



KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY

www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk



ANNUAL REPORT 2021–2022

Chairman's report

Alison Gifford

Despite the restrictions of the past two years, the committee of the Civic Society have been as busy as ever behind the scenes this year. We were very keen to meet in person again rather than on Zoom, and by August 2021 we were meeting face to face in the Great Hall at Thoresby College. I hear about societies with almost moribund or inactive committee members and trustees, but I can assure the membership of the Civic Society that everybody on the committee works very hard and we achieve a lot, much of it behind the scenes in planning responses and letters.

Ian Price, who is also our invaluable treasurer, collates a weekly list of new or revised planning applications that affect King's Lynn and circulates it to our planning committee of Kim Leonard, Robert Fayers, Rick Morrish, Julian Litten and Helen Russell-Johnson. They review the applications, compile comments and decide whether a letter is required, sometimes also circulating to other interest groups or Borough Councillors for additional input. We take this role seriously as we feel that without a Town Council, there is otherwise no single independent organisation reviewing development proposals over the town – which is potentially a great weakness in our local planning system. Kim Leonard is also our representative on the CAAP (Conservation Areas Advisory Panel), made up of people from outside bodies. The Panel advises the Council on planning applications in Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. The Panel generally meets once a month or when needed and the Panel's comments are incorporated into a future agenda for the Planning Committee. Kim's report on CAAP is on page 17.

I think Lynn town centre is thriving; it's lost some big players like Debenhams and Burtons, but that was exacerbated and not caused by the lockdown. Economic regeneration comes from the bottom up, not the top down. The word on the High Street is that Debenhams has an investor already, four units and flats above. The building is a gem and I hope that whatever plans take shape, they take into account the beautiful coloured glass and other internal architectural flourishes. This part of High Street can seem a bit empty, but I see Arterton's old shop is to be an eco-friendly

delicatessen with Michael Baldwin at the helm. Ian tells us about empty properties in town on page 23.

We still wait for concrete (!) news about the empty silo site and the Sommerfeld and Thomas warehouse on the riverside. The silos were demolished in 2010 and the warehouse has been empty for many years, maybe thirty. Again, we hear that investors might be showing interest. Development here will no doubt have constraints and challenges – but it appears to be a prime site for an upmarket mixed-use development. What is the problem? In the meantime, Veronica Sekules and partners have quietly proceeded to ‘regenerate’ the west end of Purfleet Street with pleasing results. Well done to these local entrepreneurs!

In an area of historic towns and villages surrounded by beautiful countryside, some of it of Special Scientific Interest, we do wonder if one Conservation Officer and one tree specialist in a huge area like West Norfolk is really the right level of officer employment. Of course, we acknowledge that public money must be carefully spent, but what can be more important than conserving our built and natural environments in the long term? They are the economic driver of a large and important sector of local businesses. No Hunstanton without the beach, no visitors to our coastal paths without the marshes and creeks and similarly visitors to King’s Lynn and other towns and villages don’t want jolting new developments or installations out of keeping with the character of the area. All buildings were new once, yet there can be a Carnegie library building (1904) and an Argos type building (1974?) in the same town! Something went wrong. That’s why a Conservation Officer to advise the planning committee is so important.

This is a controversy which has also been brewing in the last year. Should the Central library book collection be moved to a new ‘Community Hub’? It’s a big subject and there is more to it than just changing buildings, which I try to discuss on page 10.

One pleasing thing over the last year has been our inclusion on the Public Realm Regeneration Panel. We feel we have relevant experience, expertise and overview to offer working groups like this – and we can also gather and feed in comments from other local residents, groups and

organisations as well. Through this we have been able to advise on new fingerposts and interpretation boards. See our front cover picture.

Another project which is nearly finished is the new Pilgrimage Trail and the addition of the new Green Plaques to help visitors along this trail. Robert Fayers, Alison Gifford and Elizabeth James (with new photographs by Colin James) have been the authors of the little booklet. Read more about it on page 5. Expect to see the Pilgrimage Trail in the Tourist Information Office and other open visitor venues soon, as well as on our website. Funding was provided by Historic England via the Heritage Action Zone fund. We are hoping that now the Heritage Action Zone project is over, there will be a final report explaining what was achieved. There is a report on what we understand is the progress on the Town Investment Plan on page 6.

Sandra Coleman is our membership secretary and she tells you about joining and re-joining on page 22. Many Societies are losing members and some even closing, the Friends of the Lynn Museum for example, but we hope to keep up our membership numbers because you help us with our invaluable work. You may not be able to come to lectures at Thoresby College and feel your participation in the Society is slight, but through your membership subscription and your collective voice, we are able to be the pressure group for positive change (or no change!), which King's Lynn lacks as it has no Town Council.

