

Welcome

This edition focuses on the area, its heritage and characteristics, the changes over the past three or more decades, the challenges that come through planning applications and, on a strategic level, the planning policies that the City Council are considering over the coming weeks and months.

Amongst the changes that there have been in the Divinity Road Area over the past decades the most significant are increases in traffic, parking problems for local residents and the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). DRARA has been campaigning on all these issues, with, we believe, some success. The County Council agreed on 22 March to the introduction of the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) for the area. This has been a very protracted campaign, and one that has had a high level of support, albeit with some reluctance because of concerns over the speed of traffic and inconvenience for permanent residents. The City Council has introduced a register of HMOs, which is publicly available. This should give us a starting point to confront poor landlords and tenants who show no concern for the neighbourhood and consistently use the front of their houses as a dumping ground for all of their rubbish.

We continue to develop links with the Universities, and they are also beginning (some may say rather belatedly) to take more seriously their responsibilities in dealing with the poor behaviour of some students through the introduction of Student Wardens.

Planning decisions are often controversial and of course can have a significant impact on an area for generations. The City Council has recently completed a consultation on the Sites and Housing Development Plan, which will, once agreed, shape housing developments for years to come. DRARA has been reviewing the Development Plan and has submitted comments on three key issues, which have been summarized by the City Council in a Local Heritage Statement. An extract from our local statement is included in this newsletter.

The feedback from people who went to the DRARA Annual General Meeting last October expressed the wish that the Newsletter could feature local people or people who contribute to the daily life of the streets. We are starting a series on the businesses that people run from their homes or local premises, and feature the work of a local photographer who will be showing some of his work during the local Artweeks from 12 – 20 May. The exhibition will focus on the hamlet of Bartlemas, often viewed from a different perspective.

Elizabeth Mills, OBE

Commemoration

Some weeks before she died last summer Catherine Walker asked DRARA's Environmental Committee if they could prod the City Council to replace the tree in the chicane on Divinity Road just below the Stone Street turning. The Committee has now done this, and the tree will be replaced. It has been decided that it should be dedicated to Catherine's memory. This should happen very shortly.

Donations totalling over £1200 were collected in her memory, which were sent to Sobell House and Macmillan Nurses.



Oxford City Key facts

The City Council has produced a brief and very helpful summary of key facts about our City. It can be accessed through the following link:

<http://www.oxfordpartnership.org.uk/PDF/OCCKeyfacts2012.pdf>

Feature

Heritage Character Statement for the Divinity Road Area

The City Council has been supporting the preparation of 'Heritage Character Statements'. These are descriptions of a defined area's characteristics that should be taken into account in the submission of planning applications and in deciding on their acceptability. They are not statutory documents but they can influence planning decisions. We have been working on the Heritage Character Statement for the Divinity Road Area and an extract covering the history and general characteristics of the area is given below. The whole statement can be seen on the DRARA website.

The Divinity Road Area covers Divinity, Southfield, Bartlemas, Warneford and Minster Roads, and Stone Street (Hill Top Road is included in the residents' association area but its own separate residents' association is drawing up a heritage assessment). The area is contained by Cowley Road to the southwest, Manzil Way (site of the 19th century Cowley Road Hospital and workhouse) and the Morrell Avenue Estate to the northwest, the Warneford Hospital (previously a 19th century lunatic asylum) and meadow to the northeast and by the Bartlemas hamlet (designated as a conservation area in recognition of its special historic and architectural interest and including the site of a medieval lepers' hospital and devotional site), as well as the cricket ground and woods belonging to Oriel College, to the southeast.

