



Maidenhead
Civic Society

Strategic Review of Amenity

A Summary

Making Maidenhead a better place

Maidenhead Civic Society

The aims of the Society are to improve the local environment and facilities in Maidenhead. Maidenhead should be a place people want to live, work and visit. The Society liaises with other local bodies to this end and with other Civic Societies both in the UK and abroad.

Introduction

Maidenhead has a long and successful history. As a result, it has been exposed to continuous and often rapid change, retaining few features, man-made or other, that make a town visually attractive. Moreover, its facilities, services and amenities have grown haphazardly, without any real plan or coherence. They have been introduced piecemeal and, through the years, have formed a series of ‘patchwork-quilt’ responses to immediate needs. The Strategic Review by the Society aims to encourage a more coherent approach to what is needed – to identify long and short-term objectives for the continuous upgrading of those features which will make and keep the Town an attractive place in which to live and work.

The Council operates under a system of quadrennial elections which tends to limit the horizons for long term planning, whatever may be the tacit agreement between Council groups on desirable long-term objectives. This Review is the Society’s considered effort to create a vision and overall plan of the amenities that are wanted by those citizens who, as Society members, have put forward their views. It is hoped and believed that they will be representative of what the larger body of the Town would like. It is the Society’s intention to go on developing the Review and to promote it with the Council and interested parties as a valid Strategic Plan for the Town together with the actions needed to make it effective.

Historically Maidenhead has been known as ‘The Jewel of the Thames’. We want to restore that image to its full glory. How? By exploiting the attractions of its riverside, having a vibrant but civilised and appealing town centre and creating a healthy balanced environment between the built and the natural. What follows is the vision and actions to make this happen.

John McIntosh
Chairman

July 2004

Headlines

In particular, the Society is pressing for:

- **Town Centre – a town with a distinctive heart; an attractive focal centre for the community, comprising a healthy and engaging mix of civic administration, business, commerce and, importantly, domestic housing.**
- **Planning & Housing – preserve the best, improve the rest; insist that new building enhances an area’s character and meets the needs of the community, not developers. Preserve and improve the environment.**
- **Riverside, Leisure & Tourism – imaginative ways of improving the amenity of the riverside and extending the “green belt” to include the Thames through Maidenhead.**
- **Travel & Transport – serious improvements in travel to, from and through the town plus the creation of an integrated transport hub centred on the railway station.**
- **Culture & Heritage – build on the success of the library and Norden Farm; refurbish the Desborough Suite; make provision for a town centre Heritage Centre and museum.**
- **Appearance & Ambience – high standards of design and maintenance in public areas; zero tolerance to graffiti and litter**

Maidenhead Civic Society would like to see:

1. Town Centre

A comprehensive plan implemented for an area at the heart of the town – a town square on the French model - centred on updated council offices, surrounded by quality shops, restaurants, social & leisure opportunities and green space.

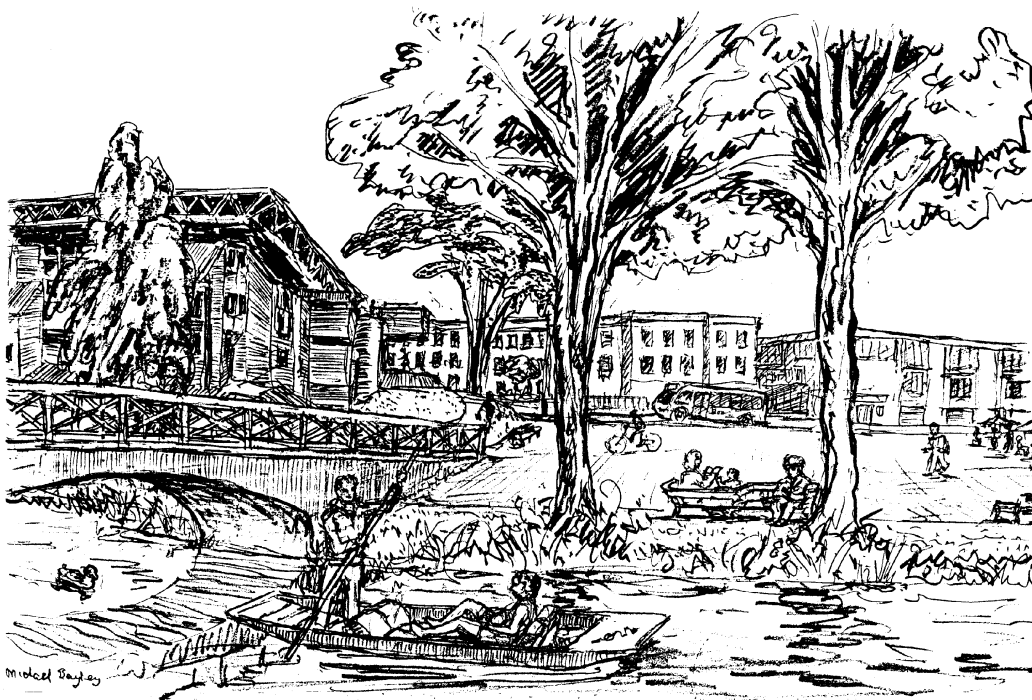
Exploit the opportunity for creating a navigable waterway to connect the town centre with the River Thames.