I ask you to consider how we can improve our attendance at our six monthly winter lectures below. You can email me alisongifford@btinternet.com or come to the AGM on 19 May where this will be discussed.

Thank you to all the Executive Committee for their continued hard work.

The Winter Lecture Series

Alison Gifford

It seems a few years since the Civic Society's winter lecture series had full meetings and Jean Tuck and her team made coffee for the audience. We might wish those times to return, but all amenity societies are finding their membership grows older and younger people seem not to be attracted to talks and lectures in person.

Yet, although we are not a lecture society (like the Arts and Sciences), lectures have been part of our programme for many years and I wonder how we can improve the numbers attending on Thursday evenings. There is just this caveat: any idea that means Committee members have to do more or work harder is probably not going to happen – work differently, certainly. On the other hand, if an enthusiastic member would like to be co-opted on the Committee as lecture programme organiser, that would be very good.

Some ideas to discuss:

- Leave well alone, it's fine.
- Should we change the times to lunchtime or afternoon?
- Are we failing to find interesting speakers?
- Should there be more publicity?
- Should we combine speakers with something extra – buffet lunch or tea?

Your views are important and we will have a resolution at the AGM which may include staying as we are. Let me or Anna Gunn, our secretary, know on

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info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk

or a letter to the address on the back of this report.

New Pilgrimage Trail

Elizabeth James, Robert Fayers and Alison Gifford have turned a small leaflet featuring the steel plaques made by Norfolk Museum Service into a 40-page booklet with maps and walking instructions. It is also on our own website www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk. Anna Gunn arranged a translation into Portuguese also on our website, which was one of the requests of the funding organisation, Heritage Action Zone via Historic England. The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk provided essential design and printing.

Concerned about copyright issues, we asked Colin James to take a whole set of new photographs, which have turned out very well. A combination of Rev. Fayers' theological knowledge and Elizabeth James' knowledge of the layers of history in our town led to some interesting discussions and occasionally compromises between the academic and popular. We hope the trail will be informative and readable while encouraging a walk around parts of the town not often visited.



All around us in King's Lynn are traces of a previous town, Bishop's Lynn. The lives of our medieval forebears were lived within the cycle of the Church Calendar – fast and feast – and amid the daily presence of priests, monks, nuns, friars and pilgrims, together with their churches, chapels and friaries. The Pilgrimage Trail brings to life this lost world with the five neglected steel plaques by artist Lyndall Phelps at its core. On them are motifs taken from four religious buildings in Lynn: a wooden ceiling boss showing a seated Christ from All Saints' Church, a dog pictured on a monumental brass from King's Lynn Minster, mouldings from the fine ceiling of the Red Mount Chapel, a decorated

stone corbel from Greyfriars Tower, and a carved ship on a wooden bench end from St Nicholas' Chapel. The fifth plaque is an image of a medieval cogge bringing pilgrims across the Wash.

We have also commissioned ten new green plaques to commemorate some pilgrimage sites not celebrated at the moment.

The Pilgrimage Trail should soon be in the Tourist Information Centre and other town attractions open to the public, including True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum and the Lynn Museum.

Town Investment Plan ... and other 'Stories of Lynn'

We continue to try to follow the emerging course of the Town Investment Plan and where possible to get involved and attempt to assist/influence how the £25 million 'offered' to King's Lynn is spent. How might it really 'transform' the town ***so it becomes a place of choice and fulfils its potential as a sub-regional centre*** (for that is apparently the goal according to the Vison King's Lynn website).

Town Centre Repurposing & Public Realm Working Group: We have served on this group, which has looked at enhancing the corridor between the Railway Station and Custom House – something we think is a valid ambition. The budget dedicated to this was less than the task really requires – and it was decided that this project that could be 'fast-tracked', and as reported in the autumn, we felt this short-changed the analysis and decision-making process.

As illustrated elsewhere in this newsletter, one part of the budget went on new fingerposts. We think this is a good thing because we felt the old signs were often in the wrong place and pointed to the wrong things. It transpired that the existing positions were not negotiable and, in the rush to get the new ones commissioned by the end of March, we were not completely happy with all the place labelling. However, your committee is happy with the general livery of the new signs and we would welcome feedback from the wider membership! We may be able to influence changes and improvements in future.

