



Maidenhead
Civic Society
Estd. 1960

NEWS

Issue 1/25

February 2025



*The Arms granted to the Borough of Maidenhead on 21st May 1947.
Are we still living up to the motto?*

Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

Chairman's Piece

As you will by now know, the chancellor has recently made a big announcement about supporting a third runway at Heathrow Airport.

This proposal has been discussed before, with the current administration in government supporting the expansion in 2009. In 2010, the coalition Government cancelled the third runway plans, which were resurrected in 2016 by the opposition administration.

In 2020, the Court of Appeal blocked the proposed 3rd runway on *environmental* grounds, but the Supreme Court overturned the decision. The coronavirus in 2020-21 stalled plans, and passenger numbers slumped.

Now Chancellor Rachel Reeves has announced the continuation of the third runway at Heathrow on *economic* grounds. Meanwhile, over the years costs have escalated with a variety of different governments taking differing views, over the benefits or disadvantages of implementing such a project.

If the government agree to the reinstatement of this project, what will be the effect on Maidenhead, as the previous consultation highlighted the flight path for the new runway will be directly over the town?

This will create additional noise and pollution in the town and the impact on many a historic building could be impacted by the increased air traffic. This should concern us all, as we try to protect the local environment and the surrounding area from forces outside of our control.

The government has already amended planning laws through the new National Planning Policy Framework 2024, agreed just before Christmas. The government has already taken steps to agree on planning decisions that would have gone against the Green Belt policy. One such implementation was the agreement by Secretary of State Angela Rayner on an 84,000 sq metre datacentre in the green belt between the Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire border. This blatantly shows a disregard for planning policies that are in place to protect our environment.

We will wait to see further details to confirm the flight path for a new third runway at Heathrow Airport, but I suspect London Heathrow will bring forward the same information that they have previously consulted upon and therefore no change to flight paths from the new runway.

Derek Wilson

What next for the Civic Society?

At their monthly meeting in April your executive committee will sit down to consider the way forward for the Society.

Reappraisals have taken place several times during the society's 65-year history in response to challenges or changing circumstances. Many of our long-running major projects have now come to fruition and the committee feels another assessment is now appropriate.

And an unavoidable fact is that we are all getting older and at least half of the current committee has been "on seat" for a very long time. In the case of post-holders, for example, we have Ann Darracott (Heritage, Environment & Projects) – over 40 years (!); Brian Darracott, (Newsletter Editor) – 23 years; Martin McNamee (Planning Group chair) – 16 years; Eileen Goford (Hon. Sec) – 14 years; Joyce Delasalle (Membership Sec.) – 13 years. Hopefully, this doesn't read like a "sentencing tariff"! At least two feel that they will no longer be able to continue after the end of this year.

But before they put their heads together on April 8th, there's an opportunity for you, as members, to tell us what you'd like to see on the agenda. We'd like to hear, for example, how well you think the Society fulfils its purpose. Perhaps we're not appropriately structured to deal with today's issues. Do we focus on the right issues? What others would you suggest?

And what about the public perception of the Civic Society? Is it still relevant in this day and age or do we need to change that and, if so, how? Honest and frank opinions are welcome as are constructive suggestions. Just send them in an email to: **chairman@maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk**.

Social Media

We have recently taken steps to increase our presence on social media. New member Chris Bristow has been active in ramping up our use of Facebook to get our message out and to highlight relevant issues and events, and we now have nearly 600 "followers", most of whom will not (yet!) be members. And committee member Lisa Curtin has been experimenting with our Instagram use and in a few short weeks we already have approaching 100 followers there. There's clearly a whole new audience out there!