Provide a wide range of shops and services and make access to them convenient, sociable and pleasant.

Call for the urgent redevelopment of the derelict cinema and an end to buildings being left in a run-down state.

Promote the redevelopment of redundant sites in the town centre to provide new, modern shops.

Encourage in-town residential accommodation, including ‘affordable homes’, starter homes and homes for the elderly, using the idea of ‘planning briefs’ to ensure that there is an integrated concept and design.



The area around Maidenhead library and York Stream offers an opportunity for a new town square

2. Planning & Housing

In all development and redevelopment set out policies and plans to ensure positive moves to improvement, as follows:

- Insist on high standards of design and development; that what is good is preserved and what is new adds character to the area, bringing urban renaissance and an improving quality of life.
- Make use of the ‘gateway’ idea to ensure that developments produce buildings suitable to the purpose but which are of architectural high standards and impress the visitor to the town on his way into it.
- Insist on a better balance between office and residential development with particularly more emphasis on town centre residential accommodation.
- Give full weight to the preservation of the Green Belt and demand adherence to the policy for ‘green’ provision in every new development.
- Focus on the use of derelict and ‘brownfield’ sites for redevelopment.
- Balance town centre shopping with out-of-town and local shopping enclaves.

Envisage any housing development will include a proportion that is ‘affordable’, with particular attention to the town centre, and underline the need for ‘starter’ homes.

Demand tighter management of ‘infill’ development, particularly the replacement of single houses by blocks of flats.

Insist on adherence to all aspects of government flood guidance policy, including the adoption of up-to-date flood plain maps.

Publish an annual review of the forward pattern of housing needs in terms of household size, income etc., to achieve a proper balance of future needs against existing housing.

Ensure and demonstrate that all developments are matched with appropriate infrastructure – services, schools, shops, road capacity and amenities.

Use ‘planning briefs’ to ensure new developments are appropriate to the areas they are planned for, avoiding piecemeal growth.

Insist that industrial activities in residential areas are relocated to industrial areas.

The Civic Society’s review process produced more than 100 individual demands and suggestions. This Summary is a distillation of those ideas. The full “wish list”, together with information about the Society, including how to become a member, can be found on our website at: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