New benches and planters are also ordered. A new metalwork arch is proposed over Purfleet Place next to Boots. BCKLWN/BID are bent on

providing so-called ‘pop-up shops’ (AKA permanent stalls) alongside Boots – something about which we remain sceptical. New public art works are being considered along the route (with a bid going to the Arts Council for match funding so as to boost the budget). Public art can be notoriously divisive. But there are countless examples where public art pieces enhance and even represent the spirit of a place (think of Eros at Piccadilly). Unfortunately, in urban development we often get so tied up in the minutiae of emergency access provision, CCTV coverage and taxi parking that we forget to celebrate our own creativity and culture in public realm design. So this author certainly supports expenditure on public art!

Custom House and Purfleet: The public realm working group have also been asked to input into ideas for investment in this area – and we have attended a workshop with officers, councillors and other interest groups. KLCS have subsequently put our thoughts down in a letter, stressing how important we feel it is to get the public back into the building. It is our town icon!

Goals seem somewhat vague for the Custom House – do BCKLWN want to increase revenue from it or just to widen usage? We remain of the view that it could still be a useful Tourist Information Centre, but have said we are not averse to more flexible usage of the first floor or a flat or office on the top floor. But significant alteration of the building (a commercial kitchen? a lift?) would be expensive, and one may never recoup the investment. Ideas for King’s Staithe Square include limiting traffic access and encouraging a more consistent programme of events and activities.

St George’s Guildhall and a new Creative Hub: KLCS have not been represented on this working group – and it is with some concern that we note that nobody from Shakespeare’s Guildhall Trust appears to be on the panel either – which seems to be a waste of local knowledge and enthusiasm.

Proposals recently announced in a press release include:

- refurbishment and development of the theatre to provide a flexible space – developing a creative hub in the former White Barn
- opening up the Ferry Lane side of the site near the ferry landing stage so that people can walk through the site

- creating a catering experience in the Shakespeare Barn, with mezzanine floor
- improving the Fermoy Gallery so that a wider range of exhibitions can be shown
- re-imagining the undercroft (currently Crofters) to provide an additional performance space
- developing options for mobile food trucks, street food, pop-ups and outdoor performances in the courtyard
- opening up unused parts of the site to be included in the heritage experience.

A ‘business plan’ is due to be finalised by June. In principle, the Civic Society strongly support the idea of investing in one of our principal arts facilities, but we remain unclear of the detail behind the broad proposals.

Community Hub: The idea of moving the library from the Carnegie building to a new facility in or at the current Argos building (or potentially someplace else) is still being advanced by the Town Board. Alison discusses her views on this elsewhere in this newsletter.

The proposal is now called the ‘Multi-User Community Hub’ (or *the MUCH!*). It is apparently now compulsory to have ‘Hub’ in the title of any new public facility. Suffice to say that the KLCS committee remain sceptical that this is a priority project to make Lynn ***a place of choice (that) fulfils its potential as a sub-regional centre.***

Active and Clean Connectivity: This part of the Town Investment Plan could also be called the ‘cycle infrastructure improvement plan’ – something that the Civic Society would be keen to support.

Except that again, we are flummoxed by the projects we believe (available details are scarce) are being put forward. Replacing the existing apparently adequate cycle bridge over the sand line at Hardwick? Creating a ‘Hub’ (apologies) for cycle storage at Baker Lane? Another ‘Hub’ (ahem) for bicycle hire at NORA? These don’t seem like the ‘quick wins’ that will underpin a cycling revolution in Lynn? Another idea we understand is coming forward is a cycle lane on the ‘gyratory’ at Railway Road. This is perhaps the sort of project we need – but as part of a whole integrated route.

We are again disappointed to hear that local bicycle groups have not been directly involved in formulating these ideas and we have recently

prepared a letter submitting our more detailed ideas on the needs for cycling infrastructure to relevant councillors.

Developing cycle infrastructure in West Norfolk, when we are light years behind Cambridgeshire, let alone Holland or Denmark, will take time and investment – but we need to make sensible first decisions with the funding presently on the table.

South Gates: Lastly, committee members have been invited to several online meetings with consultants BDP, who have been charged with developing a masterplan for the entire South Gates precinct (refer to our Autumn 2020 newsletter).

This is not a consultancy being funded by the Town Fund and in fact no monies have yet been identified to take the project forward once a scheme is agreed. The consultant team are open and friendly and the more radical ideas they are coming up with could make this part of the town into the destination neighbourhood that it deserves to be – not the car-choked, partly derelict embarrassment it is at present. KLCS support a bold vision. But again – it's all about the money ...

