that it is not proving easy to find a body to take responsibility. Unbelievable! We wish them luck.

Permitted development but.....

The old Barclays Bank building has been permitted to open as a "Papa Johns" pizza takeaway [22/00811/FUL](#). TCS opposed that application because we felt that another takeaway was not appropriate in the High Street, particularly at that point. There are rules governing the proximity of one fast food outlet to another but this application conformed to those, unfortunately in our view.

They are using particularly garish window decals which are causing TBC to examine carefully exactly what the enforceable rules in that regard are. They were initially flying advertising flags standing on the pavement until stopped by TBC.

Perhaps not a beneficial addition to the Heritage High Street!

If you wish to follow planning applications

For those interested, the new TBC "Planning Application Tracker" simplifies access to live and recently permitted applications and provides regular emailed or



Work being done without permission, now corrected.



King John's Bridge Clearway!



Papa Johns—pavement flags



Some of the properties to benefit from HSHAZ grants



Old ugly wire fence St Marys Road



New three bar fence, rear of Priors Court

texted update notifications should they be wanted. Find it here: <https://tewkesbury-central.oncreate.app/w/webpage/apptacker-search>. Older applications can be found through the Planning Portal as always.

HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE (HSHAZ).

We reported before on the award to Tewkesbury of Government funds to improve Town Centres. The initiative is led by English Heritage and administered locally by TBC. We are happy to report that after a hesitant start, the project has really gathered pace and its results are starting to be seen around town, particularly in the High Street. Read more [HERE](#).

A number of shops have applied and been awarded grants to refresh their shop-fronts, redesign their facias and blinds etc. It's a good deal for them. They contribute only about a quarter of the cost and for the community in that we benefit by an aesthetically improved street scene. A more attractive street environment may well encourage greater footfall so it's a potential win win.

Our TCS contribution was helping TBC identify properties that could benefit. Using Google Street View we examined critically every shop in Church Street, Barton Street and High Street.

The Town Hall roof and façade have benefitted from this fund as has the Riverside Walk with stretches of new signature three-bar fencing. The latter has proved particularly popular and justified TCS's heavy lobbying for it over the last couple of years.

With the help of HSHAZ ,TTC has planned more improvements to the Riverside Walk. That is very appropriate considering the importance of this asset.

We understand that TBC offered the Corbally Group some matched funding from this fund in order to pay for some site preparation surveys for things like heavy metals, in order to stimulate their interest and action in getting the Ham Healings Mill site developed. As yet, it has not been taken up, unfortunately.

The HSHAZ project concludes at the end of March. All works so funded must be completed by then. However, there is a Legacy project just starting that is intended to build upon its success create a "Town Centre MasterPlan and Design Code" for Tewkesbury. The intention is not to ignore earlier planning and public realm standardising but add to it.

We understand that unlike any earlier planning of this type, the intention here is to specify particular projects in such detail that once funding is found they can be executed quickly. This would be singularly different from anything that has gone before and a very welcome initiative.

Clearly, key sites like Healings Mill, Spring Gardens and the MAFF site (rear of Morrisons) will feature prominently in that HSHAZ Legacy project.

There will be community consultation and organisations like TCS will be invited, we are told, to contribute to a Steering Group. We look forward to that possibility.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In the last newsletter we reported that the future of Tewkesbury Town Regeneration Partnership (TTRP) was in the balance. It seems to have died quietly of neglect. An opportunity for community consultation and involvement wasted perhaps?

However, if the HSHAZ Legacy project mentioned above gets off the ground it could be the vehicle for future community engagement.

The icing on the cake would be if TTC coincided some of their Strategic objectives/ambitions with those of this HSHAZ Legacy project?

BIN BLIGHT

See Glos Media video [HERE](#)

The good news is that Planners at TBC do seem much more attentive to the need to ensure developments, whether new or conversions, adequately accommodate and manage waste and recycled material. This includes conditions in permits that require that allocated space is maintained for the lifetime of the development. Permitted developments in the past often had no focus on such issues with the result of bins stored on pavements!

There have also been a couple of modestly successful local community led efforts to have residents remove bins back to their own property and/or have TBC remove unowned bins from pavements.

