

Stoneygate

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2002

Conservation Area Society

SIGNS OF A FEW PROBLEMS!

The forest of no-parking signs that has sprung up to accompany the new yellow lines on our streets has angered a number of residents.

And the message from the city council is: Let's get them all up first and then we'll see if we can move them!

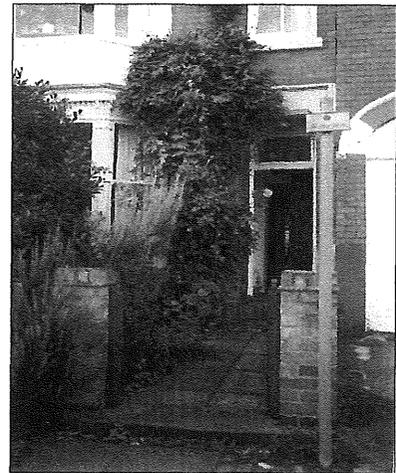
A member of SCAS who found herself with a sign immediately in front of her gatepost, although the yellow lines related to the driveway of the house next door, wrote in protest to the council.

A traffic officer has replied that the

council is entitled to install such street furniture without consulting residents. He will make every effort to accommodate her wish that the sign be moved, but cannot treat the matter as urgent.

He adds: "Aware of the massive workload that my team currently faces the Group Manager has instructed me to wait until all of the signing in the Clarendon Park area is completed and checked before dealing with the numerous requests for

□ Continued overleaf.



Intrusive . . . one member's sign.

Help us to celebrate our silver jubilee in 2003

Leicester City Council set up three conservation area societies 25 years ago, of which only SCAS survives.

If you were at the meeting in St John's School that launched SCAS, tell us what you recall about it and anything you feel has been achieved in its 25 years.

SCAS has accumulated a small amount of money over the years. The following possibilities for celebrating the jubilee in 2003

were floated at the AGM.

Recording our past: inaugurating and supporting an oral history of the area; locating houses where significant people lived or worked, then organising a celebrity walk.

Recording our present: photographing the diverse people, activities, buildings and places for a jubilee book and another public exhibition; or creating a montage in a public place. Either could contribute to another project, creating a website about Stoneygate.

Improving our environment: It is hard to envisage how limited funds could make the sort of impact that public drinking fountains made in the past, but do you have an idea?

Enabling more community connections: perhaps co-ordinating a Stoneygate picnic in Victoria Park, or organising a day of open gardens.

We have neither the funds nor the person power to do all of these - but we will do some of them. Contact any committee

member if you would like to volunteer to help, or if you have bright ideas of your own.

□ Stop press: All who remember our Living History exhibition two years ago will be delighted to hear that we are repeating the event on 1 February at the Friends Meeting House, Queen's Road.

Do you have photographs or other material we could display? Contact Madeleine Cooke.

Dig out your old photos

Dr Helen Boynton, a respected local historian, has published books on many parts of Leicester, including Victoria Park, London Road and, most recently, New Walk.

She is researching Clarendon Park, Queen's Road and Knighton now and would be delighted to hear from anybody who has photographs of or information on old buildings in the area.

Contact her at 7 The Fairway, Oadby, LE2 2HH.

People power wins the day



Reprived . . . 27 Knighton Road

Two applications concerning 27 Knighton Road, the former University Chaplaincy, were the subject of heated debate at our AGM in May: to demolish it, and to replace it with a block of flats.

We all felt that if this large Victorian house were to be demolished, then potentially no building in the conservation area would be safe from speculative property development. It would be all too easy to repeat the ravages of the 1960s and 1970s, when so many large Stonegate houses were demolished and replaced by blocks of flats.

A group of neighbours around Knighton Road organised themselves as a local action group to op-

pose the proposal, producing a petition and letters to the city council. SCAS supported their action, wrote a letter of formal objection and discussed the proposal with officers in the council's Development Control Team.

The upshot of all this was that the council welcomed local opposition and made it clear to the applicant that it would not entertain the proposals - which were subsequently withdrawn.

Of course, further vigilance will be needed. But it does show what local action can achieve.

- A new application has

now been posted to build around the old house to create 19 flats with parking in the front garden.

SCAS has told the council that it is not happy with this, in terms of the effect of the blocks on the immediate environment and the appearance of the sur-

rounding area.

We have said that we believe the site is already overcrowded and the new proposals would lead to serious overdevelopment. Loss of trees and light, inadequate on-site parking and traffic hazards in nearby roads are concerns.

It continues to be a very busy time for planning applications in the conservation area. Fortunately, we can report that local residents are actively organising themselves to tackle proposals, with support from SCAS.

An example is a proposed development of three bungalows on former allotment land at the rear of 196 Queen's Road, with access from the very narrow Avenue Road cul-de-sac. This could open the top area of the allotments for further building development..

Residents have mobilised themselves, held a meeting with the local councillor and written letters of objection to the council.

Signs of a few problems

□ From Page One.

the relocation of individual signs . . . By dealing with all of the requests for the relocations of signs together there will be substantial time and cost savings."

These yellow lines will almost certainly reduce accidents, but in concert with proposed works on London Road there is a danger that this traffic management will convert even more local streets into unofficial car parks for commuters working in the city.