Conclusions: It is undoubtedly frustrating for local authorities that the way central government now prefers to hand out funding (AKA *our* money, raised from *our* taxes), requires them to constantly dance to a special tune involving countless 'bids' conforming to ever-changing and often obscure 'criteria'.

We recently learnt (from the chairman of the parliamentary 'Levelling-up, Housing and Communities Select Committee', no less) that there have now been **130** separate government funds to assist High Street regeneration – all with their own application rules.

Faced with this constant game of snakes and ladders, it is perhaps not unreasonable that local authorities should try to shape funding applications to obtain monies for schemes they wanted to do anyway.

But the frustrating thing to us 'people in the street' is to find out (often late in the process) what projects have been put forward as supposed 'priorities'. Some of the present projects just don't seem to make much sense. Where have they come from?

BCKLWN urgently need to revise their approach to and understanding of the meaning of 'consultation'. **In our view it does not and should not mean using a public relations person to put a positive spin on decisions that have already been made by ... who? It should be about**

the rather more difficult challenge of building knowledge and consensus in the community, perhaps over a long period of time. This would ensure inclusivity, build civic capacity and utilise more of the skills and knowledge that already exists in our community. In that way, we really could transform King's Lynn and West Norfolk and make it a sub-regional leader.

Carnegie Library book collection move

Alison Gifford

There are usually two sides to important discussions, but not in this case it seems, so I'm putting the other view in support of retaining the Carnegie Library as a library where it is. This is not the 'Civic Society view', but the committee are nevertheless sceptical about the move and especially the way the 'consultation' has been conducted and very concerned about the fate of the Carnegie Library building. We will formulate a view and would like input from our members to inform that view. The more things are discussed, the more likely we are to make the right decision as a town. alisongifford@btinternet.com 01553 763983.

Although this scheme is driven by Norfolk County Council, a move to a regenerated Argos building or similar is the preferred option of senior borough councillors and many officers, without whom the idea would not have surfaced. I was told by a senior councillor that 'the Carnegie Library building is not fit for purpose in the 21st century'. I'm afraid I thought that no great recommendation to do anything as, so far, the 21st century has been pretty rubbish. The fact is that it is a perfectly fit building as a library, what it cannot do so easily is be a job centre, games room, drop-in health surgery, baby bounce and IT suite as well.

I ask 'is the empty Argos building currently owned by the Borough Council looking for a new role rather than we absolutely need a Community Hub and luckily this is the right building?' A similar thing happened when the Tourist Office was moved out of the Custom House to bolster footfall in the failing Stories of Lynn exhibition. The rather poor end justified the abandonment of a nationally renowned iconic building.

'Is it to do with saving money?' I asked. 'No' was the answer. So what is it about?

‘It’s not accessible’ Yes, it is. It has no public lavatories, but it could have with thought. Most old houses didn’t have inside WCs, but they do now. Is the Carnegie Library ‘in the wrong place?’ Not if you live in South Lynn. Surely a short walk is to be encouraged. The Carnegie Library is the exact same distance as St Margaret’s Church from the Argos building. Is that in the wrong place?

There was ‘consultation’ (400 people), but here is the announcement on the Vision King’s Lynn latest website bulletin! **The consultation took place after Norfolk County Council, working with the Town Deal Board and the Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk, announced plans for a new hub that will have community, library services, learning and skills at its core.**

That sounds like a done deal to me. Aren’t consultations meant to take place before decisions are made? The Civic Society are not entirely against a new community hub and even welcomes the Argos building being reconfigured. But isn’t this an example of how existing public services have so shrunk that they can be consolidated into a single ‘community hub’ as if the whole community were in desperate need of advice or low-level hobbies and nothing else? The library will then be reduced to books on ‘How to ...’, paperback novels and DVDs. The special collections will be preserved in the new set-up apparently, but there will be no trained library staff to interpret them or even know what they possess. What I find most difficult to accept is closing the Carnegie Library to facilitate this project. What will happen to it? Another Custom House in the making I suspect.

‘People don’t read any more so the library needs community activity to make it viable.’ Is this true? The use of libraries for community activities rather than just as a repository for books to read and consult has led to a fall in their use rather than an increase, according to a new report (2020) by campaigner Tim Coates, who knows a thing or two about books; he founded Waterstones. He sees the reading offer as being weakened by other unrelated activity and that leads to library under-use. The book stock at the public library is much smaller than it used to be and how can that not cause a downward spiral in reading use?

