

## Acting Chairman's Comments

This is the second time I have been Acting Chairman of the Alton Society when we have been unable to find a permanent one and I am struck by the amount of work we do, and that there is to do, in support of our aims. In a nutshell these are to:

- **promote and encourage the rational and appropriate development of Alton and its amenities;**
- **stimulate interest in the past, present and future of Alton;**
- **work for the preservation and enhancement of local features of particular historical, cultural or aesthetic importance;**
- **act as a focus for obtaining and giving relevant information and advice and to provide a forum for public discussion;**
- **represent and advance the views of the Society on these matters to the Authorities concerned and to the wider community.**

A plethora of issues are now impacting our town, ranging from the EHDC proposal to sell off some of our valuable Green Spaces in Alton across to the Star Energy proposal to run twelve large tankers per day, seven days per week for the next nine years through Alton, and so on. Your committee has been working extremely hard to ensure that the Society represents its views in harmony with the above aims. I am sure that there must be other members or even potential members who care about Alton and would be able to contribute towards all that we do with minimal impact on time, so scarce in our modern day lives. If you would like to know more or can think of anyone who would like to join us then do contact one of us through the contact details on the back page.

Now down to current issues in which the Society is involved. Three significant ones are :-

- the Core Strategy,
  - the Town Design Statement and
  - the Landscape Planting project
- all of which are covered in this newsletter.

The first two will have a major effect on our town and so it is most important that Society members join in the Public Consultation process being undertaken by EHDC. So please follow the website links to these documents:

Core Strategy is

<http://www.easthants.gov.uk/ehdc/localplanweb.nsf/webpages/>

Town Design Statement is

<http://www.alton-in-partnership.org/indtds.html>.

Alternatively visit the local library and ask to see copies.

The Core Strategy represents the first thoughts about the new Local Development Framework (what used to be known as the Local Development Plan) and the Consultation ends on 6 May. There is an article contained within this newsletter from the Chair of the Alton Town Partnership which sets out his own personal views on this work which has already stimulated considerable debate. The Society view on the Core Strategy is summarised in the Built Environment report. The Town Design Statement has been developed with your assistance over the last year and a half and the Public Consultation runs until 15 May. We will be publicly launching the Town Design Statement at the EHDC Community Forum at 6.30 pm on the 24th June in Medstead Village Hall where we would be delighted to see you and enjoy your support.

The third topic is another project to improve the appearance of the town and hide some of the less attractive corners by modest planting of trees and shrubs, and is in tune with our physical contribution to the town, like our maintenance of Flood Meadows. In this we need the active participation of street/road frontage owners/leaseholders (shops, restaurants, offices etc.) where we will be working with the Town Council and the Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Our monitoring of planning applications continues and we explain on Page 2 why we have come to the decisions we have and, where known, what effect we have had. Nominations are sought for the Society Award introduced last year for the person who has given Outstanding Services to the Town, won last year by Luath Grant Ferguson. Please think about who should be recognised this year and submit your nominations in a short statement of 50 – 100 words, by 31 July at the latest to Edward Hepper.

Mike Heelis, Acting Chairman.

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## BUILT ENVIRONMENT GROUP Planning Matters

We have commented on a number of planning applications and some of the more important ones are listed below. We have tried to explain where we have approved or not and why.

