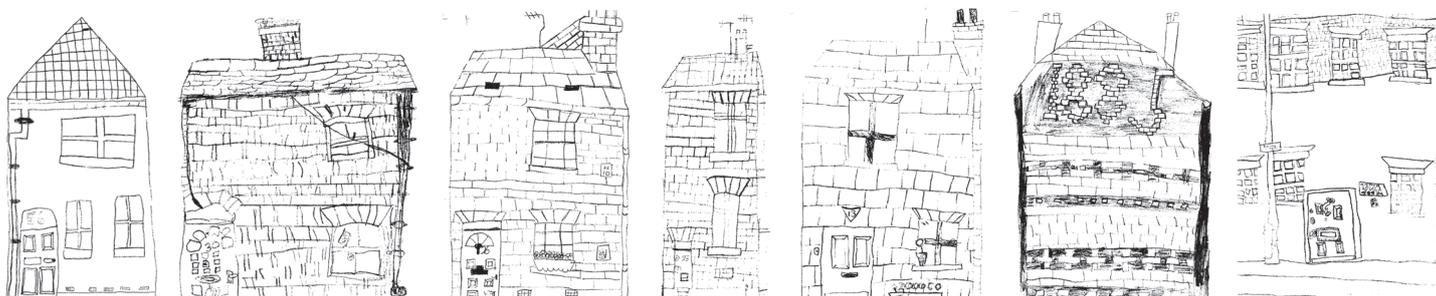


OSNEY ISLAND RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

www.osneyisland.co.uk

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2011



WHAT'S ON

Osney Island children's lantern parade

The traditional Osney Island Children's Lantern Parade and carol singing will take place on **Saturday 17th December**. Meet outside The Punter at 5.30 pm, bring a lantern (tea light in a jam jar) and dress warmly. Refreshments are offered en route. If you would like to provide treats, please drop a note to Ben and Claudi at 50 West Street or give us a ring on 204511. If you would like the group to sing outside your door please let us know; it would be lovely to be able to welcome new arrivals - both babies, and those who have moved to the island this year.

Free pre Christmas wine tasting

Multiple award-winning wine merchant The Oxford Wine Company, whose shop in Botley Road some islanders will already have visited, cordially invites all Osney Island residents to an informal introductory **FREE wine tasting @ 6.30 pm on Monday 28 November in the Mary Town Room at the West Oxford Community Centre**. Complete mixed case offers and OIRA discount on the night. To register, please contact Lee Isaacs, by email at lee@oxfordwine.co.uk or phone him on 01865 249500. Note that TOWC can deliver to Osney Island within 24 hours if you place your order by email or telephone. Lee and co are able to put together mixed cases at different price points for you for regular delivery should you require them. TOWC is also offering an ongoing 10% collection discount across the board to Osney Island residents on any of their 1,500 products on production of this newsletter.

ISLAND NEWS

BT's fibre broadband service on the Island

From Jon Cox: News on BT's fibre broadband service on the Island. Many of you will have seen and heard about BT's fibre broadband service 'Infinity' which promises much faster downloads (and uploads) compared to 'standard' BT broadband. BT have been rolling out this service, and the associated fibre cabling and infrastructure, throughout Oxford over the last year. Although BT's telephone exchange in central Oxford is now 'enabled' and can accept orders for fibre

broadband, the coverage is not yet complete over the city (as of November 2011) and Osney is not yet ready – although the rest of West Oxford is connected.

If you are like me, and wish for a fast internet connection that isn't supplied by Virgin, then read on.

The fibre cables run between the telephone exchange and green-painted local 'cabinets', which are popping up everywhere. One example is outside the Carphone Warehouse on the Botley Road. Osney's existing telephone cabinet is a battered looking pale green box on the north pavement of the Botley Road, half hidden in the allotments hedge by the bus stop opposite the Island.

This cabinet falls within the Article 4 Direction boundary and unlike elsewhere, BT need to secure planning permission to install a new fibre cabinet alongside the existing one. A planning application was finally lodged in early September. Although BT won't concede as much, it's very probable that the Conservation Area is the reason why Osney was missed out of the original cabinet installations in West Oxford.

The planning decision is expected by mid November* – just when you should be reading this newsletter. It is likely to be approved, and BT have assured me that the cabinet will be promptly installed – hopefully before Christmas - and immediately connected to the existing fibre infrastructure.

UPDATE – 31st October – the planning application has been approved today by the City Council.

Thames Water's adoption of shared ('private') sewers

From Jon Cox: It's not a meal time conversation but it is excellent news to note Thames Water's recent 'adoption', from 1st October, of all private sewers. You should have received a letter from Thames Water to explain this – but it is a point worth making again.