The idea that the library and its book collection is not inextricably linked to the building that houses it, however it has been eroded over the years with attempts at modernisation, shows a lack of cultural concern for the

collective memory of our past and the communities served. We may be told that the Carnegie Library building will find a use, but when questioned about who will then pay for any repairs, i.e. a new roof, reply came ‘We don’t know’. The Carnegie building in Dundee became a nightclub, music venue and is now a pizza restaurant. Can’t happen here? If the group interested in taking over the Carnegie building have to be viable, that is able pay for repairs, power, staff, etc., then that rules out most not-for-profit groups. Many people say it can be an art gallery, a lecture theatre, a library (no, not that!), but how will the bills be paid? Do you think Norfolk County Council are going to run a hugely expensive hub and keep paying for the Carnegie building? Perhaps they will, but we don’t know and we need to know.

Has the population of King’s Lynn so lost any respect for learning and literature and regard for the ambitions of our ancestors who commissioned the Carnegie Library that they will see their cultural past and future in a ‘hub’ and think that’s good enough? Maybe, but it’s no choice without the alternative being explored. That’s a diktat disguised as consultation. It’s your town and your money, so give it some thought. Read about it on the Vision King’s Lynn website.

<https://www.visionkingslynn.co.uk/residents-help-to-shape-new-hub-for-kings-lynn/>

You could also google ‘Architects Against Humanity’ to while away a few idle moments.

West Norfolk Wins Lottery

On the next page, you will see an advert for West Norfolk Wins lottery. We have registered as a ‘good cause’ and hope that you will join the lottery – for a chance to win £25,000! – but also as a way to help support King’s Lynn Civic Society. It’s easy to join and can cost as little as £1 per week.

If you have any queries, contact our secretary Anna on info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk or 01553 849957.



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Planning round-up 2021–2022

Planning sub-committee

The planning team continue to plug away trying to lobby for common sense decision-making that can support attractive, appropriate development in our ever-changing town.

We have submitted more than 30 letters over the last year. We have objected to some schemes – but on the whole we try to offer what we see as ‘constructive commentary’. Sometimes we simply write to say ‘that is good – well done!’

An example of this was the restoration of Whincop House on Tower Street – which is being brought back into life as shop units on the ground floor and three flats above. Such conversions inevitably bring concerns about fitting in new services, and regulations about fire safety, ventilation, waste bins and other matters can take a toll on the heritage fabric of a building.

We were therefore pleased to hear that Sowerbys Estate Agents had acquired Bank Chambers, 23 Tuesday Market Place (formally a Chinese restaurant and at one time touted for conversion to seven flats). Sowerbys have brought it back into use as their King's Lynn office and we think this is preferable for the many original features to being sub-divided into seven flats.

We have also supported internal improvements to 18–20 King Street (Millsopps) and return to domestic use of White's House, 1 Nicholas Street (formally Ward Gethin) and a loft conversion at Clifton House.

In our letters, we have often tried to make the case for improvements to the energy efficiency of the premises. Most listed buildings were of course originally heated by solid fuel fireplaces. They have often been chopped about in the last 50–70 years to fit in radiators, gas and oil heating systems. If, as we are led to believe, these fuels are now to be phased out, new works should now be taking the opportunity to ‘future-proof’ with appropriate technology (air source heat pumps, for example).

We have therefore been promoting some of the new guidance that has been published – including a ‘Retrofit Standard’ by the Association for Environment Conscious Building (AECB) – which is encouraging the building industry to ‘decarbonise’ as well to use more environmentally-friendly building products.

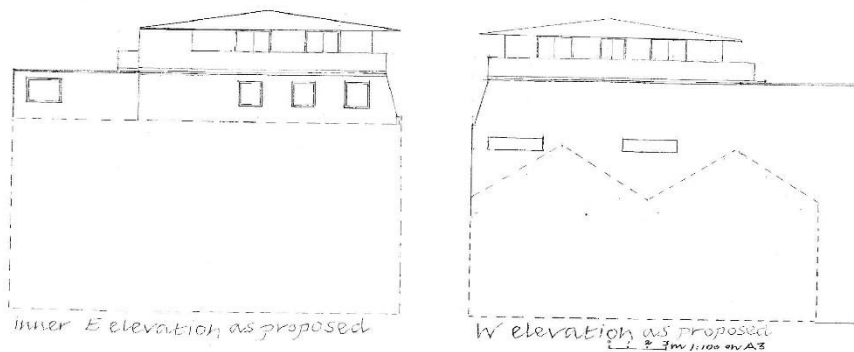
Most applications continue to relate to residential development, as Local Planning Authorities continue to be pressured by central Government to deliver more housing. Therefore, we have commented on reserved matters applications at South Wootton (450 new houses by Larkfleet developers, 125 new houses by Persimmon), which have had some positive aspects (a reasonable amount of public open space) and some very disappointing aspects (nondescript architecture, specification of gas central heating and car-dependent planning). We increasingly think our grandchildren will look back on early 21st-century residential housing estates and wonder why it was allowed.