- *Old Gas Works Site, Butts Road.* Appeal against refusal for 14 units was upheld so this development can go ahead and remove an eyesore. A new application on 'reserved matters' has been made, which we welcome but have slight reservations on strip along SW side – who owns and maintains it?
- *70 The Butts.* An excellent and sympathetic scheme for modest extension in the style of original and of neighbouring houses and including the restoration of sash windows. We wrote in favour and it was approved.
- *20 Grebe Close.* This scheme for a small semi-detached pair of houses is OK except for the appalling access proposed directly onto Gilbert White Way. We objected strongly on the grounds of this dangerous access.
- *Boots, 52 High Street.* As part of an application for Boots' new corporate livery, new 'cross' signs were to be put up near the corner of the site. However one was to be over narrow pavement of Market Street and so in danger of being hit by large vehicles. We drew attention to this and it looks as if it has been dropped.
- *Hamlet House, 80 & 90-94 High Street.* An application for replacement of aluminium double glazing by uPVC, but only on about half the building. The building is not great but its appearance would be even less attractive if the window details were to be inconsistent.
- *Alton Day Centre, Chawton Park Road.* We had objected to this scheme. At a Public Inquiry at West Tisted Village Hall on 12 March, the Inspector refused the development as excessive for the site.
- *Chandos Lodge, London Rd, Holybourne.* This application for the 172 dwelling estate has now been approved by EHDC. We had lately advocated access form opposite Anstey Park, beside Claines, but the plan follows the other route through the Holybourne Gap to join the Montecchio Way / London Rd junction on the edge of Holybourne village.
- *9 Kings Road.* The revised scheme, which we had supported, has been wrecked by being built 0.4m too high, increasing impact and privacy problems. Councillors attended a site meeting and decided it should be demolished (as we had reluctantly proposed – it seems an unsustainable waste of materials for something still in keeping with its western neighbour and the rest of the road, but it was not in agreement with the approved plans and demolition is the only solution). Later, EHDC officers, wary of losing to an Appeal, brought it back to Committee where the revised scheme with the lower roof-line was narrowly accepted.
- *Market Hotel, Market Square.* Application for awning over half of frontage. This is one of the many to provide cover for outdoor smokers. Not a permanent structure so we have no objection but propose to suggest a different, multi-coloured blind instead of the rather obtrusive dark green.
- *22a Normandy Street.* This is a back land proposal onto an inadequate access lane and we have objected.
- *49 Normandy Street.* An attractive block of 4 one-bed flats behind No 49 accessing onto Orchard Close to which we have no objection.
- *22 Queens Road.* Proposal for a block of 5 dwellings in garden, accessing onto Rack Close Road was rejected because of over-development. It was allowed on Appeal.
- *46 Queens Road.* Proposal for extension of attractive period detached house. This is well designed and we have so commented but recommended use of permeable surface to parking space.
- *Vixen House, 18 & 20 Turk Street;* we objected to an earlier application to demolish 2 Victorian villas and to build new flats and it was refused. The revised application is in a similar and acceptable style but only 3 storey and the 20 flats are reduced to 14. We have no objection now.
- *New RMC Plant on Sewage Works off Waterbrook Lane.* Our concern is to avoid polluted run-off into Caker Stream.

*Edward Hepper*

## Local Development Framework – Core Strategy – Issues and Options

EHDC have started the process of preparing the Local Development Framework (LDF), which will be the new form of the Local Development Plan, defining development in East Hampshire and Alton over the next 15 years or so. It is therefore vital that we participate in the preparation of it to ensure that our wishes are considered. The Town Design Statement is a vital part of this but the present Consultation goes further and includes such things as where new housing should go and the provision of infrastructure for health, education, water and drainage, as well as transport. What is available so far is the seminal Core Strategy, which will guide the preparation of all the detailed chapters in the LDF. The documents can be seen at [www.easthants.gov.uk](http://www.easthants.gov.uk) and in the Library. The Consultation period has been extended until 6 May. Do please look at it and send your views to EHDC.

There are three fundamental questions to which only Whitehall can provide the answers and they will affect and perhaps modify answers to the questionnaire. However it is still worthwhile at this stage to start thinking of the issues and the desirable solutions. The unanswered questions are:-

- The South Downs National Park. Will it be established? and when? and where will its boundaries run?
- The South East Plan. We and every local authority have contributed our views and the agreed suggestion as to how many new houses we can accommodate has been forwarded to Whitehall. However they have not yet accepted these numbers and the word is that they are likely to increase them by up to 50% (way above the numbers they first suggested and which detailed analysis has shown to be acceptable). Apart from the issue of space for these additional houses, it is difficult to foresee how the necessary supporting infrastructure can be made available. Until Whitehall releases its numbers, we cannot plan the number in Hampshire and so the number in East Hampshire and so in Alton.
- The future of the army base at Bordon. Whitehall has recently included Bordon in its list of proposed eco-towns for the south east, suggesting that it might have between 5,000 and 8,000 additional houses. This could make it 25% or so larger than either Alton or Petersfield, with potential consequences for our share of infrastructure provision.