History—The area was developed in two principal stages. The lower parts of Divinity and Southfield Roads, along with Bartlemas and Warneford Roads, were developed as the 'Bartlemas Estate', which was laid out by the Oxford Industrial and Provident Land and Building Society in 1891. The upper parts of Divinity and Southfield Road, Minster Road and the western part of Hill Top Road formed the 'Southfield Estate', developed from 1905 onwards and which built on land that was part of Southfield Farm, sold to the same building society in 1902. Most of the houses were completed by the mid 1920s. A space left between houses on Divinity Road for future development became the end of Stone Street when Morrell Avenue was created. The northwest boundary of the area was the site of Divinity Walk, leading from Cowley Road to Warneford Lane and on to Headington. Divinity Road is still the only direct route between Cowley Road and Headington.

General Character—The hillside setting gives the roads an elevated feel and from the upper sections of Divinity and Southfield there are extensive views of the hills to the southwest of

Oxford, which provide an attractive connection to the city's rural setting. The area is characterised by terraced, semi-detached and detached houses, mostly built within a few years of the estates being laid out, providing a coherent historic character and identity to the area.

The houses in the earlier development were built in the Victorian 'gothic' style but with many variations in style and detail, including a mixture of detached and semi-detached pairs of one-off design. This reflects the sale of individual plots for development by different builders. These range from between 17 to 30 feet wide but are narrow enough to provide a rapid rhythm of frontages in views along the streets. The architecture provides a rich palette of details that contribute positively to the aesthetic value of the area, including many canted bays, ornamental ironwork details, and metal finials to front facing gables. Roofs are almost all slate and some of the houses are tall and imposing—there is sometimes great variation in height between adjacent houses.

The later development is generally more 'Edwardian' in feel, though many of the houses would still be considered 'Victorian' in appearance. Some buildings have styles characteristic of 1920s fashions, particularly in Southfield Road, providing evidence of the later stages of the area's development and including details such as rounded bays, mullion and transom windows, and use of lead-lights and coloured glass.

Plots were developed in a piecemeal pattern after the streets were laid out, with some houses in the Bartlemas Estate not built until the development of Southfield Estate was underway and therefore sharing more of the character of the houses in the later development than their immediate neighbours. Some later infilling failed to complement the surrounding buildings despite using generally sympathetic materials, although some more recent examples have been designed to more closely match neighbouring styles.

What's changed

Some of us have lived here for many years – in some case decades. Edward Walker has been finding out what has changed and what stays the same.

A random survey of residents in “Draraland” reveals some pretty constant themes. Many in our area have lived here for more than thirty years; a fairly regular pattern shows many families moving up the hill from smaller properties lower down. Children – and perhaps salaries – beginning to grow larger seem to have been the reason for this, but other reasons for people moving here then are very similar to the reasons why people have moved here more recently. People like our kind of houses, late Victorian or Edwardian, spacious, dare one say “dignified”; they like having South Park and the playground at the top, and the shops along the Cowley Road, and for some the parish church of St. Mary and St. John, at the bottom.

The shops have changed dramatically over the years, of course. One family remembers a corner shop on the corner of Divinity and Warneford Roads – unimaginable now. There was the impeccably dressed Mr. Cross the milkman from Magdalen Road, and Mr. Gibbons’ green van delivering bread – equally unimaginable. There are fond memories of the Crown Stores, a couple of fishmongers and the same number of butchers and greengrocers. Tesco’s was a relatively minor store beside the much larger Butler’s supermarket. Saturday mornings saw a regular stream of children with their weekend pocket money heading for The Chocolate Box just round the corner from the bottom of Divinity Road; heading home they could glance at a showroom displaying secondhand (or probably morehand) Rolls Royces where the Coop is now. Then the Coop was in its own building, now occupied by the O2 Academy. No Brookes then, of course. The Oxford Polytechnic had far fewer students, none resident.

Perhaps the number and variety of places to eat out is the most dramatic consequence of the establishment and expansion of Brookes. This is valued by very many of us – if the noisiness of

venue-returning students at 3 am is not. Traffic is a theme mentioned by most people. Probably more wing mirrors get smashed in Divinity and Southfield Roads than any other two roads in the country. Older residents remember with misty eyes the three months thirty years or so ago when the two roads had gates placed half-way down. Such was the hostility generated by the measure that no City Council would ever dare to repeat it. Most welcome the proposals for controlled parking.