The controversial Parkway development was eventually permitted for 226 dwellings. KLCS have consistently stated that we thought the site could be suitable for sustainable development, although we thought the scale was too great in the previous schemes. The permitted scheme includes renewable heating systems, EV charge points and cycle infrastructure, which is positive. However, we still commented that a reduced development of 190 houses would have allowed retention of several 150–200-year-old oak trees which will now be lost, and creation of a large central play area. We still therefore feel the new scheme is ‘less than optimal’.

‘Less than optimal’ would certainly sum up the large number of applications for flats within the town that we have looked at. They are invariably very small, have limited storage space, little or no outdoor space and sometimes not much in the way of natural light either. Larger schemes included the Post Office conversion to 34 flats, which we generally liked, but again felt there was little potential to create a new ‘community’.

Rather than a café, launderette, convenience store, storage areas and perhaps some resident parking on the ground floor (all of which would

have benefited the upstairs residents and, we thought, make the scheme a more attractive place to live and visit), the scheme proposes a vast bar/restaurant – few people’s idea of an attractive neighbour. And do we need another bar/restaurant chain in Lynn? All the evidence is that small independents and local business ventures are what underpin the local economy and help build the ‘civic capital’ which lies at the heart of successful urban (and rural) communities.



The quality of applications has been variable and one sometimes suspects that submitting minimal information is a ploy to disguise the extent of the works. That is certainly what we concluded about a recent proposal to put a penthouse flat on top of Bishop’s Lynn House (18 Tuesday Market Place) – see image above. Although BCKLWN had said it was part of the modern extension to the rear of the building, and therefore didn’t need Listed Building consent, it was likely to be prominent in views from Tuesday Market Place – sometimes described as one of the finest Georgian market places in the country. But the back-of-fag-packet drawings were so vague as to not illustrate the extent of the works at all.

We will continue to try to flush out this type of skulduggery and to use the limited amount of powers that third parties like ourselves still presently retain within the planning system.

Conservation Areas Advisory Panel

CS Representative Kim Leonard

Conservation Areas are local areas with a distinct character, which we wish to conserve and improve. There are now a total of 44 Conservation Areas in West Norfolk, which includes five covering King's Lynn (the Friars Area; Walks Area; Norfolk Street Area; St Nicholas Area and the St Margaret's Area).

Any planning application in these areas is brought before the Conservation Areas Advisory Panel (CAAP) to assess the impact on the Conservation Areas and to ensure that our heritage and history are protected. These comments are taken into account when the application is determined by the Council's Planning Committee.

Members can keep a track of the progress on all Planning Applications on the Borough Council website at <https://online.west-norfolk.gov.uk/online-applications/>

We had a very busy year in 2021/2022 looking at a total of 53 applications, nine of which related to a King's Lynn Conservation Area. This compares to a total of 13 applications during 2020/2021, of which five were King's Lynn related. This difference clearly shows that many plans that were only ideas or on the drawing board during the Covid-19 epidemic are catching up and are now being progressed.

Please find below a summary of the King's Lynn applications, along with the latest position.

20/01761/FM: Demolition of existing car showroom and workshop, and 15 residential units – Favorit Motor Company, Mr Clutch, 16 London Road

In principle, the Panel had no objection to the demolition of the existing car showroom and workshop.

Any contaminated land issues would need to be investigated.

The Panel had concerns with the scale and intensity of the development, particularly the height and impact on the corner of London Road and Hospital Walk. The Panel noted that there was no allowance for car parking within the proposals and the increase of cars parked on the street would have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area.

The Panel had no objections to the two town houses included as part of the proposal; however, they asked that consideration be given to using this area for car parking spaces.

The Panel also considered the render to be out of place in the Conservation Area, noting that surrounding buildings were not rendered. They also considered uPVC windows to be inappropriate in the Conservation Area.

Current position: Awaiting decision

21/00697/LB and 21/00696/F: Proposed change of use of ground floor from dwellinghouses (C3) to E(a) retail including subdivision at first and second floors to provide 3no. residential apartments. Proposed repair, refurbishment works including alterations to approved rear extension, Whincop House, 29 Tower Street

The Panel were pleased to see the building being brought back into use and were cautiously positive of the limited retail use, provided there were no changes to the fabric of the building. Controls on the use of retail should be investigated.

