

# Stoneygate

Newsletter  
Autumn 2007

*Conservation Area Society (SCAS)*



At one time Stoneygate consisted mostly of large mansions but many have now gone and the ones that remain have been divided up into flats or are used by institutions. **The Beeches in Elmfield Avenue** is one of the few that are still in use as a family home. It was bought by the Brucciani family in 1997 after having been left unaltered by the previous owners for fifty years; indeed only partly occupied by them as living space since it also served as a flour store for their windmill.

The house was designed by Draper and Walters in 1901 for Mr George Cresswell Turner and at that time the property extended eastwards down the hill as far as Oakfield Road. It was intended to face that way to enjoy a view over Evington valley but in 1934 half the garden was sold off to build Dixon Drive and so now the main frontage of the house is southwards to Elmfield Avenue. Some original stonework from outbuildings has been reused in reorienting the approach to the house.

Newsletter Production: Nick Knight, Nita Foale. SCAS Chair: Matt Matthew  
Contacts: [anthony.matthew@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:anthony.matthew@tiscali.co.uk) (Phone 0116 270 3143)  
[nicholas.knight@lycos.co.uk](mailto:nicholas.knight@lycos.co.uk) (Phone 0116 270 2532)



Although the house was in sound condition and with many charming original features a great deal of work was required to make it comfortable, such as installing central heating without doing any harm to the very fine woodwork. The main part of the house has oak floors and panelling and is arranged around the hall and landings without corridors, while the servants' wing used pine and had lower ceilings, narrower stairs and fewer windows. One task was to integrate that with the rest of the house and the separate kitchen, scullery and pantry have been combined into a modern kitchen with a wall opened up, and a conservatory along the north side of the house also forming a link between the two domains.



Despite the mixed oak and tile appearance of the house, the architects were innovative in using steel and concrete well ahead of their time and the very complex roof has also lasted well. Cresswell Turner was a keen botanist and originally there was a palm house which, although not itself preserved, contained some fine stained glass that has been reused elsewhere in the house.

The hall is surrounded with a frieze of peacocks moulded in plaster and the Tudor-style oak porch has intricate carving which has survived a century of weather. Even some original Chinese wallpaper is still in good condition.



The Bruccianis found the planning department quite helpful in assessing their alterations but they think it was fortunate that the house was not listed. While the project took longer than originally expected the result must be extremely satisfying and should be an inspiration for anyone attempting anything similar.

LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY &  
LEICESTERSHIRE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2007**

**VICTORIAN LEICESTER**

**Or the Architect, the Eccentric and the Travel Agent**

*A Guided Walk by Stuart Bailey*  
From the GUILDHALL at 11.00am

**Cost: £2.50**

(Followed by Lunch in the "Slug & Lettuce", Pocklington's Walk)

# *Article 4 - What it means for Stoneygate*

## **More Protection for Buildings in the Conservation Area**

Shortly after the publication of the article in our last newsletter on the subject, the Council applied an 'Article 4' designation to the Conservation Area under the Town & Country Planning Act. This designation -which has already been applied to several other City conservation areas- introduces stricter controls on alterations to buildings and structures 'within the curtilage of a property' that do not normally require permission from the local planning authority (so-called 'permitted development'). All owner-occupied homes in the SCA will have received an official notification to this effect in April.

Many things combine to create the character of a conservation area but, generally, the most important element is the buildings themselves - the materials they are built from, such as brick & timber, and their finer architectural details, such as their windows and doors. They are often enhanced by coloured window glass, decorative timber porches, bay windows, tall chimneys or decorative ironwork and rainwater pipes.



Unfortunately, as we all know, the designation of a conservation area does not in itself protect the character of an area. Much of that responsibility lies with property owners and alterations made by owners exercising their permitted development rights can have a dramatic effect not only on the appearance of a single building but on the area as a whole.