Another consequence of the close presence of Brookes is the increase of HMOs – houses in multiple-occupation. Many landlords seized the opportunity for profitable investment, but sadly many did not – and do not – take their responsibilities further than the collection of rent. The unkempt front gardens and overflowing rubbish bins cause the teeth of many residents to gnash. Would it tempt them to move away? The answer is an emphatic no. For what are these negatives, people say, compared with all the positives: the nearness of schools, good bus services, easy walking distance to the city, Families with children especially like having the Brookes Sports Centre at the top, and the Children’s Centre at the bottom.

Many people refer to Draraland’s “village atmosphere”. People who when they knew they were moving to Oxford looked at different areas have consistently said they immediately sensed the friendliness of our area, and this is something that DRARA has built on and helped to develop by its various activities. One resident, musing over this sense of community, wondered if it had something to do with having a common “enemy” – traffic; a “them” which reinforced our sense of “us”! It is certainly the case that DRARA seems to be the best-supported residents’ association in Oxford.

Yes, this is probably the best place to live in Oxford.



Artweeks

Artweeks in East Oxford is being held between 12 – 20 May. Across East Oxford there will be 26 exhibitors, one of whom lives in and will be showing his work in Divinity Road - site 188. Nick Welch met Martin Stott to talk about his photography and what he is exhibiting. Martin has been taking photographs from an early age, and his work has appeared in a number of books and publications.

Martin Stott is exhibiting a collection of his photographs of Bartlemas during Artweeks, which he hopes will challenge a general perception of the hamlet. We are familiar with the image of the chapel and Bartlemas House, the farm house and the lane leading from Cowley Road up to what is now the Oriol playing field as a small enclave of history and quiet. But Bartlemas is also what Martin would see as 'edge land', an area that supports people and communities that are on the margins of society, and this is one aspect of the hamlet that his exhibition will illustrate.

There is evidence that Bartlemas was a place for healing in the 12th century. It appears in records in 1129 and in 1328 Edward III granted it to Oriol College to care for the infirm of Oxford. The lepers who lived there were on the margins, and they and those who cared for them were self-sufficient, not relying on charity. They farmed, grew their own food and herbs. Self-sufficiency and sustainability is the second theme of Martin's exhibition.

There will therefore be some pictures of Bartlemas that reflect the image that we are familiar with, a reminder of the holy well and the religious significance of the site, not that its history was always as settled or spiritual as this implies. Many of the wardens who were appointed to be responsible for the hospital and the community exploited their position for their own benefit and over the centuries the chapel has been used as a timber store and as a cattle shed.

Martin has been taking photographs since he was 10. His father was a keen photographer and he sent Martin out with a camera that used 5"x7 1/2" glass plates to take pictures. The camera was

heavy, the pictures were shaky; it may not be surprising that he reflected that photography can be hard work. He started to use digital two years ago but also still uses black and white film. It is, he thinks, a bit nerdy, but we did agree that anything that is pursued seriously and in depth and for a long time will have a degree of nerdishness about it.

This is not the first time that Martin has exhibited in Artweeks. The first was over 20 years ago when the theme was 'Earthly Paradise: people and landscapes on allotments'. This reflected his interest in allotments, the friendships that grow in them, and the often eccentric water collection systems developed by the allotment holders.

The exhibition for this year's Artweeks will show pictures that look beyond the superficial. There's another side to Bartlemas. Homeless people have been living in the old nursery and the bowls club clubhouse was burnt down in suspicious circumstances. At the same time, the long tradition of self-sufficiency and sustainability continue, through the thriving allotments which about the chapel, where Martin has been a plot holder for almost 25 years.