Many of the Island's terraces have sewers which collect waste from more than one house before joining up with the main street sewers. Very often a sewer serving one terrace subsequently passes under the gardens of other terraces (each with their own branch) before reaching the main sewer. This Victorian arrangement had

previously meant that householders were responsible for maintaining their sewers, even beyond the boundaries of a property. In short, shared sewers are bad news since drainage problems both 'upstream' and 'downstream' can affect an individual terrace. Problems, expenses and complications inevitably multiply if there is a problem with the sewer – costs ought to be shared, and this is tricky enough to negotiate, pay for and resolve quickly when your neighbours own their houses – but much harder when neighbouring houses, under which a sewer problem may occur, are tenanted and absent landlords or agents need to be involved. Now, Thames Water are responsible for the maintenance and repair of shared sewers, which should save Islanders money and time. You can find a detailed leaflet on the Thames Water website here: www.thameswater.co.uk/cps/rde/xbcr/corp/private-sewers-leaflet-june_-2011.pdf

Planters in Bridge Street?

From Georg Deutch: While walking down Bridge Street, it occurred to me that this part of the island decidedly lacks greenery. There are a quite a number of window sills, that could carry a box and Joyce Chalmers is exploring the question how to encourage residents to be more proactive in this matter. However, there are also the bicycle parking areas, which are front- and back- ended with a lovely space that could easily be used for wooden planters. The standard planter box (sturdy, made out of wood from controlled sources, lasting about 15 years) is 100cm long, 50 cm wide and has a height of 41cm. They would fit snugly into the spaces, leaving about 3cm - 5 cm around them. They cost about £ 70.00 each. (If you want to see how they look, google: elite-trough-rectangular-planter-fsc-rectangular-wooden-planter.) Planted with lavender, for instance, they would make a pleasant sight in the summer. The planters would be purchased by OIRA and then handed over to residents who had indicated that they would take care of those planters for an initial period of three years or so. The planting would be left to them, perhaps receiving a bit of financial help from OIRA for the purchase of garden soil and plants. The whole scheme would cost - generously calculated - less than £ 600.00 for the six planters in Bridge Street. The proposal has been discussed by the OIRA committee, who members welcomed the idea, but of course nothing can be decided until everybody in Bridge Street had the chance to have their say in this matter. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

St Frideswide

Christingle Saturday December 24th, 4:30 pm
Midnight service Saturday December 24th, 11:00 pm
Christmas Day Sunday December 25th, 10:30 am

St Margaret's, Binsey

Advent carol service Sunday 18th December, 4:00 pm
Christmas Day Sunday December 25th, 9:00 am

Summary of the West Oxford Matters meeting of 5th October 2011.

Note a full report of this meeting can be found on www.wosneyisland.co.uk

West Oxford Matters is our local community planning group. It meets to discuss concerns and communicates

these to the City and County Council and Councillors, the police and other authorities. On 5th October a substantial group of local residents met with City Council Officials and City and County Councillors and there were presentations from Paul Wolf, City and Communities Team, with responsibility for the Area Forum on Frideswide Square and the West End, and Adrian Roche Team Leader Planning Policy/Strategy, Oxford City Council. We ask that they respond to the points raised at the meeting and noted here.

Transport: To hold a West Oxford Matters meeting in transport in **January 2012**. To invite County Council Officers to the meeting. Please tell Anne James of any issues you would like on that agenda riverbank26@tiscali.co.uk 01865 725906.

Community Safety: The Police Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) meets every three months. The next meeting is on **14th December at 5pm at The Town Hall**. The meetings are open to the public. Anne James attends on behalf of West Oxford Matters. Jan Warner, our Neighbourhood Officer and her team of PCSOs can be contacted on 0845 8 505 505.

Flooding: People are invited to join the mailing list of The Oxford Flood Alliance. www.oxfordfloodalliance.org.uk

The Built Environment and Local Facilities: We suggest people sign up to the Oxford Planning Finder Service run by Oxford City Council. This provides an instant search facility and you can sign up to receive automatic notification of planning applications close to you planning01.oxford.gov.uk. As part of a West Oxford networks would you be prepared to act as the contact and co-ordinator for your street(s)? If we can set up a local network we would be able to be much more pro-active in ensuring we have a strong say in shaping our local environment. Please contact Anne James riverbank26@tiscali.co.uk 01865 725906.

The West End: West Oxford Matters will circulate future issues of the West End newsletter to everyone on its mailing list. Information and past newsletters can also be found at www.oxfordwestend.co.uk or by emailing Sarah Leach Press and Marketing Manager at sleach@oxford.gov.uk.

Plans for Elms Parade: West Oxford Matters will make contact with North Hinksey Parish Council and the Vale of the White Horse to ensure we are included in consultation over any planned developments in Botley.