The cumulative effect of lots of such changes can eventually destroy the architectural and historic interest that made the area worthy of conservation area status in the first place. Unauthorised works such as the fitting of unsympathetic uPVC windows and doors and - in the worst cases- the building of unsympathetic extensions compound the problem. The stricter controls will strengthen the council's ability to safeguard the integrity of the Conservation Area and preserve and enhance its character. They apply to those parts of a property which either face the public highway and/or public open spaces or which can be seen from them. Permission will now need to be sought for such work as;

- *Extensions and other alterations*
- *Replacing any windows and doors*
- *Alterations to the roof such as re-roofing or alterations to the chimneys and ridge tiles*
- *Erecting porches or buildings in gardens*
- *Creating a hard surface for car parking or other use*
- *Taking down or putting up garden walls or fences*
- *Covering walls with cladding, render or painting brickwork*
- *Installing a satellite dish.*

(continued overleaf)

Introducing Article 4 further acknowledges Stoneygate's historical importance. June Gray of the Council's Conservation & Nature Dept reassured members of the public at SCAS's AGM that responsible owners had nothing to fear from the new rules and that she and her colleagues were always willing to offer advice on conversation-friendly maintenance issues; a message echoed by a very helpful leaflet delivered to all owner-occupied homes in April when the legislation took effect. For copies & advice phone June or one of the Conservation Team on 0116-252-7217.

## SCAS AGM - 2007

The Annual General Meeting took place at the St John's Church Octagon Room in Clarendon Park Road on May 21st. Over 70 people were there, an all-time record attendance. Guest speakers were June Gray and Judith Carstairs from the Conservation and Nature Team, Leicester City Council, who talked about the new Character Appraisal and took questions from the floor. Tea, coffee & biscuits were enjoyed by all.



### FOUND

At the AGM, a Red Folding Umbrella, was left on a chair in the front row. Will the owner please contact Odette 270 5623 to have it restored

## New Licensing for your HMO from home

HMO? It stands for Houses in Multiple Occupation; essentially houses let to several individual tenants who share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet. Usually such houses have been converted into bedsits or other non-self-contained accommodation but buildings converted into self-contained flats which did not meet the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations and in which more than one-third of the flats are let on short-term tenancies also qualify.

There are a large number of HMOs in the SCA and since 6 April 2006 landlords of HMOs of 3 or more storeys and which are occupied by '5 or more persons forming two or more households' are required by law to purchase a license.

HMOs provide affordable housing for many young and vulnerable tenants. However they are often poorly managed and in poor physical condition and can leave tenants at risk from poor fire safety and standards, overcrowding and inadequate facilities. An ENTEC risk assessment for the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions on fire safety in HMOs concluded that in houses of three or more storeys converted into bedsits the annual risk of death per person is sixteen times higher than average.

Landlord registration and voluntary landlord accreditation schemes have existed for some time but this new scheme aims to raise and unify standards across the country. A license will be granted for a property if it is suitable for occupation and meets minimum standards in terms of the number of bathrooms, toilets, washbasins, showers, cooking and laundry facilities. The local housing authority will also need to be satisfied that the house will be managed by someone who is competent and fit to manage it. Landlords of licensable HMOs will receive support from local housing authorities and by guaranteeing tenants a certain standard of accommodation, reputable landlords will no longer have to face unfair competition from those who undercut rents and offer poor quality. The licences may contain several discretionary requirements of particular interest to SCAS members:

- The licence holder shall ensure that at all times. gardens. yards and other areas within the curtilage of the house are kept in a reasonably clean and tidy condition and free from rodent infestation.
- The licence holder shall maintain the exterior of the property in reasonable decorative order and in reasonable repair.
- The licence holder shall make suitable and adequate provision for refuse storage and collection at the house

The LCC has been holding Landlords' Forums to prepare for the new legislation and have publicized the practical help they are able to offer in the Landlords' Forums newsletter. This includes free information for landlords on the arrangements available for collection and recycling of domestic waste and advice that will help them avoid the Fixed Penalty Notices introduced under new Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment legislation to deter, for instance, the cluttering of pavements with wheelie bins.

According to a recent paper issued by Office of the Deputy Prime, "Raising standards of management will benefit tenants and the wider community". As a reminder to landlords of what is at stake, the title page states "No property licence, no rent". The government's serious and practical commitment to helping improve all aspects of community life is to be welcomed but -as always- its success will depend on the vigilance of residents and the willingness and ability of the Council to implement and then enforce the new legislation.