In principle, I am in favour of new eco-towns instead of fringe expansion of existing settlements. The new towns can be well designed with adequate infrastructure and, although they take up new land, they can be at least partly on brownfield land such as at Bordon, and they avoid the erosion of green gaps between settlements (e.g. between Alton and Holybourne or Four Marks or Beech). The garden suburbs, such as Welwyn a hundred years ago, and the London overflows in Basingstoke and Andover fifty years ago are examples. The better ones (as these) were built on good transport routes which Bordon, unfortunately, does not have and they will have to be provided.

However, despite many good schemes, none have come to fruition over the last twenty years— so one cannot be sure that Bordon will either!

Your Committee has studied EHDC's questionnaire and welcomes the chance to respond to this preliminary consultation, which runs until 6 May. Please make your own responses too.

*Edward Hepper*

### Town Design Statement

Our work on this Alton Town Partnership project has nearly been completed. The Draft has been handed to EHDC for their Public Consultation which runs until 15 May, after which we will finalise the text, attend the EHDC DPP at the end of May, and print it ready for launch at the Community Forum on 24<sup>th</sup> June. Paper copies are available at the Town Hall, Library and EHDC Presence Office, Cross & Pillory Lane. It can also be inspected on the web at [www.alton-in-partnership.org](http://www.alton-in-partnership.org). Comments should be emailed to EHDC at [ldf@easthants.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@easthants.gov.uk).

We are grateful to all of you who took part in the various workshops last year and commented on the preliminary drafts. We hope you will like and approve the finished document, which will include some hundred photographs illustrating the features of Alton that you all think important. If you still have comments, please make them to EHDC, as above.

*Edward Hepper*

### EHDC's proposed sale of the family silver

We have been shocked to learn about EHDC's proposal to sell some of its listed open amenity space. In Alton, at present, this means two sites on the Manor Estate. This is in clear contradiction to the recommendations of the Town Design Statement and we have written strongly regretting this idea. We have also tried to contact Manor Estate groups to alert them.

We appreciate the need for more housing but the numbers involved in these sites are small compared with the advantages they bring as open space. One of the attractions of the larger post-war housing estates in Alton is the provision of such green spaces which can be used as informal kick-about areas, children's playgrounds, or simply space for walking or relaxing. They can also provide welcome relief from lines of housing and often provide views through to the countryside beyond.

*Edward Hepper*

## HISTORICAL VIEWPOINT - Beaumont Court

As you pass the new complex that has been built on the site of the old Library in Alton, you may notice that it is called 'Beaumont Court' - and wonder if the name has any connection with Alton. As will be shown below, the Lords Beaumont did have interests in Alton in the 1400s but with the manor of Truncheaunts, most of which lay in Alton Westbrook.

Unfortunately the old library site lies in the manor of Alton Eastbrook - in which the Beaumont family had only one property. That lay on the High Street, becoming the White Hart which has been replaced by Currys and the Halifax Building Society. All the rest of the Beaumont land lay on the other side of the river.

To have these new flats called Beaumont Court is historically incorrect, confusing and misleading - especially as the name may well be used in the future for property or roads that actually lie in the Beaumont's manor of Truncheaunts. It is also interesting that Beaumont means 'beautiful mount' - not a suitable name for a property down by the river!

### Beaumont family connections with Alton

The lord of the manor of Truncheaunts in the early 1400s was Henry, Lord Beaumont. He was descended from Henry de Beaumont, a French kinsman of Edward I who fought against the Scots in 1307. Henry the younger's father, John Lord Beaumont, had been Warden of the West Marches towards Scotland, Admiral of the North, Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports. In 1395, he was part of an Embassy to France to demand the Princess Isabel in marriage for the King. When John died in 1396, his son Henry was aged 16. He was knighted in 1399 at the coronation of Henry VI, becoming Lord Beaumont by 1404. In 1410 and 1411 he was one of the Commissioners to treat for peace with France. When Henry, Lord Beaumont, died in 1413, he held 'Truncheants Place' as well as property in Lincolnshire, London and elsewhere.