The Panel had no objections to the creation of the flats and felt that three units was acceptable and acknowledged that the configuration of the flats did not impact on the fabric of the building.

Issues relating to fire escapes and sound insulation would need to be investigated.

Current position: Application permitted with conditions

21/00925/O: 6 dwellings on West Norfolk Deaf Association Car Park, Old Market Street

There was unanimous disapproval from the members of the Panel. To summarise, it was felt that the potential development was unimaginative; there was no natural light entering some of the windows; the building occupied the full footprint of the site, which gave no outside space and the right-hand section of the building was higher than the Lord Kelvin roof line next door and should be in line.

Current position: Application permitted with conditions

21/00089/PREAPP: Redevelopment of the existing car park to up to 19 dwellings at Car Park, Chapel Street

This was a Pre-Application, as part of the Heritage Action Zone initiatives, to seek the initial views prior to developing a full application. The Panel were generally happy with the scale and arrangement of the development, but had some concern about the focus and variety of the undulation of the roof line. They agreed it may benefit from some dormers. Current position: Awaiting further applications

21/01654/F: Glazed balustrade around seating area at Marriott's Warehouse, South Quay

The Panel were opposed to the proposal, although they did welcome the removal of the timber pallets. They might be more receptive to a metal boundary, but it needed to be more bespoke and more relevant to Marriott's Warehouse itself. Glazing behind that may or may not be acceptable.

Current position: Application permitted with conditions

21/01568/FM: Conversion of former post office (Class E) to a flexible use for commercial uses (Class E), public house, wine bar, drinking establishments and hot food takeaway (sui generis) on ground floor only with 30 residential units on first, second and third floors and third-floor extension to create 4 new residential units at King's Lynn Athenaeum, Blackfriars Street

The Panel were broadly supportive of the refurbishment and repairs and supportive of the ground-floor changes, changes to window arrangements and installation of regular roof lights. They raised concerns that the south- and west-facing apartments would get too hot and that ventilation should be considered as part of the planning process. The Panel supported the principle of the additional storey, but did not consider the profile or materials of the roof to be appropriate. The Panel were pleased to see plans to bring back into use this designated Heritage Asset.

Current position: Application permitted with conditions

22/00066/LB: Ground floor internal alteration and refurbishments. Rear garden refurbishments at Globe Hotel, King Street

With regards to the external works, the Panel was concerned about the impact on the trees and considered that an arboricultural report was essential. The Panel was concerned about the level of information

supplied relating to the internal works and required further details to be submitted.

Current position: Extension of time granted

21/02219/F: Proposed extension of outside seating area incorporating new and retained seating pods – Liquor & Loaded, 21 Tower Street

The panel unanimously objected to the fence surrounding the seating area and would prefer a brick wall instead. They felt that the fence would have a detrimental effect on the Conservation Area. The panel had no objection to the increase in seating pods if they were surrounded by a suitable boundary, i.e. a brick wall.

Current position: Revised plans have been submitted and awaiting decision

22/00028/F: To add penthouse to rear extension – Bishop's Lynn House, 18 Tuesday Market Place

The Panel was united in its opposition to the application. The Panel was concerned about the quality of the application; the drawings were poor and inaccurate. This application would cause significant harm to the setting of Bishop's Lynn House and the adjoining Listed Buildings on Tuesday Market Place through its height and appearance and significant harm to the character and appearance of King's Lynn Conservation Area. The Panel therefore supported refusal of the application.

Current position: Extension of time granted



Heritage Open Day 2022

Sunday 11 September

10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

This year Heritage Open Day will be on Sunday 11 September. We are hoping to have a wide range of buildings open, from churches and museums to restaurants and private homes. We will also have our market of local producers in Saturday Market Place, as well as a selection of entertainers. There will be activities in The Walks and on South Quay, the Purfleet and King's Staithe Square. Do come and join us!



Volunteers needed!

Several of the buildings require stewards. We need more people to offer two hours of their time to ensure that we can continue to organise a successful Heritage Open Day. If you haven't already offered to volunteer and would like to participate, please contact Sandra Coleman. secoleman@btinternet.com



Subscriptions

If you have already paid, thank you very much. Your contribution helps us to continue our valuable work.

If you haven't paid yet, please do so now.