It may be unworkable without an accompanying residents' parking scheme. We're looking into the pros and cons of such schemes, and would value your views and comments.

Meanwhile, the summer was notable for the number of road closures imposed at short notice.

- St Mary's Road was closed for St Crispin's school fete one Saturday in June, with absolutely no notice.
- London Road was closed for much of August 23.
- London Road, Victoria Park Road and many more were closed for One Big Sunday on September 8, an event the council assured us "Leicester should be proud to be hosting."

These events, and the associated closures, certainly inconvenience residents. We wonder how decisions to close roads are taken, and for whose benefit.

Chance to see plans

Public exhibitions on the London Road improvements were held by the city council at St James the Greater Church Hall on November 26 and Knighton Memorial Hall, Holbrook Road, on November 30.

We hope members attended!

Planning applications

The following is a summary of planning applications considered by the society's committee since the last newsletter and some of the decisions taken by the city council on applications within the conservation area over that period.

There have been many applications for the felling and pruning of trees in the conservation area.

There are also continuing concerns about the erection of telecommunication masts and satellite dishes on public buildings in the area.

Mayfield Roundabout: there is still no planning applications but ideas to change the road layout are definitely being considered by the council - watch this space!

The committee has also been concerned about further applications for bars on Queen's Road and even though these are outside the conservation area, some details are given here.

Knighton Hayes, Ratcliffe Road: demolition of three-storey building and erection of four-storey building and 14 flats - approved.

27 Knighton Road: demolition and replacement with block of flats - withdrawn.

32 Ratcliffe Road: internal and external changes - approved.

London Road Congregational Church: three polar antennae and two cabinets - approved.

Queen's Road Allotments: Forty-

six houses - approved.

19 Toller Road: demolition of dwelling and replacement with four houses - refused.

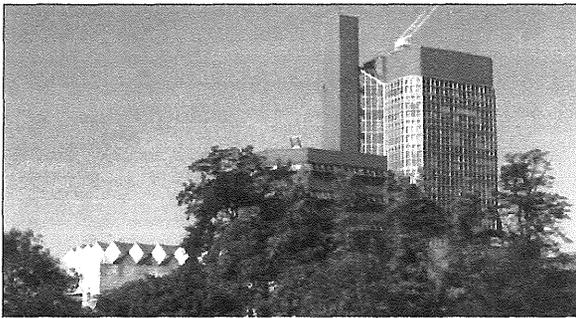
56-58 Queen's Road: change of use to café/bar - approved but amendment pending.

120 Queen's Road: change of use to restaurant/bar - pending.

26 Knighton Park Road (The Laurels): removal of two holly trees - pending.

Adjacent to 2 Southernhay Road: detached house, garage, fell one tree and works to two others - pending.

Rear of 196 Queen's Road: three bungalows - pending.



From this . . .

Stand at the corner of Queen's Road and Victoria Park Road and look across the park to the university's Engineering Building.

Now turn round and consider the block of flats rising on that corner, or rather the computer image of the finished structure that David Wilson Homes has been proudly displaying.

The Engineering Building, designed almost half a century ago, is still Leicester's most interesting modern building. The apartment block must be one of its dullest.

Cutting-edge architecture cannot be expected from

. . . to this!

volume housebuilders. But is The Laurels - as uninspiring as its name - really the best that could have been done on this prominent site? An Eighties postmodern commercial building with token domestic features (or, as one observer put it, a Battenberg cake made of Lego)?

There are ordinary flats from the 1950s in our area - never mind James Stirling's delightfully innovative work across the park - that look fresher than The Laurels.

This development - just outside the conservation area - is a waste of an opportunity, and we hope the planners will in future give more thought to designs for such exceptional sites.

Could more of our buildings be listed?

An extremely successful autumn walk took place on Sunday, October 6, led by the noted local architectural historian, Richard Gill, who was as always informative and entertaining.

On this occasion we walked the square between Clarendon Park Road, Queen's Road and Montague Road/Knighton Park Road, taking in Richard's ideas for potential extensions to the conservation area and buildings that could be listed.

The event was enjoyed by 32 members of SCAS. Many thanks again to Richard - we shall call on your services again.

SCAS CONTACTS

Chair: Diane Hall 221 5630

Co-ordinator: David Oldershaw 270 0010

Treasurer: Henry Evans 270 2169

Membership: Odette Fogler 270 5623

PR: Madeleine Cooke 270 6420

Newsletter: Jennifer Clegg 270 5181 and Julia Killey 210 9077

Trees: Caroline Cook 210 9685

Members: Tom Copp 270 4975, Anna Reville 270 9885

Meetings are quarterly, enjoyable and informative. New committee members are always welcome. If you would like to join SCAS or renew your membership, please return the form below.

Stoneygate Conservation Area Society

JOIN US!

I/we wish to join the Society/renew membership and enclose cash/cheque for £3 (per household per year) as from 1 April 2002. Cheques should be made payable to Stoneygate Conservation Area Society.

Name

Address

Tel

Send to: Odette Fogler, 5 Calbri Court, 37 Knighton Drive, Leicester LE2 3HD (tel 270 5623).