



Tonbridge Civic Society

December 2023

DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER



I hope you've had a great Christmas and are looking forward to the New Year. It's been a busy first full year as chair of the Society and we've got plenty planned for 2024.

**TCS Chair
Tom Freke**

It was great to see so many people at our event 'Visions of Tonbridge' on 3 Dec at The Old Fire Station. We showed the many attempts there have been to develop the area around the Angel Centre over the last 50 years. Given how many plans there have been to replace the Angel Centre, it is remarkable the original building remains.



The TCS 'Visions of Tonbridge' event, 3 Dec at TOFS

Looking through the archives we can see the same issues and arguments have been made about the site over many years. As far back as 1978, even before the current development, the Society had extensive complaints about it. We noted the large area given over to "open cast" parking, poor traffic management plans, the limited ambition of the Angel Centre and that the proposals were only those proposed by food stores. How prescient these comments now seem.



The Angel Centre: fate TBC!

But now it seems the Angel Centre will be replaced. That was the council's decision earlier in December but without detail on where and with what. That uncertainty triggered a petition from the Tonbridge Model Engineering Society seeking to protect the current location of the miniature railway. The council has reassured the railway it is very unlikely to be affected, with a decision on that at the next cabinet meeting on 9 Jan.

(cont'd over)

(Chair's note, cont'd from page 1)

Into this uncertainty, the Civic Society wishes to draft a response. Not just about the model railway site but – and more pertinently – the area where the Angel Centre is now. The council owns most of that land - though it does not have levers to affect use of the Sainsbury's / Beales site. As per [a TMBC report from 14 Nov](#), if the council does replace the Angel Centre, this could “unlock additional opportunities in the area east of the the High Street, especially in relations to the area running alongside the Botany Stream where more could be made of the water frontage”.

What do you think should happen with that site? We'll post up on our website some images and plans from the past. Do any of these provide a basis for plans for the future? Or should we do something new? What would bring people into the town? How should car parking be arranged? What should a 21st Century leisure centre do?



News

The council is consulting on changes to car parking across the borough. These include a suggestion to extend the Upper Castle Field car park with 28 new spaces (the area shaded blue in the plan excerpt, right).



The proposals also include extending charging periods to 8pm and to include Sundays. Details of the consultation, which runs to 7 Jan, can be found [here](#).

Design Awards

After the success of this year's revitalized awards we're already thinking about next year. Please send in your submissions either for the design or community award categories.

Tonbridge Civic Society 2023
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Planning

The proposal to replace the house at 2 Yardley Park Road with a much larger building has been rejected on appeal. The planning inspector rejected the appeal because of evidence of bats on the site.



Plans have been lodged to convert much of Douglas House, the building near the station on Quarry Hill Road, into flats. Details on the council website, ref 23/03205.

Events

In the New Year we're restarting our programme of talks, with the first at the Angel Centre Riverside Room on 16 Jan in the evening. It will be about the role of the station in the town's history and will be given by Philip Gale, a member of Tonbridge Line Commuters and a professional archivist. Further talks will then take place through the rest of the first half of the year. Our AGM will take place on May 7. We've also programmed two other events. On 21 April, we're proposing a walk around Tonbridge to review our Design Award winners, and on 26 June we're lining up a visit to a nearby garden. Further details of these will be sent out in the New Year.



Civic Society Events

16 Jan	Talk at the Angel Centre. Speaker Philip Gale
5 Mar	Talk at the Angel Centre. Speaker TBD
7 Mar	AGM. Speaker TBD
4 Jun	Talk at the Angel Centre. Speaker TBD
26 Jun	Visit to Long Barn Gardens
21 Jul	Summer party and Design Awards