Planning Matters

In our last Newsletter the three pending applications for the construction of multi-storey residential blocks fronting West Street were featured at length. Subsequently, the proposed development on land to the rear of **106 to 104 High Street** (the old Post Office Building) has been permitted by the Development Panel. The scheme is for 57 apartments with 49 parking spaces within a 7-storey block. It appears that in the light of the increased housing targets being imposed by central government, local planning guidelines such as the Tall Buildings **Supplementary Planning Document** (SPD) will be over-ridden. This SPD recommends a maximum contextual height of five storeys in this West Street location. Planning officers maintain that the new targets make the Tall Buildings SPD “negligible”. There are several SPDs that have been adopted or are in the pipeline, and it has always been understood that they are guidelines rather than policy. However, their very existence must be questioned if they are ignored in such a manner. When the **Borough Local Plan** was being reviewed by the Planning Inspectorate, there was a recommendation that SPDs should be drawn up for topics such as Tall Buildings and the Town Centre. It is almost unanimously felt by residents that recent town centre development has been blighted by too many flats and high-rise building, hence the perceived need for the protection of a relevant SPD. The BLP was adopted by RBWM and “imposed” on residents on the understanding that it would offer protection from excessive further development and could be enhanced by the guidelines within subsequently adopted SPDs. If the BLP targets no longer apply and the role of SPDs is “negligible” then what is the status and/or validity of the BLP itself?

It seems very likely that the other two residential schemes fronting West Street - at **74 to 82 High Street** and **88 to 90 High Street** will be permitted. The first location has a proposed 36 flats with 18 parking spaces within six storeys. The latter a total of 52 flats with 19 spaces in an 8-storey block. The wider concern about the lack of any Traffic Management Plan for West Street was not raised at the meeting of the Development Panel which permitted the new development. With the potential introduction of hundreds of flats (many with parking provision) the current traffic arrangements on West Street are not fit for purpose, with the new residential traffic movements joining existing shopper and retail delivery vehicles.

There have been two major applications for developments on sites identified within the BLP. Whilst there is nothing that can be done to stop these developments, it is important that we continue in our efforts to influence how these sites are ultimately developed. At **Spencers Farm** the proposal continues to be for 330 dwellings through Bellway Homes. Concerns about poor and limited access to the site persist. The detailed plans submitted show that in addition to a good number of social/affordable flats – which we need, there are too many open market flats – which we do not need. Indeed, there is an overprovision of 1 bed dwellings, and we would prefer to see the proportion reduced. Considering that it is a green field site there is

inadequate parking provision – in terms of the total number of spaces, while for many dwellings there is the use of unsatisfactory tandem parking. Within the application documentation it is acknowledged that there are two areas of landfill within the boundaries of the site. The stability of the ground and risk of contamination of groundwater needs to be addressed and remedial action put in place. The Boundary Walk and Millennium Walk both pass through the site, and assurances are required regarding continued access in the future. As it stands, the current application is for the housing element only, with the application for the development of the Education Area to provide a large primary school to follow.

The other green field development is of land **South of Kimbers Lane** where Taylor Woodrow is proposing 225 dwellings. Again, there is a satisfactory proportion of social/affordable dwellings, but this has resulted in the overprovision of flats within the scheme. The south-western area of the site is dominated by a linear series of eight apartment blocks, which run alongside the A404M. The rear elevations facing the motorway are singularly unattractive, with the front elevations and balconies etc. all facing north-east. These blocks of flats also serve a noise screening function to protect the rest of the site from motorway noise. With multiple developments scheduled for both sides of Harvest Hill Road (which serves this Kimbers Lane site) there is a need for a comprehensive Strategic Highways Review to assess the impact of construction traffic in the short term and residential vehicle movement once the sites have all been completed.

