

# SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2021

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## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

**S**OMETHING SPECIAL seems to be happening in Spalding. There seem to be some seeds of civic pride in the town that are being sown, thanks to the efforts of the Wombles of Spalding Common. Long may it continue. The Civic Movement's key aim is to make places more attractive, enjoyable, and distinctive, and it is my firm belief that Spalding & District Civic Society has a key role to play in delivering those aims in our town. Indeed, as we come out of what we all must hope will be the last national lockdown, the year ahead could be very demanding for the society. One thing that the pandemic will be remembered for is a reawakening of community spirit. Daily we are seeing examples in the news of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. If you have been inspired by the good-news stories of the last year, you could be just the kind of person that the Society needs.

Are you passionate about the conservation of nature and/or the historic environment? If so, you could become the Society's voice on local conservation matters? Are you passionate about how new buildings look? You could be part of our planning team, with a role in reviewing and commenting on planning applications in the Conservation Area and elsewhere in the Spalding area. Are you passionate about local

heritage and history? You could have a role in undertaking research into potential candidates for future blue plaques or helping identify buildings for listed status. Are you new (or not so new) to Spalding and have ideas that could benefit the town? If so, do not keep them to yourself. Join the team and together we could help make them happen. If you are not a member of the Society, but would like to join us, or would like more information about the Society please feel free to contact us (details on Page.8) or visit our website ([www.spaldingcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.spaldingcivicsociety.org.uk)).

The Society will be holding our AGM via Zoom on Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, at 7.30pm. It is a time to hear about the activities of the Society over the last 12 months and discuss future plans, and affords an opportunity for people to step forward and be part of the journey towards delivering a better Spalding. This year our guest speaker is Ian George, Historic Places Manager for Lincolnshire County Council. Ian will be sharing details of some significant developments that will help to protect our county's rich heritage.

All members of the Society will be invited to join the AGM by separate notice. If you are not a member but would like to attend the AGM, please contact us via the link on our website.

**John Bland**

### Covid-19



Seagulls social-distancing on the White House Chambers – November 2020

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## £500,000: ESTABLISHING THE PRIORITIES

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**T**HE REGENERATION STEERING GROUP has been able to meet only once since the October Newsletter. Frustratingly, the winter lockdown meant that the two planned town-centre festive events had to be cancelled. However, the Group has been able to identify a number of priorities for action, many of which were on the Society's shopping list.

**Appearance** Everybody agrees the town centre ought to look better. The Society awaits the day when the owners of town centre buildings that look forlorn and unloved will give them the make-over they deserve. It won't happen overnight – too many of the shops are empty – but the offer by Bridge Farm Group to supply over 100 hanging baskets for 15 shops in the town centre is very welcome. Another project, scheduled for spring, is Transported Art's 'Book Nook' scheme, which will result in displays in some of our empty shops. A focus on quick wins will hopefully deliver some immediate improvement, while work on longer term projects progress. Naturally, the Society hopes the return of the Johnson Fountain to the town centre will be one of the latter. (*See across.*)

**Accessibility** The steering group has recognised the importance of making the centre readily accessible. Car parking, cycling and walking trails have all been discussed, along with an extra bus serving the town. It is recognised the river also plays an important part in the town. Many of these ideas are still in their infancy – or in the case of the bus service put back due to Covid.

**Events** It is agreed we need to hold more events. Pop-up market stalls, a monthly market event on a Saturday, outdoor cultural events and activities inspired by our heritage, events on the river – all have been discussed. Uncertainty, however, about the safe lifting of Covid restrictions makes planning of any event difficult. Let's hope that by the late spring it will be possible to begin making provisional plans for the second half of the year. (*See p.5.*)

**Business engagement and digital support** The need for retailers to work together and support each other will be a key part of the regeneration. Support is available through the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce, but the town needs an active group to take the fullest advantage of this. Establishing a Business Improvement District, encouraging and incentivising local people to support independent traders, wi-fi hotspots and business incubation have all been discussed. The last will be needed if, as seems likely, we lose more national High Street names to internet shopping. Hopefully, some enterprising people may be encouraged to open independent shops in the spaces that could be available in the next few months. The town as a whole needs to be better marketed, but some businesses need to be better at marketing themselves as well.

**Town Survey** A public survey consisting of 20 questions has been drafted. Scheduled for release in January. the lockdown, however, has put it back to the Spring. We will let Society members know when it is available and hope all members will take part.

**John Bland**

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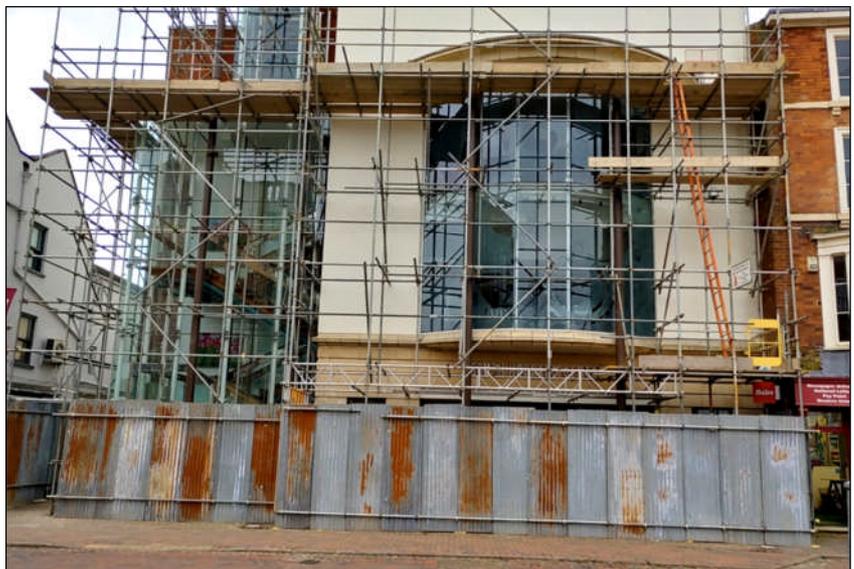
### MISSED OPPORTUNITY ?

Corrugated iron? Looks like the 1950s. Why not the more modern board-ing sheets? These could then have had huge enlargements of some of the Photographic Society's striking Spalding photographs with a few thought-provoking questions as a trailer for the forthcoming Town Survey.

**What are the greatest assets of Spalding? What prevents people from visiting Spalding Town Centre?**

Or street art? Have we a budding Banksy somewhere? The same could go for all our town building-site boarding, providing a constantly changing gallery.

Or reproductions of some of the brilliant work done in our schools? Or by the winners of our Open Arts event?



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## THE BAKERS

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Like everything else, Covid has put the brakes on getting *The Bakers* statue installed. That and the choice of our first and second sites turning out to be unacceptable, even before an application. It was a small detail in Ian Marshman's otherwise much fuller submission to the Town Centre

Regeneration Steering Group that sparked a realisation of the possibilities of what is now our preferred site. Ian was the guest speaker at our AGM two years ago, and a little mock-up picture in his submission suggested how *The Bakers* plus four or five trees could transform a bleak featureless area of the town centre into an attractive 'place' with character, a destination rather than just somewhere one passed through to get somewhere else. And the space in question? The empty 'square' between the rear of the Pied Calf and the zebra crossing to Holland Market. Could the flower seller from alongside Argos also move up there, to be joined by the stall that regularly sells strawberries in the summer months? The coffee shop on the corner already puts tables out. "Swan Place"? It's the sort of physical enhancement, generating community use, that the regeneration of our town centre surely needs.

In order to avoid fixing on a position for the statue that would turn out to be on top of water or sewer pipes, we asked Anglian Water for a map of their pipe-work underneath the block paving, but were refused, "for copyright reasons", and referred elsewhere. Why is nothing ever simple?

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## THE FOUNTAIN

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IT WAS with some concern that we read in a *Voice* report that the Cemetery Improvement Group have suggested that the Fountain be installed in the Cemetery. There could hardly be a more unsuitable place. In a cemetery it is bound to be perceived as the memorial of somebody-or-other who died and was buried there. On the contrary, it was a monument of gratitude to someone who was very much alive

in 1874 – Miss Mary Anne Johnson – for the gift of *life* that she had brought to thousands of ordinary Spalding people. Her £150,000 (in modern money) enabled water mains to be laid along the three or four principle Spalding roads, bringing pure drinking water to whole areas of the town previously dependent on more or less contaminated well water, with the often fatal illnesses that resulted.

The Fountain was designed for the Market Place (with a last minute change to Hall Place); and Spalding lost a distinctive part of its character when it was dismantled to make way for an experimental traffic scheme in 1954. To restore it to the centre would be to restore some of that lost character. And it is of course a ready-made feature for the regeneration of the town centre, to which SHDC is pledged.

A follow-up letter to *The Voice* making these points set social media buzzing – overwhelmingly in favour of the town centre. Spalding people, it seems, clearly want to see the Fountain back again in a place in the town where it has meaning. It is an emblem of life, not death.



**AGM**

### ZOOM

It's a Zoom AGM this year!  
Members, even those who've not zoomed before may like to give it a try.

Just email Secretary Marian Boxall  
[info@spaldingcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@spaldingcivicsociety.org.uk)  
and receive a simple link in return.

Tuesday, 23 March

7.30 pm

Guest Speaker

**IAN GEORGE**

LCC Historic Places Manager  
Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries

Visual presentation

Heritage, place-making, regeneration:  
'There's a lot going on at the moment'

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## 'Planning for the Future' – Controversial White Paper\*

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**A** WHOLESALE REVISION of the planning system – no less – is what the government's White Paper proposes. It is now analysing the feedback. Members of the Society were asked for their views, which helped shape our response.

The government's first major proposal is to simplify land use into three types – **Growth Areas** (suitable for substantial development), **Renewal Areas** (existing built areas suitable for development) and **Protected Areas**. In **Growth Areas** outline planning permission would be automatic, with approval fast-tracked. In **Renewal Areas** there would be a presumption in favour of development, with detailed consent fast-tracked again. Only **Protected Areas** would keep the planning application process as now. However, the present eight-week consultation period for applications offers the main – or often only – way for ordinary people to take part in the planning process. I therefore utterly reject automatic planning permission for Growth Areas, as it deprives the public of any say. Likewise for the presumption of consent in Renewal Areas. These are views shared across the civic society movement and beyond.

Rightly, conservation areas fall into the Protected category

To speed the preparation of Local Plans, the White Paper proposes to impose national development policies. However, one size does not fit all. Local plans should reflect local circumstances. Take Policy 26 of South East Lincolnshire's Local Plan: "*The blanking out of shop windows by externally-positioned opaque blinds or vinyl film or by other means will not be permitted.*" This provision was a direct result of the Society's involvement in consultations for the Local Plan. Such a policy would not be possible with centrally imposed national policies.

Amongst welcome proposals is one for local plans to be visual and map-based, using digital technology. However, it is vital that people are not digitally excluded. The White Paper repeatedly pours scorn on lamp-post notices, but they remain a key way to highlight planning applications for those who otherwise wouldn't know about them, unless they happened to check their local authority's planning portal.

On the housing shortage, the government does recognise that approved sites often remain uncompleted for many years. As much as 20 sometimes. It's a key recognition. The shortage is not simply down to the planning process, but also to

a failure of commercial builders to see an application through to completion. It's hoped the proposal to allow a variety of development types by different builders within the one large site will enable it to be developed more quickly, whilst retaining the quality design standards initially set for it.

Indeed, a key proposal is for improving design quality generally. Thus, there would be a National Model Design Guide, a National Model Design Code and an updated Manual for Streets; and also local codes that reflect local characteristics.

However, says member Roger Smith, such local codes will require adequate resources and consultation with architects and designers who work in the area and with bodies such as local civic societies. They must "give clear guidance without being so prescriptive as to frustrate innovation". Armed with a code both "realistic and generally accepted", local authorities would be able to promote good design by being "consistent in their decisions .....leading by example in [the council's own] developments ..... [and] encouraging developers to engage designers [with] the skills to respond to the local design guide."



In the complete absence of captions it is impossible to know whether the White Paper regards this (and others) as an example of good design or bad. And why. (Editor)

One final proposal is to combine Section 106 planning obligations with the infrastructure levy on developers, at a national set-rate. The combined levy would clearly have a greater emphasis on getting affordable housing built; for there seems to be little provision for other aspects of development that present 106 agreements can cover, such as open spaces and drainage.

This proposal needs further thought. At present up to 25% of the community infrastructure levy is spent on priorities in the area where the development occurs. The proposed greater say for the community in how the levy should be spent is welcome. However, to leave local authorities free to [Page 7 ►

# SUNDAY FUNDAYS

Ways to liven up the town centre ?

**S**PALDING MARKET has a long history. The town is mentioned as one with a market in *The Domesday Book* (1086). Over 900 years later the Steering Group for town centre improvement has identified **Events and the Market** as one of the priorities for regeneration of the centre. This is something the Society has been urging on the Council for some years now and perhaps at last its time has come. Looking forward to the return of more normal times, there is no shortage of opportunities.

## The Market

A weekly or twice-weekly **'on the stones' auction** near the South Holland Centre would rapidly draw people back to the top end of the Market Place, to the benefit of market traders and shops alike.

Add a **flea market** between Lloyd's Bank and the Red Lion.

Spalding is a Fair Trade town. What about a **Fair Trade stall** once a week?

**Eastern European Food** Persuade our Eastern European shops to take up a stall or two (on a rotating basis?), encouraging local people to try out new foods. (At present they probably feel a bit reluctant to enter the usually blanked-out *shops*, feeling them perhaps to be 'foreign territory'.)

**Extend the Market into the Sheepmarket** on Saturdays – on a rotating timetable: car boot sales, second-hand car sales, *children's* flea market, gardeners' market. Very occasionally: a continental market.

## Entertainments

The seating circle in Hall Place is the town centre's foremost social space. Its aesthetic, community and visitor opportunities seem to be unrecognised by the Council – witness the way it has been allowed to become a dumping ground for market traders' clutter and even parked vehicles. It should be sacrosanct: the attractive heart of this key section of the market. It is, moreover, a ready-made 'arena' for entertainment on market days.

- Bring in the **buskers**. Some are very good.
- Organise a **programme of entertainments** for the Saturday markets, drawn from:- ♦ Punch-and-Judy, ♦ jugglers, ♦ boy (and girl) bands (but not too loud!), ♦ ukulele band, ♦ local choirs, ♦ Act II and Polka Dot and other local drama and dance groups, ♦ magicians, ♦ Holbeach Brass Band, ♦ SADOS and St.Nicks, ♦ work at a mobile forge, ♦ gymnastics, ♦ judo, ♦ martial arts, ♦ TRANSPORTED events .....

• Make the circle a recruiting **showcase for local clubs and societies** to display what they do, encouraging by-standers to join in and maybe have a go:- ♦ crafts, ♦ folk

club, ♦ ukulele band again, ♦ roller-skating, ♦ flower arranging .....

• **Maypole dancing** from scratch – anyone can join in – with music.....

• Have a **mini-ceilidh** .....

• **Exhibitions** under a pop-up gazebo:- ♦ paintings, ♦ photographs, ♦ ceramics, ♦ stained glass .....

Work of the Civic Society, Local History Society, Gentlemen's Society, RSPB, ATC, Ramblers, PEDALS, TRANSPORTED again .....

## Events

Monthly? Bi-monthly? Establish the idea that the town centre is where things happen – interesting, entertaining, family fun – with immediate spin-off for the town centre shops that open on a Sunday and subconsciously reinforcing the vitality of the area for the Tuesday and Saturday markets as well.

**Vintage Displays**:- tractors or cars or motorbikes or bicycles, rounded off with a round 'tour'

**Citizens' Fair**, in which all local societies and clubs advertise themselves and offer coffee and refreshments. (Add to those already mentioned: Rotary, Round Table, Young Farmers, Lions, Unique Studios, fitness groups.)

**Performing Arts Festival** Set up three or four stages at separate points within the town centre, for local drama, music and dance groups to show off their talent during the day and advertise forthcoming programmes or productions.

**Sunday Funday** Besides being an (annual?) occasion when the town centre is given over to a day of family physical fun, this could also be a promotional event for local firms to show off their services by adapting some of their equipment for a temporary fun use – Crowland Cranes? cherry-pickers? tyre dealers? Fire Brigade? .....

Events might include:- **'Iron Man'** competitions (truck-pulling, lifting tyres .....); **team tower building** with straw bales; **tug-of-war**. A **climbing wall**.

Competitive events for **mini-wheelers**, largely within the central pedestrian area:- scooters, skate-boards, segways, quad-bikes, slow bicycle race, even perhaps a sedate motability event. **Treasure Hunt** (for heritage details? using smart-phone technology in some way?). Vital that whole families can be involved in the day.

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We have put these suggestions to the Steering Group. Almost all of them are things done by other towns, here and abroad. Some indeed already successfully organised in Spalding by former Town Centre Manager Bruce Wakeling. [Page 6 ►



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# PEDALS ROUND-UP

*Spalding's Cycle Action Group*

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**I**N 1983 the only traffic signs in Spalding referring to cyclists were **NO CYCLING** signs. So we decided to form a group to support cycling in our town, in the hope that more people would want to use their bikes more often and perhaps leave their cars at home. Obvious reasons:- more exercise, less pollution, more space on the roads for those who need it.

Now we have designated cycle paths, more and better signs, and three cycle routes named after flowers – Tulip, Crocus and Daffodil – created by LCC without any direct pressure from us.

However, much still needs to be done to enable more people to feel safe and confident when cycling. Our main areas of activity include the Western Relief Road and, especially, much-needed links to Pinchbeck and Spalding town centre on the B1536.



Residents in the proposed new houses will need safe cycle routes if they are not to clog up the roads with their cars. The Daffodil Route, from Spalding Cemetery gates to Enterprise Way and beyond, is to be improved with s106 money from the Power Station. It is a remarkably beautiful route for walkers and cyclists, passing the Vernatts Nature Reserve and the rear entrance to the hospital. When finished, it will be a vital part of the local tourist offer. Safe routes to the schools in the east of the town from the residential areas in the west are another big concern.

We offer support and advice to both LCC and SHDC so that these routes can be the best possible, and we can see the needs from a rounded point of view, as most of us are also motorists! Do join us. Even non-cyclists can help!

**David Jones**

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## MUCH APPRECIATED

- **Network Rail** for the passenger lifts at the Station.
- **SHDC** for reopening the Vine Street toilets at last. Sheepmarket next?
- **Heritage Lincolnshire** for the LincsPass scheme. The pass is open for attractions, venues, cafés, retail outlets, and accommodation providers to join, but they do need to have an “offer for customers” with a LincsPass. It could be anything from a free cup of tea with a sandwich to a discount on the shopping bill. Participating businesses will then be promoted on the LincsPass website and mobile app for free. Some national names (such as Prezzo) have already signed up to the scheme, but Heritage

Lincolnshire are keen for local businesses to sign up. The pass itself is an annual card costing £9.99 per year that then enables the holder to take advantage of the deals available. The LincsPass is based on the East Anglia Pass, which has been very successful. In the whole of South Holland, just three organisations have so far signed up. We hope there’ll be more soon? (Further information on: <https://lincspass.com/> )

- **The Wombles** for the splendid job they’re doing. May their numbers increase and there be less litter dropped in 2021 to womble

◀ Page 5] Some are simple enough, such as inviting the buskers in or engaging Punch-and-Judy or a local folk group. Larger events would need the Council to draw on the experience of the organisers of major successes such as the Bakkavor Summer Gala, the Beer and Music Fest or the in-house team that put on the popular 2019 Circus Skills Day in Ayscoughfee Gardens.

“If someone likes to organise something, we’ll support it” won’t achieve very much. Any more than: “Let’s get the pandemic over first.” Planning for a markets and events programme needs to start



now – with groups and individuals approached, contacts made, possible contributions explored – so that when face masks and social distancing are unnecessary and it’s no longer dangerous to sing, the programme will be ready to go. The goal needs to be more than “getting back to normal”. It’s “normal”, after all, that has seen the steady decline in town-centre footfall over the past ten years or so. To increase that footfall, as everybody wants, it will need “normal double plus”, “super normal”, “normal on jet-skis”, leaving the same-old and the normal well behind.

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## NEXT BLUE PLAQUE

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**A** VICTORIAN NOVELIST – Anthony Trollope perhaps or George Eliot – might well have seen a potential plot in the apparently uneventful life of Charlotte Charinton, quiet spinster philanthropist in a small market town.

Born in 1801, she was the younger daughter of a wealthy Gedney Hill farmer, Thomas Charinton. When he died, she inherited the whole of his estate, as he had disinherited her elder sister Sarah for eloping with a bricklayer and refused to recognise the marriage.

Eventually moving to Spalding, Charlotte settled in No.11 London Road, where she lived frugally for the rest of her life. Devoting her inheritance to various churches in South Holland, she financed the restoration of the parish churches of Holbeach, Gedney Hill (seriously damaged when struck by lightning), Cowbit, Fleet and St.Mary and St.Nicolas Church in Spalding, whose vicar, the energetic Canon Edward Moore, had at some point become steward of her land and properties. She was a major contributor to the building of Canon Moore's second new Spalding church, St.Peter's in Priory Road. Church schools, too, received generous donations, not to mention private charitable gifts to individuals in need.

She wanted in the end to leave all her remaining money to her sister's grandchildren, as she felt guilty about having inherited all of her father's money. However, Canon Moore persuaded her to finance the third new church he wanted to build, at Fulney. And so, St.Paul's Church [pictured] was built and endow-



-ed, together with its vicarage and schoolroom, entirely at Charlotte's expense. (The London architect chosen by Canon Moore, the renowned Sir George Gilbert Scott, cannot have come cheap.) Her grandnephew Richard Guy Ash was installed as the vicar.

When Charlotte died in 1888, she left her estate, not to her sister's grandchildren, but to be shared between Mr.Algernon Peckover, a Wisbech banker, and ..... yes, the Revd. Canon Edward Moore. The Ash family disputed the will. The local press speculated. "Should the dispute come within a public court, some very sensational evidence may be expected to be produced, and the legal struggle in which the principle figure of the Vicar of an important parish, advanced in years and rich in worldly goods, is likely to create no small stir not only in this locality but throughout the country." But the case was settled out of court and the Revd. Ash received some remuneration. Canon Moore died in 1889.

But whatever the moral conflicts for those involved – of love v. class, family v. religion, religious calling v. worldly prestige, and the use or misuse of a powerful position – we all remain in Miss Charinton's debt. South Holland, like most of Lincolnshire, is rich in mediaeval churches, and that the architectural glory of many local ones was preserved from neglect or misguided alteration owes much to the quiet munificence of Charlotte Charinton.

*Research by the late Marion Brassington; picture from a watercolour by Phil Biggs.*

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◀ Page 4] spend it on whatever they wish – on services, for example, or reducing council tax – is unacceptable. Once built, a good quality housing estate might reasonably be expected to stand for 100 years. Surely it is right for the levy to be spent on things that will last at least as long? Community facilities and open spaces, for example.

We hope the government has listened to the representations that have been made, and will go back to the drawing board on the White Paper's more controversial aspects. But, as it sneaked in another proposal during December – with far-reaching consequences for our High Streets (*see Planning Matters, p.8*) – we are not sure they will.

**John Bland**

\* Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future/planning-for-the-future>

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## PLANNING MATTERS

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**N**O APPLICATION for the **old sorting office** on the Crescent yet, although it's a few months since the encouraging news of a new owner for the site. We'd all hoped that there would have been one by now, which, together with the adjacent Fitness Company site, would come up with a sympathetic scheme making the most of our most recent listed building and transforming a significant street corner long blighted by a derelict building. Building surveyors have been seen on the site, and hopefully there is someone with the vision this part of town needs.

It was good to see that **Pygott & Crone** have begun the refurbishment of their shop front. Whilst the dark grey colour may have marmite qualities, the overall uplift will hopefully encourage other town centre businesses to give their buildings some TLC.

We objected to **Carpentright's** application to modify the condition relating to their unit in Westlode Street which would have enabled it to become a potential food and drink outlet. The support statement reminded us that Policy 25 of the *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan* required a review of the retail capacity in Spalding to be commenced within one year of the local plan's adoption. The plan was adopted on 8 March 2019, yet no such review has been undertaken. The latest available study dates from 2013. A lot has changed since then. We argued that, in the absence of a more up-to-date retail study, an impact assessment of the proposal was needed. The support statement also stated that the Westlode Street site is integrated with the town centre. We disagreed. It is at best on the fringes.

Our MP Sir John Hayes also objected, highlighting the number of food outlets already in the vicinity, and expressing concern that relaxing the condition could adversely affect the vitality and viability of the town centre.

As a result the application was dismissed. Given all that has happened to High Street retailers due to Covid-19, it is clear that a retail capacity study would now produce a very different result from one undertaken in 2019. For once, it appears that delay has been a blessing in disguise. When we do come out of the other end of the long dark tunnel that Covid has thrown us into, Spalding will need to make the review of retail capacity required by Policy 25. That review will have to reflect the new circumstances that we find ourselves in.

□

In December the Government sneaked in another planning proposal for consultation that surely should have appeared in its earlier White Paper. That is: to permit the conversion of High Street shops and commercial buildings into flats without any planning application. Whilst our High Streets are facing acute challenges, surely they should be given every opportunity to recover by encouraging new start-up businesses? Whilst it seems inevitable that there will be more residents living on our High Streets, it should come about as part of a planned process that is properly thought through, with proper widespread community engagement, not by means of a piecemeal process at the whim of a landlord. The proposals, if implemented in their current form, could change High Streets indefinitely.

**Planning Sub-Committee**

### SPALDING AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

I enclose a cheque for:- [ ] £8 for individual membership; [ ] £12 for 2 persons in the same household;  
[ ] Free if in full-time education; [ ] Details of a standing order mandate

Please send to **Melvyn Price, 3 Morus Close, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2QL**

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