The photographs taken over that 25 year period are the result of his long term connection with this particular place and with sustainability and self-sufficiency. The history of Bartlemas and the allotments that are there today are seen by Martin as part of a long tradition and one with increasing significance today, the production of food by local communities through the use of the land in urban areas

Local Businesses

The Divinity Road area is the home for a range of small businesses, run from people's homes. They all contribute to the local economy and the life of the neighbourhood. Signal Books is one such business and is the subject of the first in an occasional series of articles on the businesses that are based in our neighbourhood. Nick Welch went to meet Jim Ferguson, who owns and runs Signal Books.

Signal Books is based in Minster Road and is owned and run by Jim Ferguson. It is an independent publisher specialising in the fields of travel, history, religion, philosophy, biography and current affairs. A very recent publication, 'Walking in Palestine' was featured in the Guardian and it seems to characterise Signal Books. Walking in Palestine can certainly be seen as a niche topic and Jim describes his company as a niche publisher.

Like all the Signal books that I saw in Jim's office, it is a very attractive book, with a striking cover photograph. The covers alone are worth the purchase price; a forthcoming book on the culture and history of the Peak District has a wonderful cover photograph that for me captured the essence of why so many of us want to get out and see places. The cover of Jane Bingham's book on the Cotswolds, featured previously in this Newsletter, captures the colours and textures of Cotswold villages.

Jim started Signal Books in 1998 after being an academic for many years. Publishing is clearly something that he enjoys. One reviewer commented that Signal Books occupies that space between travel and history. It has an extensive list of titles and the company's web site is very attractive and really accessible. The Signal Books blog has some good and interesting summaries and discussion on the recent publications. The growth of internet selling and Amazon has been a real bonus for small publishers like Signal Books as it gives them a reliable and very accessible outlet. The major booksellers are reluctant to take the niche book from the niche publishers. He's not so keen on Amazon Market Place though, selling used books. Signal Books uses the services of other local businesses; the accountant is six doors down and the designer lives and works locally. It is a busy life but the rewards of working from home were clear.

www.signalbooks.co.uk

Southfield Superstars Cricket Team

There has been a local cricket team for the past 25 years; its name is more about the triumph of hope over experience than the reality of its achievements but it has kept playing and many people have had a huge amount of enjoyment from the matches each season – and sometimes the Superstars win!

All the games are 20:20 and played in the evenings. New players are very welcome; ability would be useful but is not essential, but if you have to discuss this with your agent you may be too good, not that the organisers would mind.

If interested please contact:

- James Rowland. 108 Southfield Rd. Tel: 728153. james.rowland@ntlworld.com
- Richard Carver. Tel: 07711941037. carver.richard@gmail.com

2012 SOUTHFIELD SUPERSTARS CRICKET FIXTURES

Wed.2nd May v. Cheney School @Cheney	Thu.14th June v Moreton @ North Moreton
Tue.8th May v Heinemann @ Jordan Hill OUP ground	Thu.21st June v Probation @ Jesus College
Thu.17th May v Oxfam @ Horspath Rd Rec.	Tue.26th June v Heinemann @ Oriel College
Thu.24th May v Blackwells @ Horspath Rd Rec.	Tue.3rd July v Blackwells @ Oriel College
Wed.30th May v OUP @ Jordan Hill	Tue.10th July v Oxfam @ Oriel College
	Tue.24th July v Probation @ Oriel College

Campaigns

HMO licensing

On 18 October 2010 the City Council resolved to extend Licensing to every house in multiple occupation (HMO) in Oxford by introducing an Additional Licensing Scheme. The first stage of the Scheme came into force on 24 January 2011. It required landlords of all three or more storey HMOs and all two storey HMOs occupied by five or more people to obtain a licence to operate the HMO.

The second stage came into force on 30 January 2012. The landlords of all two storey or single storey houses or flats occupied by three or four people will be required to obtain a licence to operate the property as an HMO. Licensing ensures a good standard of domestic living for all HMO occupants.

The HMO licensing process is now in full swing and the City Council anticipates that it will have registered 5000 HMOs by 2015. The City Council does not know how many HMOs there are, the total may well be over 7000.