Back in early 2023 there were a series of applications from BT to introduce **Street Hubs** around town – especially in the High Street Conservation Area. These were refused because they did not enhance or reflect the character of the Conservation Area. Many are concerned at the state of our High Street – some even surprised that it has Conservation Area status. For better or worse, it needs protecting. BT are attempting to roll-out their Street Hubs nationally, but they are widely unpopular. They have resubmitted two applications within the High Street CA and one for a new site at Stafferton Way. The hubs are illuminated digital advertising stands around eight feet in height. BT maintain that they can improve telecom and internet access, but this is not an issue in Maidenhead, and most mobile phone users have unlimited free calls. At a time when there are moves to remove unnecessary street clutter, the hubs will be just another obstruction for passers-by and a visual distraction. In two locations – outside Boots side entrance in Market Street (see picture for impression) and the High Street outside the old Post Office – they are



replacing obsolete free-standing call phone equipment. In Stafferton Way (outside Lidl) they are supposedly replacing a call kiosk – which does not exist! It remains to be seen what happens away from the Conservation Area, but it is to be hoped that the protection of the CA will prevail where it applies. (It would be nice if they could sort out the lack of mobile signal in Cookham High Street.)

A decision is still pending on **Lawnfield House** where a 70-bed care home is proposed on the site of a Victorian villa at the corner of Westmorland Road and Bath Road. The application has been scaled back marginally, but it still represents a very intense and overbearing development across the site. The application for four semi-detached homes on surplus car parking at **The Crown PH** on Wootten Way has been refused, although we believed the scheme was acceptable.

The change of use from offices to residential under Prior Approval/Permitted Development has continued. The latest is the Volvo office block known as **Scandinavia House** on Norreys Drive, near the roundabout junction with Shoppenhangers Road.



A total of 30 dwelling units is proposed (9 x studios, 15 x 1-bed and 6 x 2-bed). It appears that many fall below the minimum Nationally Described Space Standard. It is to be hoped that RBWM insist on a conversion that does not provide substandard dwellings. **Eastgate**, an office block on Moorbridge Road to the east of Waitrose, has also been refused because of the substandard living space offered by some of the proposed dwelling units. It is understood that a further office block, **The Reach** on Bridge Avenue, which had applied for change of use is likely to continue as an employment site. RBWM is about to conclude the year-long process of introducing **Article 4** legislation, which protects key employment sites, both individual buildings and office parks from potential change of use to residential. This legislation is anticipated in early February 2025.

Martin McNamee

Could a New Town at Taplow become Government Policy?

The Government is being encouraged to plan a new town of more than 20,000 homes at Taplow. It is one of four locations across England put forward by UKDayOne, a think tank dedicated to boosting growth.

The other locations are Poppleton, a commuter village on the outskirts of York, and urban extensions of Manchester and Leeds.

But Taplow appears to be the think tank's priority as a key location for a potential New Town. They say: "An extension to the town of Maidenhead, at Taplow, has a strong economic growth case. Maidenhead has great rail connections and a strong local economy. It is an attractive area for people seeking more affordable housing outside of London."

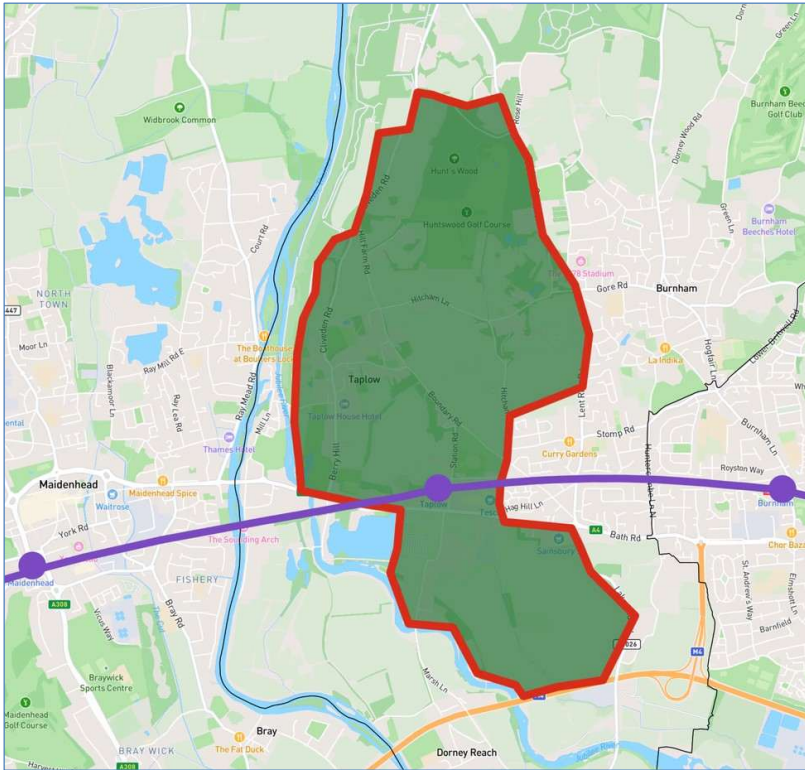
As proposed, Taplow New Town would occupy 5.8 sq km of land around the current village, stretching from Huntswood Lane in the north to the M4 in the south and from near the Jubilee River in the west to Taplow Common Road and Lake End Road in the east (see map).

