Another tower - another view

An addition to the Heritage programme: St. Peter’s Church

Sunday 13 September

Church open 1400-1700

Tower tours 1415 & 1515. No booking required. See Wembley Arch and Canary Wharf if visibility and weather permit. Under 9s not allowed on the roof.

Historic displays in the church. Large chuchyard with orchard, wildflower meadow and Garden of Hope with Tree of Life memorial sculpture.

St. Peter’s Street, St. Albans AL1 3HG

Membership Matters

To join or renew membership

Subscriptions remain unchanged and are renewable on 1 April each year.

Individual £10

Family (2 or more) £15

Pensioner/Student/Unwaged £7

Residents’ Associations No charge

Corporate £50

To join or check payment details please contact the Membership Secretary, Bryan Harlow, tel: 01727 851734

hanlofryan@gmail.com or post to -
24 Monks Horton Way, St Albans AL1 4HA

The Society acknowledges with gratitude the support from the following Corporate Members:

T&B (St Albans) Ltd
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Christopher Place Shopping Centre
St Columba’s College

Ziggurat decision raises questions of design quality

The cladding of the Ziggurat building, which was given the go-ahead Plans Central Committee on 2 August, much to the dismay of the Society and the many residents present at the meeting. We had objected to the substantial change to the design when such have become a distinctive landmark building stating: “its glass panelling successfully blends the building into the background sky; thus heightening its bulk. The proposed cladding will do nothing to disguise the towering elevations and the repetitive expanse of brickwork would give a heavy appearance. The result will be a bland and uninteresting building”.

The decision was made on technical grounds, but also a mini-visit, with lunch, to the Old Town in Hemel Hempstead on Tuesday 27 October – see leaflet.

Turning to planning, it was initially encouraging to hear from the Budget that the Government proposes to protect the Green Belt by allowing planning permission on all suitable designated brownfield sites. On the face of it, this sounded good, but potentially, like the reaffirmation that allowed our offices to disappear into flats, it raises the possibility of blotsch of mid-rise buildings appearing all over the place. However, we should hear in mind there has already been a flood of increase in Green Belt housing development in five years (Daily Telegraph 10 June). The CPRE is predicting that in the next few years 226,000 new houses will be built on what should be protected land. We need to be vigilant.

Nearer home, the recent Sewell Park decision is a step in the right direction. The threat of building on our Green Belt is likely to continue until our Strategic Local Plan is in place. The SLP is needed urgently as the Government’s approach is development-led, with related planning controls and fast-tracked decisions, particularly when the Council does not have an updated Plan in place.

There is still time to sponsor a tree.

This is especially important in view of the advance of ash dieback (chalarus fraxinensis) and the parasitic moth attacking horse chestnuts. Contact the Council on 819563 or email treesandwoodlands@stalbans.gov.uk.

The Council is bringing back its loss-making (so far £140,000 in two years) Christmas Market in November.

What damage will it do this year? Vineyard Garden has not yet recovered (the Council did nothing to repair the upheaval after the last market) and Wax House Gate passage is continuing to crack up following damage by market contractors’ heavy vehicles. Promises of proper restoration made last year have not been kept. This is unacceptable. Why is the Council so neglectful in its upkeep of this important area?

The Heritage Open Days programme includes a balloon race from the top of the Tower, and an opportunity to visit at various times. These include a balloon race from the top of the Tower, and an opportunity to visit at sunset and see various displays.

See the Heritage Open Days programme.

For Clock Tower information, the correct number is 01727 864511.
Chairman, then later remarked that: “it's a shame when the public here are in number and background, and have come to us. This is what we are elected for and sometimes we have to take some decisions which are unpopular.” This was not the case with this decision. The Society has been involved in the local area and the risk of late

The Civic Society does not support the concept of turning the line into a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route. Main reasons for objection:

- Cost is a factor
- Adverse impact on environment – in particular the buses are likely to be diesel powered.
- Suspicions on usage – similar BRT elsewhere have not met anticipated patronage
- Unpalatable to existing service and local neighbourhoods, especially as construction of the concrete guideways etc.

Questions need to be asked if the line would be better provided for outside the London Midland franchise. Would the route sit more comfortably in one of the following:
- 1 part of the successful London Overground Network
- 2 part of the (current) Southern franchise which operates a service from Milton Keynes to Clapham Junction via Harrow

Then in March 2014, without warning, the Cabinet took a swipe at that Heritage butterfly. It decided to withdraw support and cease production of any local brochure. Did someone think that, in order to save money, the event could be combined with Residents First Weekend, which is held in January? It cannot. Residents First is national and cannot simply be moved to St Albans. The Society was dismayed and still thinks that the local event needs to stand on its own. Residents First event, by its very nam e, is for those areas and how do they monitor w hat is going on? The Civic Society does not support the proposal for use of the line’s infrastructure installing a passing loop at Bricked Wood.

Larks in the Park stall with Melody Tove’s pictures on it. Below: one of the ‘Where is it?’ pictures. Answer: back page.