TCS has a continued dialogue with TBC on "Bin Blight" in the Conservation Area and that has resulted in a campaign to stimulate community interest and action to tidy up areas in every respect, not just keeping bins off the pavement. TTC voted to support and make use of that campaign. Hopefully they will.

TCS is cooperating enthusiastically with such campaigns on the understanding that if such efforts in persuasion do not result in clearing our Conservation Area pavements of bins, then TBC will seriously consider requiring rather than simply asking residents to comply and keep their bins on their own property or use bags instead. We'll see how things go by the year's end.

All the changes at TBC may result in a better cross-functional approach to problems of this sort. It would be great if people responsible for 1. waste/recycling, 2. hygiene in takeaways/restaurants etc, 3. tourism and 4. Planning, developed a combined approach. There was one attempt at this some years ago by the Deputy CEO before last but nothing apparent since!

STREET FURNITURE BLIGHT

The other thing that glaringly lets down Tewkesbury is the continued damaged state of the bollards and keep left signs mostly in the High Street.

We are about to ask GCC formally just how much has been spent on this continued repair and replacement and ask them to consider alternatives.

We have done little by way of lobbying to date but hope to do more in the coming year. There has to be a better way.

PLAQUES

As expected, our eleventh plaque was erected on the Stocking Makers Cottage in St. Mary's Lane. Another, hopefully before year end, will be sited on the footpath just north of the lock, commemorating Bathursts boat building business.

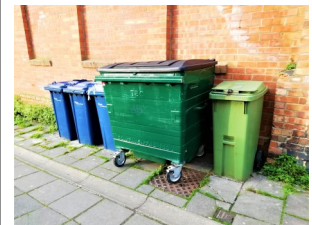
We are also engaged in a joint venture with the History Society to erect a plaque in Bishops Walk recalling the buildings and alleys it replaced.

We have joined forces before with the History Society, most rewardingly to successfully jointly lobby TBC to complete the "missing link" on the Riverside Walk behind the Hop Pole. A good result then so we hope this more modest effort will be so too.

TALKS

The Talks programme for 2023/4 is about half way through and, of course, we once more meet in the Library but on the newly refurbished first floor.

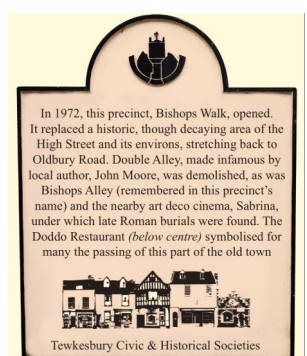
We had as our guest speaker at our recent AGM, Georgia Smith, talking about the HSHAZ project she manages (see above). It was an engaging talk that was greatly appreciated by the attendees, so we thank her very much for her time, effort and enthusiasm.



Nelson and Quay Streets



Google has captured several of these for all the world to see.





Tewkesbury Civic Society
C/O 1 Mill Bank
Tewkesbury
Glos.
GL20 5SD

Membership fees are £15 per couple and £10 per single person. All fees not paid by standing order are due on April 1st.

TCS talks, AGM, any organised trip and an Autumn Supper are normally run on the second Thursday in the month, January through November. See membership card, posters and website or ask for a programme.



Above is an image of the [Tewkesbury Civic Society website Home page](https://www.tewkesburycivicsociety.org), we hope the site is of interest to members and non-members alike.

Presently we are updating and redesigning part of it, so your patience is sought if you can't access exactly what you need.

OFFICERS & HONORARY MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

Chairman	Mr A Purkiss	The Mercer's House 1 Mill Bank Tewkesbury, GL20 5SD	290114
Treasurer	Mr H Sweet	10 Cotteswold Road Tewkesbury	294314
Membership Secretary	Mr S Strathearn	Trafalgar House, High St. Tewkesbury, GL20 5BJ	07773 633323
Committee	Mrs M Turland	(Plaques/Talks/Trips Co-ord.)	293265
	Mrs K Caswell	(Planning Application Review)	
	Mr A Lord	(Trees, Planting)	
	Mrs C Beck	(Social Events)	
Hon.Solicitor	Mr B M Lawler		
Hon. Member	Mr P Finnigan		