***The Stoneygate Conservation Area Society recommends***

***Sunday 9th September 2007***

## ***GEMS OF STONEYGATE***

***A FREE guided tour (1-hour or so) of the Conservation Area's architectural treasures in the company of June Gray and Judith Carstairs of the City Council's Conservation and Nature Team, loosely based on Richard Gill's 'Walks around Victorian Leicester'***

**MEET OUTSIDE CLARENDON PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, LONDON ROAD  
2.00PM**

***Advanced booking is essential. Please phone 0116-2527296***

# Grants for Renovation:

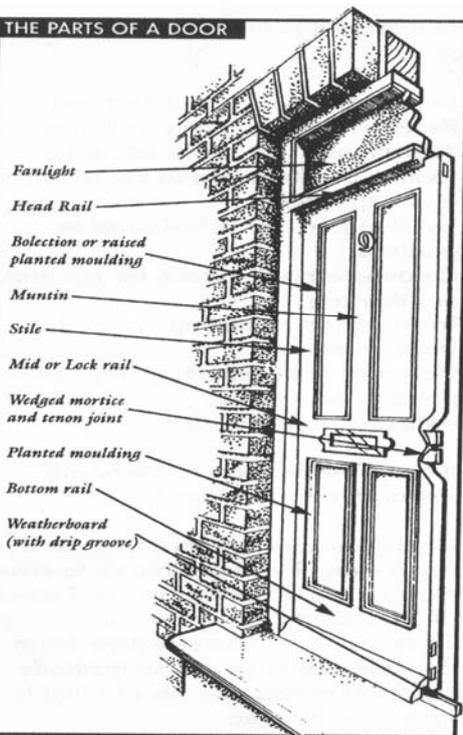
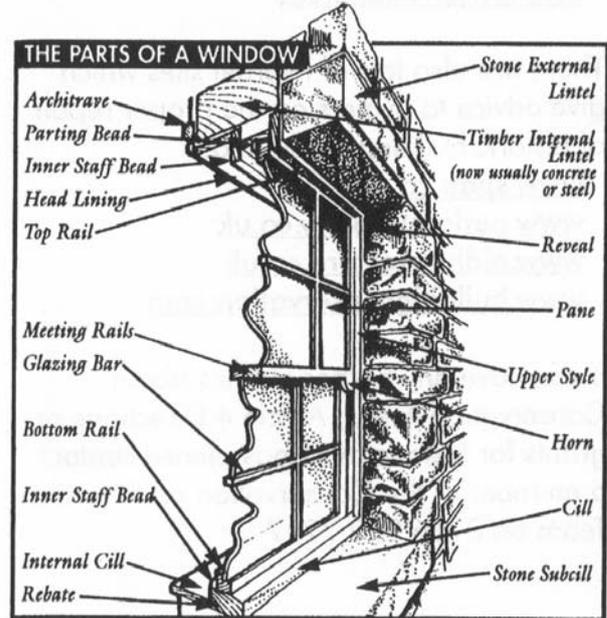
## City Council Backs Up Fine Words With Funds

As a householder in the conservation area, you may not be aware that the Council's Historic Buildings Grant Scheme provides funding for repairs to the original features of historic buildings or the reinstatement of missing features.

The scheme's purpose is to encourage owners to preserve the key elements of a historic building's character such as traditional sliding sash windows.

Owners of historic buildings within conservation areas can claim 50% of the cost of eligible works up to a maximum of £2,000.

Grants are subject to the availability of funding and the percentage and amount of grant offered will be at the discretion of the Conservation and Nature Team Leader. Applications for grant assistance are assessed on a competitive basis every three months. The grant programme is not means tested and owners will not have to repay the grant if the property is later sold. Because of the limited funds available, priority is given to repairs to listed buildings and buildings at risk followed by highly notable buildings within conservation areas. A copy of the application form can be obtained from:



Late nineteenth century clay chimney pots

**Judith Carstairs**  
 (Judith.Carstairs@leicester.gov.uk)  
**Urban Design Group**  
**Leicester City Council**  
**A7 New Walk Centre**  
**Welford Place**  
**Leicester**  
**LE1 6ZG**

There are lots of internet sites which give advice to owners on the proper repair of historic buildings. These include:

- [www.spab.co.uk](http://www.spab.co.uk)
- [www.periodproperty.co.uk](http://www.periodproperty.co.uk)
- [www.oldhousestore.co.uk](http://www.oldhousestore.co.uk)
- [www.buildingconservation.com](http://www.buildingconservation.com)

LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY IS PROUD TO PRESENT

## MY LIFE AS AN ARTIST

AN EVENING WITH OLWEN HUGHES MBE. M. PHIL.  
 THE LEICESTER MERCURY SKETCHBOOK ARTIST

**TUESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2007**

THE SECULAR HALL, HUMBERSTONE GATE, LEICESTER  
 7.30-9.00PM - WITH TIME FOR QUESTIONS

**ADMISSION £2.50**

MEMBERS FREE - BRING YOUR FRIENDS

## Planning Matters (May 2007 – August 2007)



The conversion of large residential properties into smaller units continues with **290 London Road** being the most recent to receive approval and work continuing apace at the impressive 'Knighton Croft' apartment conversion at **27 Knighton Road**. As we mentioned in the last newsletter, permission is increasingly being sought to change large houses converted for 'social' uses during the 1960s and 70s into apartments. Recently approved apartment developments

at **3-5 Knighton Park Road** and **14 Victoria Park Road** (ex-care homes) and **50-52 Knighton Drive** (ex-university residences) are examples of this.

The 'Senior Assisted Living Community' development by Signature Senior Lifestyle on the former South Lodge site at **307 London Road** (ex-Day Centre) featured in the last newsletter was approved in June. The similarly featured Charles Church housing development at **20-26 Elms Road** (ex-university residences) was also approved and is underway.



Changes in modern lifestyles and the housing market suggest that these trends are unlikely to be reversed in the near future. However, there are positive signs that both developers and planners are beginning to understand the value of creating sustainable, high-quality developments which enhance the area and do not overstretch its limited resources.



Motor traffic and parking remain particularly serious challenges in parts of the SCA but there is evidence that the extra burden placed on the existing infrastructure by new apartments is being recognised and travel plans and parking provision are becoming increasingly important requirements for the success of any application.

This new attitude has been reflected in the treatment of several recent planning applications relating to both first-time flat conversions and the refurbishment of existing flats, most recently, at **4 Clarendon Park Road**; an application that SCAS objected to on the grounds of overdevelopment (it was refused). Finally, although outside the Conservation Area, the planners' rejection of the **College Hall** proposals which would have seen **Latimer House** demolished is surely worth a mention; not least as an illustration that 'silent majority' public opinion can still be aroused by the right sort of cause!



### The Importance of Making a Clear Planning Application



The Campaign for Plain English awards a Crystal Mark to examples of excellence but is there a Crystal Mark for planning applications? Perhaps there should be. A recent planning decision underlines the importance of making your intentions crystal clear through both drawings and written documentation when submitting a planning application. Plans submitted to the Council for an extension to **21 Central Avenue** did not make clear that a 'hanging' window on the side wall of the house would be lost in the process and permission was refused as a

result. Planning Officers advise SCAS that applicants should carefully consider the impact of their proposals and ensure that, if documents are submitted on their behalf by architects or agents, they make explicit all the proposed changes

### A Word About Trees

Most of the applications over the last few months have been for work on trees, either cutting them back or cutting them down. It is good that so many residents realise that permission is required for such work but we hope that it is not an indication that the area is becoming less green and that in most cases where a tree has to be removed another is planted.

### Online Information about Planning Applications

Those of you with internet access who haven't already discovered the City Council Planning Department's excellent website can now use the online planning applications database to find information on all applications made since 1948 and also to check the latest weekly lists of planning applications and decisions yourselves. For each new application the site has downloadable copies of the outline proposals, drawings and other documents, thus saving you a time-consuming visit to New Walk Centre. Follow the links from <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/planning/>.

### Stoneygate Conservation Area Society

I/we wish to join the Society/renew membership & enclose a cheque for £5 (per household per year) as from April 1st 2007



Name: .....

Address:.....Postcode.....

Contact Phone: .....email:.....

Make cheques payable to **Stoneygate Conservation Area Society** & send to Odette Fogler, Membership Secretary 5 Calbri Court, 37 Knighton Drive LE2 3HD (270 5623)