The Manor of Truncheaunts was then held by Henry's widow, Elizabeth, until she died in 1428. The property passed to Henry's heir, his son John Beaumont, who was aged 4 when his father died. John greatly distinguished himself both in war and at court and was created Viscount Beaumont, being the first person in England to hold the title. John was Constable of England 1445-50 and Great Chamberlain in 1450. He died on 10 July 1460, 'being slain under the Lancastrian banner, at the battle of Northampton'.

Truncheaunts then descended to John's son, William. He also inherited vast estates from his mother's family - the Lords Bar-dolph. William, like his father, supported the Lancastrian side in the Wars of the Roses and was taken prisoner at the Battle of Townton and 'his honours became forfeited'. These were restored by Henry VI in 1470 and, along with John de Vere Earl of Oxford, he held St Michael's Mount for the Lancastrians until December 1473. William was again taken prisoner but restored in 1485. Two years later he seems to have 'lost his reason' and his property and person were placed in the custody of the Earl of Oxford. In 1499, 'The Lord Beaumont' paid a quit rent of 40s for a half year 'for Trenchans' to the Lord of Alton Westbrook Manor and, in 1507, William, Viscount Beaumont, died holding 'Trenchant's Manor'. No children survived him.

In 1486, William had married his second wife, Elizabeth, daughter and co-heir of Henry 4th Lord Scrope of Bolton. On his death, she married John de Vere Earl of Oxford and became the Countess of Oxford, holding Truncheaunts until she died.

### More suitable names for the property?

The new flats have been built on a lower part of the grounds of Amery House. Amery was the manor house for the manor of Alton Eastbrook.

**Hockley** - in 1538/9 John and Maud Hockley and their son John leased the site and manor of Alton Eastbrook for 30 years.

**Knight** - in 1617 John Knight of Chawton gave, for ever, for the relief of the poor in Chawton, Warnford and Alton, a yearly rent of Six Pounds out of Amery Farm.

**Butler** - the Butler family had Amery from 1586 until 1736.

**Exall** - William Exall lived at Amery in the 1820s until the 1840s.

**Leslie** - Louis Leslie, M.D., physician and union medical officer, lived at Amery House in the 1870s and 1880s.

**Lowis** - John Mangles Lowis, J.P., lived at Amery House in the 1890s and 1900s.

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## GUEST SOCIETY - Holybourne Village Association

There have been huge changes in Holybourne in the 34 years since the Holybourne Village Association (HVA) was established in February 1974.

The number of residents has trebled from 500 to around 1500 as a result of major housing developments mainly to the south of London Road, and most of the businesses located in the village have disappeared. However, the sense of community has continued to develop and Holybourne remains a separately identifiable village within Alton.

The work of the HVA has helped to foster this sense of community. All villagers are members and the monthly meetings are open to all. Planning issues are always a major agenda item; we accept that both major and minor developments will occur and we focus on ensuring that these are compatible with allowing the village, which contains many listed buildings and a conservation area, to retain its rural feel and 'sense of place'. Our ability to do this will be enhanced by the development of the Alton Town Design Statement in which we are an enthusiastic participant.

Holybourne has no wish to have a Parish Council. The HVA maintains an excellent relationship with the Alton Town Council and we appreciate all the hard work they do on the village's behalf. However, the village does need to have an agreed set of priorities for things to work on over the next few years and so we are in the process of developing this with financial support from DEFRA, EHDC and ATC under the name of Shift (Steering Holybourne into the Future Together).

The other recent major project has been the enhancement of the village pond, for which we obtained funding from the National Lottery, EHDC and ATC. Over the years the HVA has run many projects to ensure that the pond remains in good condition, including building the island and the weir, but every few years new works are needed and these have recently been completed.

The HVA also has a role in supporting and running events for the village, for example the annual village picnic with the Cricket Club and carols round the Christmas tree.

The HVA tries to be as responsive to villagers' needs as we can, given that it is an entirely voluntary organisation. For example, we run twice-yearly village clean-ups and are currently starting a campaign to counter vandalism and anti-social behaviour with the help of the police.

Holybourne also has an excellent website ([www.holybourne.com](http://www.holybourne.com)) and an award winning village magazine which are both independently run but supported by the HVA.