Concerns raised:

Pedestrians: Walking under the railway bridge on Botley Road is dangerous, because cyclists don't dismount. Crossing Ferry Hinksey Road is very difficult.

Cyclists: Cycle signs are confusing and cycle routes need clarifying. We need a safe cycle route into town: danger spots are under the railway bridge on Botley Road (very narrow), and where the cars turn into the car park at the entrance by the Duke's Cut Pub. Cyclists jump red lights and cycle on the pavement. There are a number of cyclists cycling without lights. New students are often not cycle competent. Can the Universities' safe cycling scheme be expanded or beefed up?

Cars: The Botley Road is jammed for a fair part of each day, particularly at the weekend. The new parking charge at the park and rides will not help with this.

The traffic prohibitions on Queen Street are confusing. It is not easy to understand what is allowed and when. Frideswide's Square is similarly confusing.

Rail: More trains mean more noise. The rail bridge is too narrow. The expansion of the station is good.

Community Safety and public health: The nightclubs in Park End St and Hythe Bridge St create a nuisance, making it unpleasant or dangerous to go down there at night. Drug hot spots: the Cemetery and Abbey Rd were cited. Bins are being emptied along the towpath by Abbey Rd. There are concerns about graffiti.

Flooding: There are major concerns that the national Planning Policy framework for flooding (EA PPS 24) is being watered down and the protection currently afforded to this area will no longer exist. The Oxford Flood Alliance is working hard on our behalf.

The built environment and local facilities

There is a lack of clarity about how all the proposed and potential developments fit together, an apparent lack of coherence between the different planning authorities and no obvious overview of planning. Developments along the Botley Rd will mean more heavy traffic.

- Planners should ensure that the infrastructure (drains etc) can cope with any developments.
- Planning appears not to suggest varied development. It seems to be student focussed. Do we really need more student accommodation? There are real concerns over the distribution and percentage of houses in multiple occupation. The area needs fewer students and transient people - they don't care about the area. They make more noise and more litter.
- Concerns about the proposed new student build on Mill St.
- There are examples of poor standards of architecture: 'supermarket architecture'. Planners could learn lessons from the continental planning approaches.
- What is the future of Elms Parade and our shops and supermarket there? We need to be included in the consultation over any proposals by the Vale of the White Horse. We would like to see more independent food shops in Botley.
- What are the actual plans for Frideswide's Square? And for Oxpens and the rail station and car park?
- An appropriate use of the MFI building should be created or knocked down.
- How will proposed developments at the Westgate Stores and River Hotel be linked and co-ordinated? We do not want to lose them.
- Is all the new office space in the proposed plans really necessary? There seems to be a lot of empty space at the moment.
- If the Oxford Conference Centre is closing because of lack of business, why plan another conference centre?
- The Southwell building/PowerStation: is this classified as an 'environmental infrastructure'? What does that mean in terms of planning? We don't want it redeveloped.

- We would like more local cafes suitable for young children during the day - the closest ones are in town.

Presentations by the City Council Officers

Paul Wolf, City and Communities Team, with responsibility for the recently established Area Forum (AF) Frideswide Square (FS) proposals. It was noted:

- The proposals are being reviewed in liaison with the County Council.
- Craig Rossington Oxfordshire County Council Highways & Transport, reports that two options have been approved by both the County and the West End Partnership group.
- There will be a meeting with institutional Stakeholders (listed) to discuss progress at the end of this month, but they currently do not include WOCA or other resident groups.
- There will be a consultation with the wider public in the Spring 2012.
- The ways in which the FS plans link into the West End plan update and Oxpens proposals will be brought to the AF in February.
- The meeting noted that consult and engage are quite different technical terms: consultation may not imply any obligation to heed or otherwise respond to issues raised.

Adrian Roche Team leader Planning Policy/Strategy, Oxford City Council

Mill St student accommodation

The original proposal for a three storey building, housing more than 70 students on a small strip of land adjacent to the railway (just north of the iron bridge), had been rejected in August, on grounds of size, bulk, massing, privacy and numbers relative to the size of the immediate resident community. A new application for a two storey building to house 55 student residents is being considered. It is likely to go to Committee in November or December. Responses are required by 11 October.

These proposals should be considered in the light of currently important debate on student accommodation in Oxford. Recent strategy has been to encourage the two universities to provide purpose-built accommodation, to protect housing-to-let for other tenants. The strategic planning review went to a public enquiry and has now agreed that access to land for building student accommodation should not be restricted the universities, but open to educational institutions offering a minimum of 12 month programmes. As a result, a large number of private colleges are now outbidding the chartered HEI's on relevant sites. (See blue review report on the web). There is a second review in progress, considering recommendations to restrict the location of student accommodation to main thoroughfares through city and district centres, preventing their construction in quiet residential streets.