In their document *'New Towns for a New Generation'*, UKDayOne say: "The suggested site is entirely contained within the Beaconsfield constituency, which has among the most unaffordable housing in the country. The new town would be compact enough to encourage active travel; a resident at the top of Taplow New Town could cycle to the station in 12 minutes."

In support of their argument, the think tank states: "Recent public investment in the Elizabeth Line has added additional passenger capacity that could be better leveraged. Currently the Taplow station has fewer than 4,000 residents within one kilometre. The local jobs market is strong with neighbouring Slough boasting the highest concentration of company HQs outside of London. In Windsor and Maidenhead, 82% of residents are employed, higher than both the national 75% average and the wider Southeast region's 79%.

"The Government could pass an Act for a Taplow New Town, an extension onto the successful towns of Maidenhead and Slough. The Act would define the area covered and give the Secretary of State powers to build new infrastructure. At a gentle medium density of 50 homes per hectare and assuming 20% public, green and commercial use, Taplow new town could accommodate over 20,000 homes or 40,000 people."

Kane Emerson, one of the authors of the report, told *The i* newspaper recently that much of the land around Taplow is "underused", has "low biodiversity" and would be ripe for the use of strengthened Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs), as proposed by Labour.



*Taplow on the Elizabeth Line is seen as a promising location
(From UKDayOne: 'New Towns for a New Generation')*

The report suggests that, under a Taplow New Town Act, the Secretary of State could issue a CPOs to buy the land at existing use values, grant permissions for development, then sell the land to developers at the new increased land value to fund the creation of public services such as schools and GP clinics as well as Government priorities like new social homes.

On the face of it, UKDayOne's proposal appears to dovetail neatly with the Government's plans. In a bid to deliver 1.5 million new homes by the end of the current parliament, Ministers have vowed to build the UK's first new towns in a generation, each containing at least 10,000 homes. And a New Towns Taskforce is currently scoping locations for the new settlements, with a shortlist expected to be put before ministers by July. You can read the full version of the think tank's report here: <https://ukdayone.org/briefings/new-towns-for-a-new-generation>.

Bob Dulson

Projects

The Green Way - Trials & Tribulations in the Town Centre

Flooding at the A4 Underpass

This has had publicity in the *Advertiser*, so you may have read about the problems of flooding of the Green Way as it runs under the A4. This is because the flood wall was cut short here to avoid a cable buried in the stream bed in 1992.