The licensed HMOs appear on a public register which can be viewed on line on the city Council website. The City Council encourages residents to report problems with litter, noise etc by telephoning 01865 252307 or via the City Council's website link. If a resident suspects a property is an unregistered HMO, the Council encourages reporting as enforcement action can then be taken.

HMO capping

From February 2012 the City Council is able to grant or refuse planning permission for HMOs. And the Council will use its planning responsibilities to prevent any further over-concentration of HMOs in areas where there are already significant numbers (more than 20% per 100 meters street length).

Alan Slater or Sietske Boeles continue to work on this.

Planning Update

Oxford City Council has been consulting on its Sites and Housing Development Plan. DRARA submitted comments on the proposed options in December. A Submission Document was then produced in January for final consultation before the Plan goes before a Planning Inspector at a Public Meeting in, we think, June 2012. DRARA submitted a number of amendments to the plan as it needs strengthening to protect residential communities in 3 main areas.

i) *Location of student accommodation - Policy HP5*: States that planning permission will only be granted for student accommodation when located adjacent to a main thoroughfare i.e. not onto quiet residential street. The only exception highlighted is if it is via a route that does not pass any dwelling frontage. This wording is ineffective as these routes could pass along garden boundaries of residential properties and be disruptive to the amenity of local residents. We have asked for wording to include "or via a route that does not pass any dwelling frontage or garden boundaries."

ii) *Policy HP9 – Design, Character and Context*: This policy makes no clear statement on the need for development proposals to protect and preserve Oxford's heritage assets, historic buildings and environment. This is a serious omission. We are requesting the following be inserted: "All new developments close to or within sight of Oxford's heritage assets – both buildings and conservation areas – must serve to preserve and enhance these historic buildings, conservations areas and their settings".

iii) *SP27 – Lincoln College Sports Ground (off Bartlemas Close)*. Although not in the immediate DRARA area, designating this site as suitable for housing could impact adversely on the setting of the Bartlemas Conservation Area. We have asked the following statement be inserted: "Development should not have an adverse impact on the setting of the Bartlemas Conservation Area through the retention of 25 % of the current open green space, which should be sited alongside Southfield Park opposite the Conservation Area."

DRARA has asked to speak on these issues at the Public Meeting in June.

Richard English – 07881424607

Oxford Brookes Liaison

Oxford is fortunate to enjoy all the educational, cultural and economic benefits which come from having not one but two universities in the city. But as with all benefits there are also some costs involved. The main cost is the impact of a very high concentration of a large transient population of students in residential areas. This problem is a national as well as a local one, and has led to recent changes in legislation concerning the regulatory and planning rules for Houses in Multiple Occupation. The issues around student behaviour are ongoing and continue to be addressed by residents, the universities and the students themselves. If we are to make progress, good communication between the residents and the universities is vital.

A representative from DRARA attends several formal meetings a year with representatives from Brookes. The student leaders at Brookes, including the general manager of the Student Union, David Whittingham, have a meeting twice a year with DRARA. Oxford University is now also sending a representative to these meetings. Brookes University organizes a meeting three times a year with representatives from numerous residents' associations. It is chaired by Anne Gwinnett, the head of Brookes corporate affairs, and addresses a wide range of issues. The minutes of all these meetings are circulated to the DRARA committee and are open to anyone who wishes to see them.

During the last few years Brookes University has become much more active in communicating with residents and attempting to address our concerns. Brookes recently announced that they are going to reduce their full-time undergraduate student numbers by 15 per cent in order to meet the city council limits on the number of students in private rented housing, which is 3,000 for each university. This could help to alleviate the acute

shortage of housing in Oxford and free up some 450 houses for families and permanent residents. (*Oxford Times*, 5 April)

Since mid-2010 Brookes have been funding two police community support officers who work with Thames Valley Police in the DRARA and Headington areas. In November 2011 Brookes started a scheme for student community wardens. There are now three of them working for five hours a week during term time. They work under the supervision of Andrea Siret, the Brookes community liaison manager, and any issues concerning the wardens should be addressed to her.