This is emerging policy only and is not likely to be put to the full Council until sometime next year. This means that the Mill Street resubmission is being considered under the current policies. However, at least for the present, it is not proposed that the Mill St site in question be allocated for development.

Binsey Lane: there is no proposal to assign this site for development, although Christchurch is suggesting its use for sport facilities. The City is reluctant as it would mean removing allotments.

Avis site: this is being considered as a site for residential development, possibly car free. There are concerns that it would risk the loss of the River Hotel Annex.

River Hotel: currently Christchurch is not proposing this for development in the emerging sites document, basically because it is too small. It may seek to develop a single proposal integrating facilities from there to the West Gate Hotel, for housing and tourism, including a hotel.

Oxpens: this falls within the West End Plan, extending as far as Carfax. It is the largest site in that area being considered for development, to include public open space, housing and leisure services. It is part owned by Christchurch and the British Rail Residuary Board (BRRB). BRRB has now put it on the market and is being considered by potential bidders. Most are interested in housing, with some secondary uses.

Elms Parade. Two years ago, Vale of White Horse published a draft proposal to include a large supermarket, numerous other uses, to include commercial letting. The proposal is currently caught in other issues, not least discussion on the amount of housing to be allowed in the VWH. This is making for hesitation before a decision can be taken.

How decisions are made

We now have East and West Area Planning Committees which meet monthly. Area Committees have replaced by Area Forums which are less formal. The Planning Review Committee reviews decisions and is empowered to 'call in' certain decisions in the event that 12 councilors request this. All planning policy documents go to the City Executive Board for ratification, once approved by the Planning Committee.

Planning policy documents are subject to independent review by an Independent Planning Inspector, appointed by HMG. The Inspector's opinion is to be heeded, but is no longer binding on the Council. When permission is refused, applicants may appeal, to be approved by the Planning Inspector. This can lead to higher level Round Table discussions and public enquiries, inevitably involving lawyers, including barristers.

How get information about proposals pending

- Sign up online to receive notification of forthcoming planning and visit the Planning Portal
- Those without IT should visit the planning Office
- Temporary change of office location and further downsizing means that an appointment is needed to talk to a planning officer.
- For the present, enquiries should go first to St Aldates.

REQUESTS, RENTALS, FREEBIES

Family yoga

From Annabel Dunstan: I would like to say a BIG thank you to all those that came along to my family

yoga fundraiser. We raised £65 for Alzheimer's Society which will be enough to help the charity distribute over 300 copies of the much requested fact sheet on 'living with dementia' or enough for 13 people to attend a monthly dementia cafe to meet with others and to socialise. For any queries on family yoga please contact Annabel on 07790 216 441 as if there is sufficient demand I will run more sessions in the New Year.

Gritty issues

An Extraordinary OIRA meeting was held October 18th to discuss snow defences for the Island. The Committee discussed the possibility of purchasing grit bins from the council but was concerned that after the initial purchase the ongoing expense of refilling the bins throughout the winter had significant financial implications for the Island. So has agreed, as an interim measure, to purchase a number of snow shovels for Islander use to encourage people to keep the pavements safe for pedestrians. Details of where the shovels will be stored will be released shortly.

Rosemary Shorter

We are very sorry to report the death of long time resident Rosemary Shorter aged 98. 'Rosie' was born on the Island and was a fixture in the Watermans (now the Punter) sitting in the same chair at lunch time and in the evening with a pint. We shall miss her.

Massage and acupuncture

New Islander Elizabeth Elliott is offering massage and acupuncture in a new Osney Island treatment room. Contact and info at www.elizabethelliott.co.uk or call 07866759669. Discounts for local residents until Christmas!

Christmas cards

Local artist Simon Pressey is selling a selection of Christmas Cards which can be seen in the window of 11 West St. 6 for £5. simon@pressey.demon.co.uk

Freebie

A three-seater wicker sofa in good condition. Contact Georg Deutsch 4 Bridge Street, Oxford 01865 728 050.

Osney Island Bridge Club

Apologies to those that were interested in forming a bridge club - there wasn't enough take up, I am afraid. I wanted to talk to you but am ashamed to say that I lost the list (of just three people). Perhaps we can try again at a later date. I am away now for a few months but can be reached for comments on email: chalmersvictoria@shaw.ca

For reasons of space the Directory is not included this issue. Log on to www.osneyisland.co.uk for details.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

The OIRA committee's next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 30 November at 17 East St @ 8pm. If you'd like to raise an issue drop in or let someone on the committee know. You can find our agenda the minutes on the Bridge Street notice board and on the website. Next newsletter is due out mid January, last date for copy December 30. If you would like to put an item in contact: Elizabeth Newbery 3 North St. 793360, email: elizabeth@newberyandengland.com