The constitution of the HVA (from 1974) states the objective as being: 'to provide a regular forum for discussion of all matters of common interest to the residents of the village'. Over the years it has become much more than merely a forum for discussion; it has taken the lead in addressing village issues and will continue to do so, hopefully for at least the next 34 years. The latest edition of the Holybourne Village Magazine, which will also be on the website, contains a history of the HVA by Dr Christopher Everett to whom I am grateful for some of the content of the above.

*Nick Cane*

### Transport

Star Energy's application for the transport of compressed natural gas through Alton to the Humbly Grove site has been deferred yet again while they produce further risk assessments etc.. HCC has advised us that it will now be considered on 21<sup>st</sup> May.

*Edward Hepper*

### Greening Alton & Holybourne

After the resounding success of the public meeting on March 18th, residents chose ten 'challenges' to prompt us all to make simple changes to save energy and reduce waste. Look out for further information in the weekly Alton Herald and the May Altonian magazine and keep June Saturday 7th free for a day of fun, information and action.

*Chris Chappell*

## ALTON'S FUTURE — Alton Town Partnership Chairman takes a stand

I was at the February Community Forum. It made up part of the public consultation process related to the Core Strategy and the Local Development Framework. Right at the outset I and I think everybody else in the room was surprised when District and Town Councillor Alan Chick announced that he believed that our working assumption for Alton should be a population growing from its current level of maybe 18,500 to between 25,000 and 27,000.

The timeframe he was talking about was 20 years. To some extent the timeframe is neither here nor there. The anticipated growth is the key issue. Since that meeting I have listened to different people commenting and they seem to me to fall into three but hopefully four main groups.

First, there are the 'Graveyard Groupies'. *"Over my dead body,"* they say, *"it'll destroy the whole character of the place, it simply won't be the kind of place I want to live in."* You might naturally assume that these are all on the more mature side, but you'd be wrong – plenty of younger people and families here also. You might also imagine that these voices lack a Hampshire burr, but again you would be wrong – incomers past and recent join with those whose families have been in the area for generations. Interestingly I've heard the same from young kids who have lived their lives here and don't want to see it change.

Then there are the 'Fearful Fatalists'. *"I know. Terrible,"* they say, *"but what can you do, it doesn't make any difference what we say, It'll happen anyway."* Again I could let you guess who says something like this. Again you might imagine this response from specific groups of people. And again you'd be wrong. All sorts of people think this way: well off and not so well off, young and old, incomers and born 'n bred.

And then we have the 'Manic Modernists'. *"Forget the past,"* they say, *"you've got to move with the times. This place could do with a real shake up. There's nothing to do, no decent shops, it's boring. We need to get a move on."* Again you might think you could imagine the people with this opinion. But I promise you I've heard this from the most unlikely of people.

The final group I'm calling the 'Purposeful Positivists'. They often start by saying, *"I love this place you know."* And then they go on to say things like, *"We're so lucky to live here. But we can't ignore change. We need change. But the right kind of change."*

Like the other groups, this one is made up of all sorts. Like the other groups, what holds them together is a state of mind.

Unlike other groups, the people in this one are quite open-minded.

And because they're open-minded they can take the arguments of the other groups, cast some of them aside, develop others and arrive not at a compromise, but at a balanced view of the future.

They are people who look at the glass see it half-full rather than half-empty and then start doing something positive to help fill it up.

They seek to see things from an unselfish point of view. They work for the whole community, not any one part of it. They want to ensure that when things change they change for the better,

that it works to our community's advantage rather than its disadvantage.

They look to find and develop the positive aspects of change rather than focus their attention on the negative bits.

A lawn expert once told me that the best way to get rid of weeds was to feed and care for the grass so that it became so strong and healthy that it literally suffocated the weeds.

It seems to me that 'Purposeful Positivists' work like this.

'Purposeful Positivists' were there at the beginning of the Vision for Alton Steering Group which produced the 2020 Town Plan; they were there when the Alton Town Partnership came into being.

And they are still with us, working for improvements in transport, in healthcare, in community facilities and support, in the natural and built environment, in support for local businesses.

It was 'Purposeful Positivists' from the Alton Society and elsewhere who excited public interest and involvement in The Town Design Statement – a beautifully balanced piece of work which will help Alton to manage change and manage it for the good of us all. And of course it was hundreds of Purposeful Positivists who guided and helped provide the hard evidence that backs up every ounce of guidance in the statement.