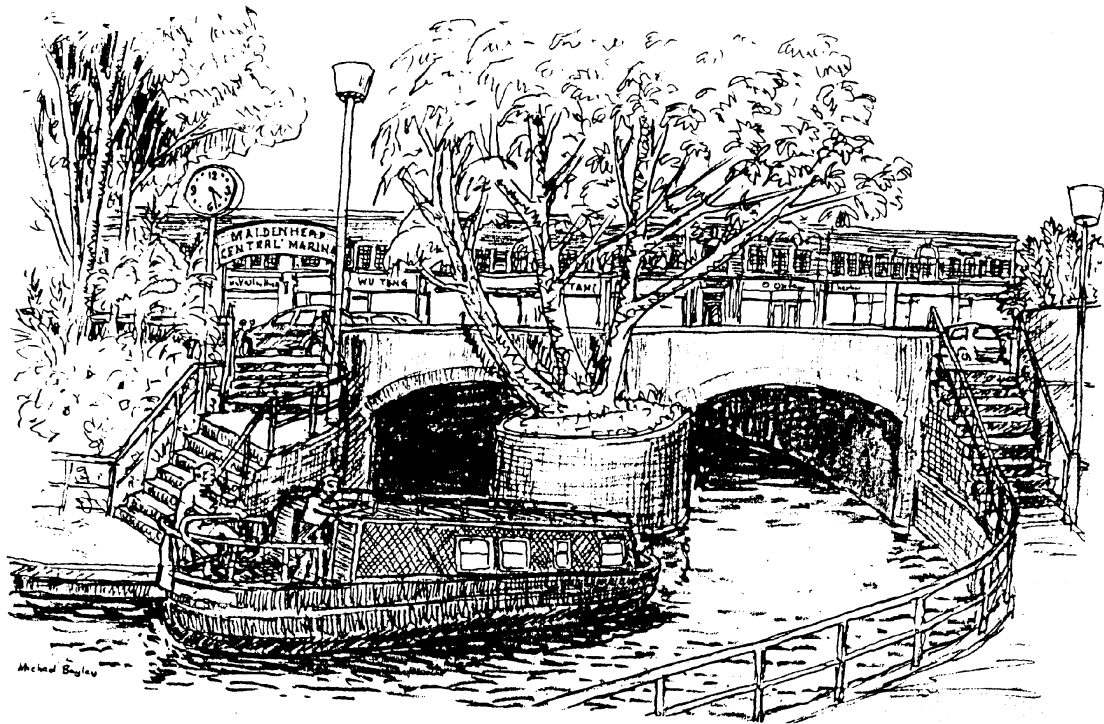
3. Riverside, Leisure & Tourism

Capitalise on the opportunities afforded by Maidenhead's riverside location to enhance and extend facilities for residents and visitors.

Find imaginative ways of linking riverside and town centre.

Adopt a landscape strategy to ensure the conservation of the River Thames environment.

Redevelop Skindles and upgrade other sad sights on the South Bucks bank.



*An enhanced York Stream 'Canal' at
Chapel Arches and The Colonnade*

Deal once and for all with the quality of the York Stream environment, including the restoration of clean, substantial flows of water throughout the Stream's length.

The Environment Agency to manage all flows in local stream systems in a way consonant with appearance and the environment.

Continue to enhance the parks, gardens and open spaces already available and find new opportunities to add to their number.

Make provision for new and existing sports facilities to encourage participation, particularly by the young, in sports/pastimes such as football, walking, cycling, cricket, swimming, rugby, athletics, etc.

Create and maintain a proper network of local paths & cycleways to uniform standard, promoting their use with easily read maps.

4. Travel & Transport

Treat transport issues as an integrated whole for the necessary coexistence of motorists, pedestrians, cyclists bus and train travellers, commuters, visitors and tourists.

Make the station area Maidenhead's transport hub, combining a renovated train station with a bus terminal, adequate and attractive parking, easy access pick-up and drop-off points and a taxi rank.

Make bus travel a viable alternative for in-town travel and give a concerted effort to make cycling in and around town safe and convenient.



There could be elevated pedestrian access to a new transport hub at Maidenhead station

Create underground rather than surface or multi-storey car parking, making this a requirement for any new (office) development in town.

Give residents priority parking in town.

Standardise speed limits to 30mph, except on dual carriageways, and take steps to have them observed.

5. Culture and Heritage

Build on the current successes of Norden Farm and Library to extend arts and cultural facilities.

Refurbish the Desborough Suite to provide a central Arts Centre/Theatre complementing Norden Farm.

Support the provision of musical events in the town and their promoting organisations and consider the merits of staging a Maidenhead Arts Festival.

Ensure an adequate space in the town centre for exhibitions of all kinds and expand the area available in the Library.

The Civic Society gives specific support to the Heritage Trust in calling for provision for a town centre museum and Heritage Centre.

Develop more conservation areas, extend the number of listed buildings and publish a map of areas of archaeological interest.

6. Appearance & Ambience

Improve the understanding that every one of us contributes to these issues.

Ensure high standards of shop front design and their regular rejuvenation; ensure such standards are applied equally to shopping enclaves throughout the borough.

Zero tolerance to graffiti, litter and chewing gum deposits, insisting on their rapid removal.

Ensure the highest levels of waste recycling with a continuing campaign.

This document is a living vision. By its nature, it will go on being modified as new needs are seen and as present ones become less important. This summary is backed by a mass of detail, which provides the detailed tasks and actions needed to make sure Maidenhead truly is 'the jewel of the Thames'.

The Society welcomes your comments. Please join the debate and send your views to:

Nigel Cockburn, Willow House, Fishery Road, Maidenhead, SL6 1UN.

The artist's impressions in this brochure were drawn by Michael Bayley