



# The Cookham Society

Registered Charity No. 257224 | [messages@cookhamsociety.org.uk](mailto:messages@cookhamsociety.org.uk)

September 2022 Newsletter

The Cookham Society notes with deep sadness the death of Queen Elizabeth II. She was not only Queen of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth but was our much treasured, neighbour here in Berkshire. We salute her seventy years of unstinting service and dedication to duty. She will be sorely missed. God Save the King.

Tom Denniford, President and Bill Perry, Chairman

## SOCIETY OPPOSES MARLOW FILM STUDIO APPLICATION

Plans to build a vast film studio complex to the east of Marlow have been roundly condemned by the Society. The site, shown roughly highlighted in red in the photo lies to the south-east of the junction of Little Marlow Road and the A404 Marlow by-pass and comprises nearly 90 acres. The developers are intending to build more than 1.75 million square feet of sound stages, offices, ancillary buildings and car parks together with a back lot for the erection of scenery, etc. By way of justification, the promoters claim there is an urgent and unsatisfied need resulting from the current success of Britain's film and television industry in attracting productions to this country.



Cookham Bridge; and fails to consider whether the surfacing of the large back lot area would increase flooding in Cookham".

While it is highly gratifying that Britain's media sector is prospering, our research shows that, contrary to what the promoters assert, there is a pipeline of at least 35 new sound stages under construction or planned in the London area and a substantial amount of space has recently come on stream elsewhere. There is absolutely no justification for such a development in the Green Belt. Visually, its roofscape and open areas would be comparable to a large warehouse estate, which would be highly damaging to the local environment. We have joined the large number of objectors condemning this scheme.

"This has got to be one of the most damaging applications the Society has faced in recent years," says your President, Tom Denniford. "It would fundamentally affect the views from Winter Hill, which the National Trust describes as '...arguably some of the most breath-taking views of the river Thames'. Moreover, the application ignores the issue of impacts on the Bisham Woods Special Area of Conservation; has nothing to say about traffic generation over

## ACCESS TO LOCK ISLAND

The road across Odney Common to the weir is a Public Right of Way, as is the tow-path on Lock Island running the length of the Lock Cut. Unfortunately, the path across the weir itself is not but the Environment Agency have for many years opened it during the daytime to give the public access to Lock Island and its towpath. Following an accident over two years ago, the EA decided to close all public access across the weir. We are continuing to push hard to get access restored to the island and are working closely with the Parish Council and our RBWM Ward Councillors.

Following a safety assessment by the EA, industrial, galvanised steel palisade fencing has been erected on the EA's land on Lock Island both upstream and downstream of Odney weir. The EA are now consulting on a proposal to install the same prominent, ugly steel palisade fencing on the Odney Common side. We are strongly opposing this. No evidence has been put forward that these metal eyesores are necessary in order to protect the public. **Dick Scarff**



Lock fencing



## HOUSING SITE AT LOWER MOUNT FARM

This site, known as AL37, was a new housing allocation location introduced

into the Borough Local Plan at a late stage of consultation in 2017. We objected strongly to RBWM at that stage and again to the Inspector at the Examination in Public. Unfortunately, our concerns were ignored and, with the final adoption of the BLP earlier this year, the site has been taken out of the Green Belt. Bellway Homes are already preparing development proposals to build 200 homes on the site. **This will be Cookham's biggest ever single**

**housing development.** Detailed plans have yet to be published but Bellway have conducted initial consultations on outline proposals. We have already registered a number of our concerns about the plans but are particularly alarmed about the impact of additional traffic at existing pinch points and in the wider village. Moreover, the single access point for all 200 houses on to Cannondown Road will cause major traffic flow problems. **Dick Scarff**

## FOOTPATHS 17 AND 59

Footpaths 17 and 59 are Rights of Way (RoWs) and run across the fields from Mount Farm towards the old brick and tile works at Pinkneys Green. Along with the Ramblers and numerous residents, we strongly objected to an application to close these paths and re-route them along an existing farm track around the edge of the field. The old route is long-established, direct and the Society considers that paths such as these are as much a part of our historic heritage as any listed building in the village. The far-reaching views from the open path would have been lost and a number of women had also complained that they preferred the safety of the open field to the wooded paths. We were very pleased that at the March RBWM RoW Panel, the diversion request was refused.

**Dick Scarff**



Paths 17 and 59

## STATION COURT

Shanly Homes' second application to develop the Station Court site, this time for eight, three-storey homes, was rejected by the Panel at RBWM. We await a further, revised application from the developer.



Station Court

## THE ROSE GARDEN

The latest application to build a house on this Green Belt site is currently being considered by a planning officer at RBWM. The previous application was met with fierce resistance by the Society and local people, as is this latest one. We will continue to watch this space closely.



Rose Garden

## TURKEY BARNES ON SWITCHBACK

To protect the purity of our drinking water, the government defines and safeguards the Source Protection Zones around water supply wells. Zone 1 is the innermost one and is the most critical. The new turkey shelters on Switchback Road have been erected in Zone 2 and partly in Zone 1, which surround the wells in Whyteladyes Lane that supply Cookham.

When the planning application for these shelters was submitted last October, we raised our concerns about the possible effect of large amounts of turkey effluent tainting the local water supply. Many months later, The Project Centre on behalf of the Lead Local Flood Authority have recommended that 'Given the site is located within Source Protection Zone 2, the proposed use of the site, and the proposals to discharge via infiltration, we recommend that the Environment Agency's groundwater protection team is consulted prior to construction'. The Borough's professional advisers are belatedly echoing concerns we raised months ago. As the shelters have already been erected and put into use, we are anxious that the application should be decided promptly with the necessary information provided by the Environment Agency. We will continue to press the Planning Department to take action.

**Dick Scarff**



Turkey tunnels

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Society has been involved in the progress of the Cookham Neighbourhood Plan since its inception. Bill Perry is Chairman of the Society and in another role, is Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party. He gives an update on its progress so far.

The Cookham Neighbourhood Plan comes in two parts: the Plan itself and the Design Criteria, applicable to housing development. Both are being drafted by professional advisers: the Plan by Troy Planning + Design and the Design criteria by AECOM. Since the beginning of the year the working party has been considering these drafts.

In July, the Parish Council agreed the working party's recommendations to accept the Design Criteria, which had already been through two earlier drafts. These cover general design principles and site master-planning for the three BLP designated housing sites. The Parish is using the design yardsticks in its discussions with the developers of Strande Park and Lower Mount Farm.

In August, the working party sent its comments on the first draft of the plan back to Troy. The Parish hopes to receive a new draft soon which will incorporate the existing Village Design Statement as well as the Design Criteria. It is hoped the next draft will be ready, along with the Design Criteria for consultation shortly, and thence for consultation and approval by residents in 2023.

**Bill Perry**



Cookham Village



# THE COOKHAM SOCIETY DESIGN AWARD

By Tom Denniford

The Society's annual Design Award competition has now been running since 2014 and this newsletter presents an opportunity to look back on the entries since the scheme's inception.

Although the majority of the entries have been houses, other nominees have included environmental projects, including a redesigned garden at Cookham Dean CE Primary School (winner in 2016), and the John Lewis Heritage Centre, which narrowly beat the new vestry extension to St. John the Baptist Church in 2014. Various housing projects have been submitted, from new dwellings to substantial reconstructions and upgrades.

What are the judges looking for? There are no hard-and-fast rules but when making their appraisals they always have the Cookham Village Design Statement in mind. It is worthwhile emphasising that this in no way rules out modern forms of construction, but the judges do expect projects they assess to sit comfortably within their surroundings.

Designs which appear to follow the whims of architectural fashion and materials that will rapidly become tired and start to look dated are unlikely to find favour, especially if they depart dramatically from the colour palette of the neighbourhood.

Quality of construction is important. Our 2022 winner, Tars Platt, faced stiff competition but won because of its attention to detail, the use of traditional materials and for the outstanding quality of the finished work.

## HOW TO ENTER THE COOKHAM SOCIETY DESIGN AWARD 2023

If you know of a building project, either new-build or refurbishment, garden or any other project that you think is worthy of inclusion into the Cookham Society Design Award, why not put in a nomination form. It doesn't matter when the project was started but it must have been completed in 2022.

To obtain a nomination form, go to the following website address, download the pro-forma and when it is complete send to Lysette Penston at the address listed at the bottom of the form.

[www.cookhamsociety.org.uk/design-award](http://www.cookhamsociety.org.uk/design-award)

## SOME OF THE WINNERS SINCE 2014



### 2022, Tars Platt:

Extensive refurbishment of an early 20th century villa, Mr and Mrs Stonell.



2019, Chapman's Orchard:  
Rework of a 1960s detached property, Karina Mellinger.

2018, Orchard Fields:  
Refurbishment of a large, detached 1920s house, Mr and Mrs Spray.



2016, Cookham Dean CE Primary School:  
Redesigned garden at the rear of the newer part of the school. Designed by Mrs Hannah Wilson along with the teachers and children of the school.

2014, John Lewis Partnership Heritage Centre:  
Repurposing of old buildings for a new heritage centre, John Lewis.

# COOKHAM ABBEY

Following Dr Gabor Thomas's excellent lecture at the Society's AGM last March, we asked the team working down at Holy Trinity Church paddock for an up-date on the progress of the archaeological dig. Fiona Tattersall, of Friends of Cookham Abbey Facebook Group sent us this report on the latest developments.

Under the expert leadership of Dr Thomas, the site is producing exceptionally well-preserved archaeology of this once vibrant and busy riverside monastic community. The latest finds include items from the Mesolithic and Neolithic flint workings. There is also evidence of a likely burial site and a sturdy road made from reclaimed Roman building materials, which may indicate that a villa had been located nearby. Personal copper-alloy items have been found and a wealth of animal bones might indicate that feasting took place here during the early Medieval period.



Dr Thomas describes the quality of the site as being "Like hitting the jackpot". It is rich in material and is associated with Queen Cynethryth, who served at one time as the Abbess of the community. She was the widow of the mighty Offa and can reasonably be described as the most powerful woman in England at the time. Moreover, the location itself is of great significance, set as it is, in a very important politically and economically strategic point on the Thames, forming a boundary between Mercia and Wessex and affording easy access both to London and European trade routes.

The site is likely to grow in importance, making a valuable national and international contribution to our understanding of this era and shining a light on the period formally regarded as the 'Dark Ages'.

For more information on how to get involved and support this once-in-a-lifetime journey of discovery, join The Friends of Cookham Abbey by emailing: [info@cookhamabbey.org.uk](mailto:info@cookhamabbey.org.uk)



## ENFORCEMENT

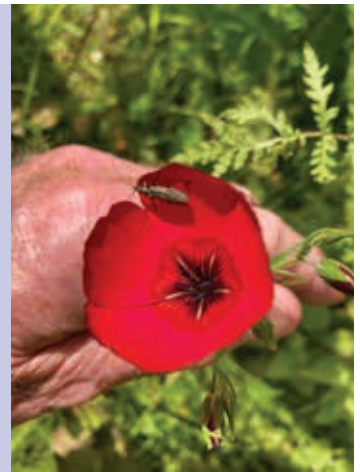
The Society sometimes contacts the Enforcement Officer at the Royal Borough to request a formal investigation into building projects or other kinds of development where we believe there has been no suitable planning permission sought or granted. Although these are, thankfully, few in number, they do occasionally merit investigation. If you are aware of developments that you think are of detriment to the wider public sphere, why not get in touch with us. We are able to depersonalise concerns if you do not wish to be associated with the request for formal scrutiny.

Contact us on: [messages@cookhamsociety.org.uk](mailto:messages@cookhamsociety.org.uk)

## SEEN IN COOKHAM

This vivid flower blossomed in committee member Barry Weare's wildflower garden this summer.

The rogue bloom, known as a Crimson Flax, attracted the attention of a female Odemra Nobilis.



## KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH THE SOCIETY

You can keep abreast of key issues facing Cookham by staying in touch with the Society in any number of ways.

- Join the Society and get access to our twice-yearly newsletter
- Read our website, [www.cookhamsociety.org.uk](http://www.cookhamsociety.org.uk)
- Follow us on Facebook 
- Read the Drum on Cookham Station concourse.