Individual membership £11

Joint membership (two people at one address) £18

Please consider setting up a standing order. Forms available from the membership secretary (see below) or send a cheque to:

Sandra Coleman

17 Trinity Quay

Page Stair Lane

King's Lynn

PE30 1NQ

Empty shops 2022

Ian Price

At the time of last year's Annual Report, the country was still in partial lockdown and even by the time of the Autumn 2021 Newsletter, there were still restrictions in place so we chose not to update at that time.

Things now are about as normal as they are going to get with regard to Covid-19 although, of course, there are new challenges impacting on our Town Centre; the effect of inflation and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine will be with us for some time. However, now seems the right time to review the current situation in King's Lynn Town Centre.

As part of this, it is necessary to compare back to September 2019 to find the situation before Covid-19 to compare with the current situation in April 2022. The table of figures shows the detailed situation now and the total levels compares this with October 2020 (between Lockdown 1 and 2) and September 2019 (the pre-Covid-19 situation). In addition, in the Empty Shop section analysis I have added April 2021.

The biggest impact over this period of time is the decline in the number of Retail Units, 14 fewer in 2022 than in 2019 and 10 of these are National Chain Stores. This has particularly impacted on the location of units which are still empty, which although the same total of 44 as 2019, show 3 more in both the High Street and New Conduit Street.

Other major changes are in Hospitality, up from 55 in 2019 to 63 today, Phone/Media outlets up from 9 to 17 (perhaps there a change in the culture of replace to repair) and interestingly a loss of 3 Betting Shops (does this reflect the number of adverts for online gambling?).

What to do going forward? We know that £25 million 'Town Fund' money is available subject to submitting successful Business Plans. However, this will not necessarily fill empty shops. Making the town more attractive may attract some new businesses, but the current economic climate may stall any new investment, so we are still a long way from a fully occupied, vibrant Town Centre.

SHOP ANALYSIS APRIL 2022

TYPE	High St	Norfolk St	Broad St & Dominic's Sq	Conduit/Purfleet St	Tower St & Blackfriars St	St James' St & Saturday Market Place	Total 2022	%	Total 2020	%	Total 2019	%
Financial services	9	1		5	3	3	21	5.9%	21	5.9%	22	6.3%
Hospitality	16	20	9	3	8	7	63	17.6%	58	16.4%	55	15.6%
Newsagent/Convenience Store	1	3	1			2	7	2.0%	10	2.8%	7	2.0%
Medical	5	4		1	4	1	15	4.2%	15	4.2%	13	3.7%
Hair & Beauty	2	17	1	5	12	13	50	14.0%	51	14.4%	48	13.6%
Phone/Media	5	6	4		1	1	17	4.8%	14	4.0%	9	2.6%
Charity	3	3	3	1			10	2.8%	9	2.5%	8	2.3%
Betting			1		1		2	0.6%	3	0.8%	5	1.4%
Vaping	2	1					3	0.8%	4	1.1%	3	0.9%
Other	5	7	2	2	2	5	23	6.4%	25	7.1%	23	6.5%

TYPE	High St	Norfolk St	Broad St & Dominic's Sq	Conduit/Purfleet St	Tower St & Blackfriars St	St James' St & Saturday Market Place	Total 2022	%	Total 2020	%	Total 2019	%
EMPTY	15	8	7	4	2	8	44	12.3%	37	10.5%	43	12.2%
RETAIL	27	30	21	10	8	6	102	28.6%	107	30.2%	116	33.0%
TOTAL	90	100	49	31	41	46	357	100.0%	354	100.0%	352	100.0%
<i>Retail Analysis</i>												
National Chain	17	11	18	9	1		56	54.9%	60	56.1%	66	56.9%
Independent	10	19	3	1	7	6	46	45.1%	47	43.9%	50	43.1%
Total	27	30	21	10	8	6	102	100.0%	107	100.0%	116	100.0%
<i>EMPTY ANALYSIS</i>												
Aug 2018	9	9	8	4	4	10	44					
Feb 2019	12	12	9	2	1	8	44					
Sept 2019	12	12	12	1	1	5	43					
Oct 2020	8	5	13	3	2	6	37					
Apr 2021	12	8	16	4	1	8	49					

King's Lynn Civic Society

Registered charity 298916

President: Heather Bolt

**Vice President:
John Loveless**

Chairman: Alison Gifford

Vice Chairman: Helen Russell-Johnson

Secretary: Anna Gunn

Treasurer: Ian Price

Membership Secretary: Sandra Coleman

Principal address:

**56 Common Lane, North Runcton PE33 0RF
info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk**