

## USK CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER: PLANNING NEWS

**John Barrow (Hon. Secretary) writes:**

### **Planning applications, the Unitary Development Plan and Sand and Gravel**

Although the Executive Committee has not had to deal this year with a major public inquiry of the magnitude of that of the Bovis appeal for houses at Woodside, it has been a busy period since the last Newsletter. Continuous scrutiny of the schedules of **planning applications** has enabled the Planning Sub-Committee to keep abreast of planning proposals; and where we thought it necessary, to submit objections to several which were contrary to policy or fell short, in one respect or another. These are noted below along with those which we supported in principle and where we entered (we hope, helpful) observations.

We objected to the latest application at **Penycaemawr** for a stable block and manège (M/9341) in accordance with the Society's previous objection to a scheme totally out of keeping in size and scale with its location in a Special Landscape Area; and partially built but not in accordance with an earlier permission. It was refused by the County Planning Committee and an appeal hearing was held in July. The Inspector's decision is awaited. **STOP PRESS:** the appeal was dismissed.

Objection was entered against a proposed house to the rear of **33 Black Barn Lane** (M/9702), since refused. We also objected to a proposed house judged not to be infilling (M/9327) and another involving the relocation of the Inn car park, both in Betws Newydd (M/9765), both were later refused. Recently, objection has been submitted to the retention of the signs and the introduction of intermittent lighting on the frontage of the **Castle Inn**, Twyn Square, a display which needs rationalising to make it less obtrusive. We understand that discussions are taking place with County Officers towards an amended application. The proposal to demolish **Railway Cottage** near Ladyhill on the old Raglan Road and to build a pair of semi-detached houses has also prompted an objection.

We commented on the proposed demolition of the Scout Hut and the building of a **Young People's Centre** near the Memorial Hall; on the extension of **7 Church Street**, Usk and on the expansion of the **Memorial Hall** itself, all of them being in an Archaeologically Sensitive Area. We suggested that the rear extension proposed at **19 Black Barn Lane** should be painted white or a light colour. We have also called attention to the need for the frontage of the **NatWest Bank** in Bridge Street to be painted in the consideration of the changes proposed there.

The installation by BT of telegraph poles in **Church Street and New Market Street** prompted a letter expressing great concern about the insensitive choice of location. (BT have responded to say that they are treating this as an objection but it seems as though legally they can virtually do as they like). We invited them to demonstrate their concern for the environment and the quality of the Conservation Area by discussing with the appropriate authorities a programme of removing unsightly posts and overhead wires by placing connections underground. They have yet to reply to this.

One of the biggest single tasks has been to respond to the **Unitary Development Plan Pre-inquiry Changes** published by the County Council in 24 pages of responses to our 82

representations on the earlier Deposit Version of the UDP. Of those 82, we expressed support in 30. The remaining 52 produced either an explanation or a change of wording by the County Council in the latest document. Having studied them, the Executive Committee found themselves able to support the proposal to delete the housing allocation at Woodside, and the allocation of the former Station Yard and adjoining land for business and employment use; but maintained their objection to the wording references and policy on development on flood plains.

We decided to enter our remaining few objections (and many expressions of support) by written representations rather than by appearing at the Public Inquiry which starts on September 14 at County Hall; aware as we are that the Inspector has to give equal weight to them as to those the subject of appearances.

At the same time as the publication of the UDP Pre-Inquiry Changes, the County Council consulted on the **Supplementary Planning Guidance** documents to define more closely the detailed development at Woodside for industry and business use; and at Castle Oak for housing.

We submitted that the access to the proposed employment and business site should it develop at **Woodside** should be via a new roundabout designed to reduce traffic speeds to the 30 mph speed limit on the Pontypool Road.

At **Castle Oak** we argued for a drainage scheme to be approved by the Local Planning Authority, the Land Drainage Authority and the Environment Agency before any planning permission was given. We submitted that adequate design be incorporated in any housing layout to promote the use of public transport to and from the Town centre; for children's play space; and the design and garage provision of the affordable housing element to be of a high order. The traffic implications for the Monmouth/Raglan Roads should be the subject of Traffic Impact Assessment. Our submissions were helped by the observations sent to us by one of the Society's most active members -Mrs Ruth Stride who received our thanks for her thoughtful contributions.

Indeed, the Committee is always grateful for contributions from Society members, whether in respect of consultation documents on which we are preparing a response or on any planning applications which are a cause of local concern Your membership card provides the names and telephone numbers of the officers to approach.

On **Sand and Gravel**, the threat to the Usk Valley continues. It is posed by the attempts by the Welsh Assembly Government to require the County Council to safeguard, in the UDP, defined areas of putative sand and gravel deposits. We have maintained close links with the officers of the Usk Valley Protection Association (to which we have subscribed financial support), helping in the written responses to the County Council's proposed changes to the relevant section of the UDP and in drafting their submission to the Public Inquiry. The outcome of this saga will start to be revealed when the Inspector reports with his recommendations to the County Council which could be towards the end of 2005.