Contd. opposite Page 7

## FLOOD MEADOWS

Work continues on the maintenance and care of our precious Flood Meadows by an enthusiastic group of volunteers who selflessly give up their Sunday mornings once per month.

Last month we focussed on a thorough clean-up of the site in support of the Youth Council who had organised a Town Litter Pick / Spring Clean.

The river Wey is flowing very well and there is a nice gravel bed in witness of the good flow. No wonder we are so concerned about the very real threat by the water company to recommence pumping to extract water from the head of the Wey above Flood Meadows. We have it on good authority from a recent study that, in developing a River Wey Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS), the Environment Agency concluded that ground water abstraction of the North Wey around Alton is "over licensed".

If existing licences were used to their full allocation they would have the potential to cause unacceptable environmental impact at low flow. We know indeed that flow does reduce to low, and sometimes nil, rates at various times throughout the seasons.

The Environment Agency aims to reduce the amount of abstraction in the ground water and have said "they will encourage licence holders in sensitive areas to voluntarily reduce their licensed abstraction quantities". One of our volunteers is pursuing ways of getting the water company to at least limit or more preferably not to recommence extraction.

Should you have strong views on this or wish to assist in our work, then please contact me on 01420 82780. Prime intent of work in Flood Meadows at present is to seek a way to remove large deposits of silt which are building up in the bottom of the old watercress beds. This is an enormous task which cannot be easily solved without lots of back-breaking work—or otherwise without the use of mechanical equipment that is currently unavailable to us. So there is plenty going on and now that the weather is improving it makes the work parties on the third Sunday of each month great fun to attend. Would you like to join us? Then contact me and I will give you the details of how to meet up with us – we would be delighted to see you.

*Mike Heelis*

## ALTON'S FUTURE — Alton Town Partnership Chairman takes a stand contd. from Page 6

It is 'Purposeful Positivists' who are now deeply involved in the Core Strategy and Local Development Framework ; who will look at projected growth levels in the town's population and work for a proper balance between growth and the infrastructure to satisfy the needs of growth, whilst always having regard for the character and sense of place that Alton owns.

It is 'Purposeful Positivists' who have begun to consider how we can initiate regeneration in the area surrounding our station; how it might be made more attractive, become a better gateway to the town to the many thousands whose first sight of Alton it is.

It is Purposeful Positivists who have started the Greening Alton and Holybourne campaign due to be launched spectacularly on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June.

It's 'Purposeful Positivists' that help keep the Town we love going. They're in Charities and Voluntary Organisations, the Community Association, Residents' Associations

Sports and other Clubs, the Chamber of Commerce, the Lions, Roundtable, Rotary, Masons, the Churches and Other Faith Groups [the trouble with lists is those that are missing – I apologise to any who can't see themselves somewhere in this list.]

And of course it's 'Purposeful Positivists' who commit themselves to representing our interests at Town, District, County Level and even beyond.

Alton Town Partnership salutes 'Purposeful Positivists'. One of our roles is to bring such positivists together, to find ways of combining more effectively so that we all have a louder voice and greater influence where it counts.

If you would like to become part of a Purposeful, Positive, Partnership whether as an individual, an organisation or a business please contact

Chris McCallum

chrism@alton-in-partnership.org Tel: 01420 549684

## IMPRESSIONS OF A NEWCOMER TO ALTON - The Proposed New Community Centre

The proposed new Community Centre development should be located at ground level in the car park area near the existing building between the River Wey and the row of large trees to allow the new buildings, including a new glazed Café and new glazed terraces, to overlook a proposed new Wey River Gardens.

### THE PARKING ARRANGEMENTS

The car parking area exit should be moved from the existing Wey River bridge crossing to a new exit into Amery Street because this would enable the full length of the exposed River Wey and the pond to be landscaped as a new Wey River Gardens, allowing the Centre and the Theatre to benefit from facing these Gardens without the unwelcome intrusion of vehicles leaving the parking area.

### A COMMUNITY CENTRE AND A THEATRE

It would be greatly beneficial to the success of both facilities if the new Community Centre included the new Theatre for, say, 120 with 10 curved/raked rows of 12 seats with side aisles only and projection room for light/sound and showing specialist films.