The stream bed dug out prior to inserting a cable in 1992. Tubes carried the stream around the ditch

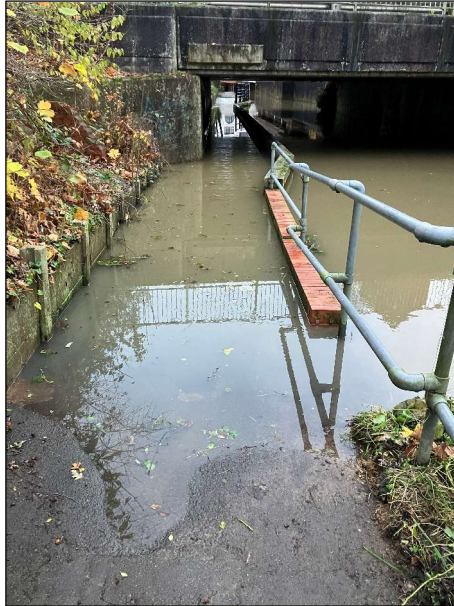


The intention was that the later development of the Ivy Social Club would allow money to be spent on removing the cable, increasing the depth of the stream and completing the flood wall. However, this never happened. Instead, a “temporary” brick wall was built.

But water leaked through the brick wall, came up through the slabs in the path and from the base of the bank. Happily, the pump used to take water away is now working again having been connected to a new source of electricity supply (previously disconnected because it made the street-lamp it drew power from flicker!). Sadly, the path again flooded when the water level rose in November last year despite a working pump. This will no doubt happen again.



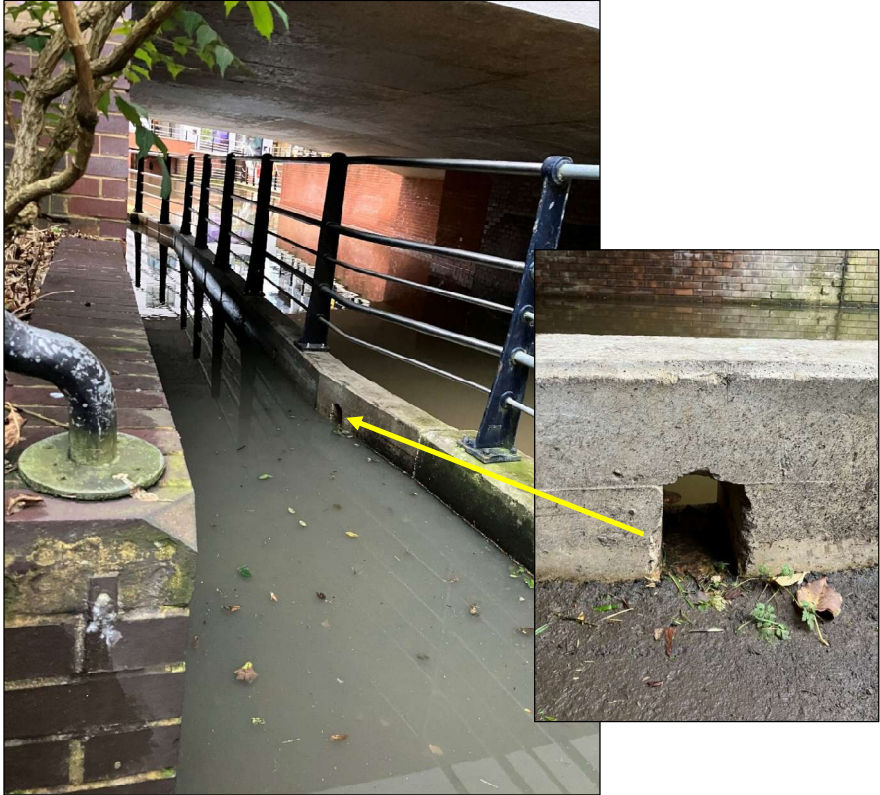
The new brick wall, as at 18th January 2018 - already watery!



The A4 Underpass - the path on 30th November 2024, despite a working pump

Flooding under the Crown Lane underpass (car park exit)

When the level of the stream rose in November 2024 water also flooded onto the Green Way path due to holes in the flood wall designed to take away any rainwater. In the absence of a pump, the holes, or ideally a hole, should have been fitted with a non-return valve.