Student leaders at Brookes have been active in making students more aware of their responsibilities as neighbours in the community, and reminding them that poor conduct will undermine the reputation of a Brookes degree. There have been student awareness campaigns about excessive drinking and penalties for misconduct. Brookes have also done more to promote their facilities which can be used by the public, notably the libraries, buses, sports facilities and gym, restaurant, dentist, osteopathy clinic and some of their academic courses.

If you have any concerns about student behaviour, or suggestions for the student community wardens, please contact Andrea Siret, community liaison manager at Brookes, Tel: 484451, or email community@brookes.ac.uk. If you have concerns about residents at Sinnet Court contact the manager, Amanda Green, on 202377, or email at amanda.green@A2dominion.co.uk. A 24 hour duty warden can be reached on 077860962015. If you want support or advice on any issue concerning Brookes please contact me by email: ivon.asquith@btinternet.com or tel: 249389.

Controlled Parking

It's been many years in the offing, but finally, the Divinity Road Area is going to be a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ). James Styring, who was the DRARA traffic rep until recently outlines what we should expect and sets us the next traffic challenge.

When?

We expect the CPZ to be installed over the summer, and individuals with queries about driveway accesses (white lines, double yellows, missing lines) should be contacted before then. If work starts and any concerns have not been addressed, contact Craig Rossington at Oxfordshire County Council on 01865 815735.

What?

We lost the argument about pavement parking. Cars will be allowed to park with one wheel on the pavement on parts of Southfield and Divinity Roads. This is to allow wide vehicles to pass while at the same time retaining sufficient pavement width for buggies and wheelchairs. Let's hope drivers respect the white lines as marked and do not encroach further than they are allowed onto the pavement. We believe that ControlPlus, who will police the CPZ, can ticket cars that park outside the marked bays, so hopefully we can use this to stop any encroachment. There will be fewer car parking spaces than the current arrangements provide. Parking at corners will stop and in general some of the anti-social parking seen on Divinity and Bartlemas Roads

should end. Commuter parking will not be possible. And some short term parking outside South Park will mean those spaces won't be lost during Brookes terms.

Who?

We lost the argument that students don't really need cars and shouldn't have permits. Two cars per household, houses in multiple occupancy included, can get permits. With fewer parking spaces, there is a real worry that students could continue to bring as many cars as they do today. We will have big problems if this does happen as the informal squeezing onto gaps that shouldn't really be parked in will end. Time will tell.

Better?

Hopefully, yes. Parking should be regularised and look neater. Hopefully, there will be fewer cars from outside the area and hopefully parking will not get more difficult. Of course, for many of us the crazy speeds at which some idiots drive will continue to be the biggest traffic problem for the area. Tackling speeders will perhaps be the next nut to crack.

DRARA Events

Please email details of your local event to events@drara.org.uk and they can be put on the web site.

Sunday 13 May	Open gardens
Sat 12 May 2012- Sun 20 May 2012	Artweeks
Sat 2 Jun 2012 - Sun 3 Jun 2012	Local Jubilee celebrations on Manzil Way and elsewhere in the area
Mon 9 Jul 2012	Olympic torch comes to Oxford and evening celebration in South Park
Tues 10 July	Olympic torch relay leaves Oxford for Reading
Saturday 14 July	DRARA Jubilee Meal in the Street
Sat 8 Sep 2012	Film in the Street
October (TBC)	Freecycle
(TBC)	Warneford Meadow Apple Day

The Olympic Torch comes to South Parks!

The Olympic Torch comes to Oxford on Monday 9th July. It arrives at 5.15pm at the BMW works and then is taken to South Parks by way of Blackbird Leys, up to and along Cowley Road, along St Clements and up Morrell Avenue to South Parks for the evening celebrations.

<http://www.london2012.com/event/9000962677>

<http://www.london2012.com/games/olympic-torch-relay/where-is-the-olympic-flame-going/oxford.php>