The new glazed Café should be located between the new Community Centre and the new Theatre so that it would become more viable and also would allow each facility to develop in its own way, but within an overall development scheme.

The new glazed Café should include a glazed terrace overlooking the Wey River Gardens which should be extended either side to include a glazed lounge area for the new Community Centre and a glazed bar area for the new Theatre, thereby providing a very attractive year-round "outside living" feature for all three facilities.

### REPLACING THE EXISTING CENTRE

The existing Community Centre is to be demolished with the River Wey opened up so then, together with the pond on the other side of Amery Street, it should form part of the new Wey River Gardens. This noisy "island" site would not be suitable for residential use; so it should become available for incorporating, say, a privately-funded Squash Racquets Club with a Ballet-Dance Studio set on an upper floor overlooking the pond, which would provide a very attractive and popular activities-centre served by buses and taxis, with excellent parking, in the heart of Alton Town.

### THE EFFECT ON CAR PARKING

It is inevitable that this new development would necessitate the sacrifice of some car parking but with the demolition of the brick shed and some rearrangements, spaces could be replaced. However, the benefit which this new Activities Centre could offer the townspeople would outweigh the loss of only relatively few car parking spaces. However, more spaces would have to be sacrificed if this site became residential.

### A GREAT OPPORTUNITY

It must be seldom that a bustling historic town is offered such a great opportunity to introduce into the heart of its commercial area a significant Activities-Centre which includes a formidable combination of Community Centre plus Theatre plus Squash Racquets Club and Ballet-Dance Studio, plus a new glazed Café and Terraces located to overlook an attractive new riverside Garden, all of which are near the local Library and served by excellent adjacent parking with buses and taxis.

*Norman Isham, OBE*

## Landscape Planting

In the last newsletter, a newcomer to the town described some of his impressions. Arising from this, the Society has decided to launch a new project to improve the appearance of the town relatively inexpensively by planting a few trees and shrubs to mask some of the less attractive corners. This will be a joint venture with the Town Council and the Alton Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI).

We are grateful to Hampshire County Council for granting us £500 from its Fund for Local Community Initiatives. Together with our own funds, we hope to have made a start by the end of this month by planting a tree and two shrubs on the two grassed areas in front of the fire station.

We will be working with the ACCI and the Alton in Bloom committee to identify other sites around the town where we can use some of our starter funds and encourage other frontage owners to sponsor their own trees and shrubs in the autumn and we are confident that the town could present a greener and more attractive appearance next year.

We shall also be working with the ACCI to try to encourage their members to spruce up their premises, some of which show a rather forlorn and uncared-for appearance - more of that in the next issue.



## Join the Alton Society Now - have a say and a role in the future of our town

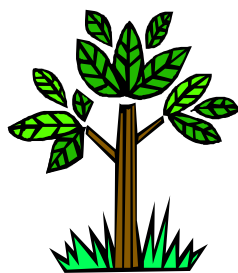
The membership subscription is £10 per household from 1st October 2007  
Ask for a leaflet for its standing order form and to agree to the subscription being treated as Gift Aid.

Contact our Treasurer: Jan Nicholas, 10 Barton End, Alton, GU34 1LD.  
Tel.: 01420 88411. E-mail: jnich1515@aol.com

***For existing members who already pay by standing order, please note that if you have not done so already, you need to instruct your bank to increase the amount payable to £10. Thank you.***

### Important Dates for your Diary

6th May	End of Consultation on EHDC Core Strategy
15th May	End of Consultation on Town Design Statmt
18th May	Next Flood Meadows Working Party
21st May	Star Energy Application considered by HCC
31st May	Deadline for Panel Member nominations
24th June	EHDC Community Forum, Medstead Village Hall for Launch of Town Design Statement
31st July	Deadline for Individual Award Nominations



Acknowledgements should have been given in the previous newsletter to :-

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The Alton Gazette for supply of the photo on the front page taken of the Individual Award presentation made to Luath Grant Ferguson.

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**Jan Nicholas** (June—August)  
**Nick Carey-Thomas** (Sept—Nov)

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(a members only service)