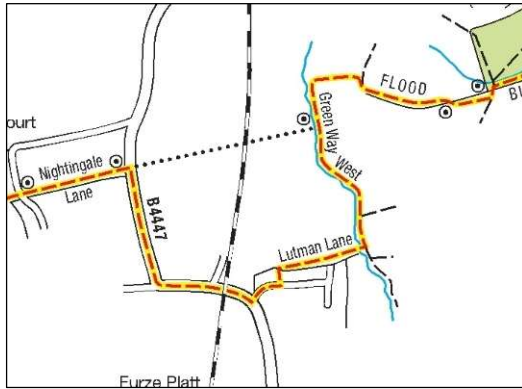
The Crown Lane Underpass – the path on 30th November 2024

One of the holes in the flood wall- there are eight!

The reality is that even if the cable was removed and the flood wall fixed at the A4 underpass, walkers on the Green Way would still face a flood at the Crown Lane underpass when the water level in the stream rises. Watch this space!

The Millennium Walk and the Spencer's Farm development

Those of you who have done the Millennium or Boundary Walk will remember the diversion that includes Lutman Lane to West Mead then to Green Way West, to navigate around and across the rail track.



Extract from the Millennium Walk leaflet: navigating the rail track showing the remaining missing link.....

Recently the permissive path next to Holyport Football Club that takes the Millennium Walk, the Boundary Walk and a permitted cycleway from West Mead to Green Way West had this gate placed across the path.



New gate across the permissive path that carries the Millennium Walk, the Boundary Walk and a cycleway to Green Way West



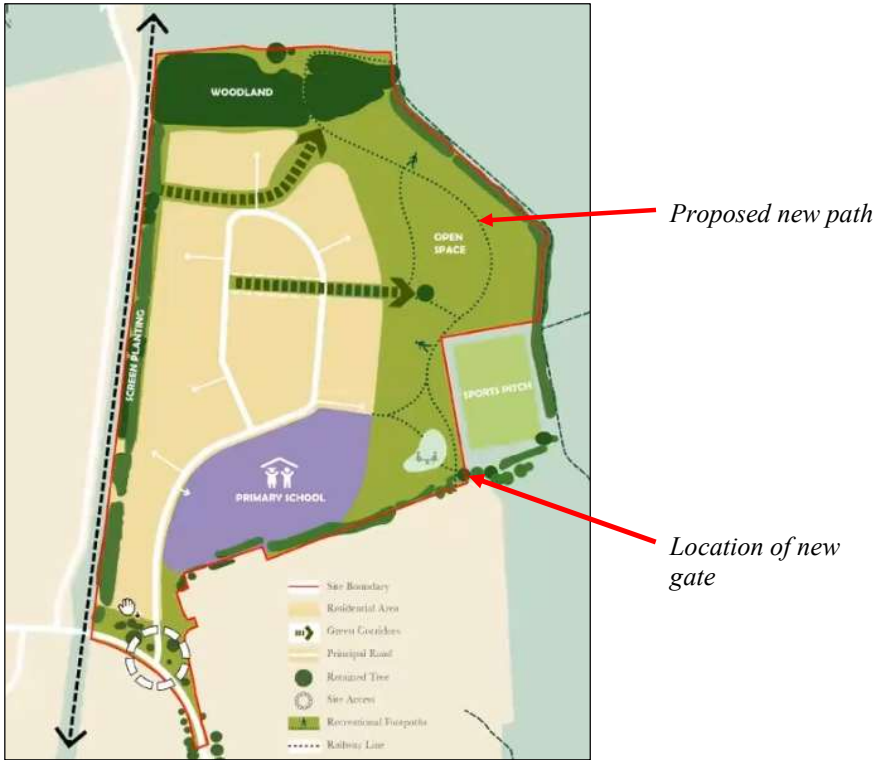
The landowner, Mr Peter Prior of Summerleaze Gravel, who gave permission for the path over 20 years ago said that:

“The local residents complained that people parked their cars in the roads in front of their houses and used the permissive path to attend football matches. The gates are now locked before games and reopened after them, so that should deter the car parking issue”.

He went on to say:

“When Bellway have constructed the paths on the east side of the Spencer’s Farm estate, as shown in the development drawings, so that people can cross the next bridge over the waterway, north of the existing permissive path bridge, the permissive footpath and cycle path will be permanently shut. This will enable Summerleaze Park to become an integrated whole, without reducing pedestrians access to the countryside.”

This proposal was not mentioned at the Spencer’s Farm planning enquiry though concern about the impact of the development on the existing permissive path was raised by the Society.



Spencer's Farm Masterplan

Unfortunately, the proposed new path is less direct and more likely to flood than the current route. As this change will affect both the Millennium Walk and the Boundary Walk (with over 600 walkers using it during the charity walk in October) we have asked the Royal Borough for more information about the new path(s). Sustrans is being consulted because of the impact on access to National Cycle Network 50. As the proposed change to the path was not mentioned before, my guess is RBWM didn't know about it: they do now!

You may note from the emerging masterplan (above) that the south entrance to the new path on Spencer's Farm appears to be within the current permissive path that is to be closed!!

Ann Darracott

Events

Private Visit to White Waltham Airfield - 13th May 2025



I have organised a visit to White Waltham Airfield (SL6 3NJ) on Tuesday May 13th, 12.30 – 4pm. The visit will include a talk on the history of White Waltham, followed by a tour of the hangars. Tea and biscuits will also be served. The cost of this visit will be £12.00 and this includes the refreshments. If you are interested please email me on joyce.delasalle@btinternet.com or phone me on 07917 876145. We have made this visit twice before – in 2009 and 2010 – and both occasions were extremely popular.

Payment can be made by cheque, made payable to Maidenhead Civic Society and posted to Joyce Delasalle, Maidenhead Civic Society, 7 Laxton Green, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 3HW. or by bank transfer to Maidenhead Civic Society, Sort Code: 30-95-36; A/c: 00277876, quoting reference “WWA”. The closing date for this event is 2nd May.

White Waltham Airfield is one of the oldest and best known airfields in the country. Set in 200 acres a couple of miles to the west of Maidenhead, and is one of the largest grass airfields in Britain. In 1928, the de Havilland family acquired the land and formed the de Havilland School of Flying which opened in 1935. The MOD requisitioned it for use during World War II and in 1940 it became the HQ for the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) whose members were responsible for the delivery of all aircraft to and from RAF stations. During the war years the ATA achieved a remarkable 309,000 aircraft movements enabling the RAF to concentrate exclusively on operations. White Waltham has also been home to Fairey Aviation, manufacturers of aircraft such as the Gannet and Rotodyne. It has been a civilian airfield and the home of the West London Aero Club since the early post-war years.

Potential Visit to Bletchley Park

Thank to you our members who contacted me regarding a possible coach visit to Bletchley Park. Unfortunately, there was not enough interest to warrant hiring a coach but quite a few people would be happy to drive. If there are enough members willing to do this I will organise a date and book a group tour for later in the year. The cost of this would be £22.00. Do let me know.

Dates for your Diary

Tuesday 13th May 2025
Visit

Visit to White Waltham Airfield
12.30 pm – 4pm.

CIVIC SOCIETY – KEY CONTACTS

Interim Chairman	Derek Wilson	01628 621176
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Hon. Treasurer	Peter Child	01628 632300
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Newsletter & Website	Brian Darracott	01628 620280
Events & Membership	Joyce Delasalle	01628 637342
Newsletter Distribution	Sue Ross	01628 626849

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2025

All meetings are now at the Cox Green Community Centre, 6.30pm until further notice.

14th January, 11th February, 11th March, 8th April, 13th May, 10th June, 8th July, (12th August), 9th September, 14th October, 11th November, 9th December

The 65th AGM will be held on a date to be confirmed in September 2025, at 7.45 for 8.00 pm.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
of the Newsletter is 18th April 2025**

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