

Knighton Neighbourhood Forum

Conservation and Heritage Working Group

Minutes of Meeting Thursday 30th January 2020

7.30pm The Lounge, Knighton Parish Centre

Names of attendees are redacted from minutes made public for privacy reasons.

2. Minutes and Actions: The minutes of the meeting on 12th December 2019 had been circulated and were agreed as an accurate record.

2.1 Leicester High School

GW had met with the headteacher, who had shown him round Portland House, which has an impressive interior. He is willing for us to visit the exterior of the buildings as a group on a Saturday when the grounds are open for non-school activities. We could visit during the week, but that would require a member of staff to show us round.

GW agreed to liaise with the head, and Saturday 15th February was proposed as a date for a visit. If this goes ahead, we shall meet at the entrance on London Road at 10.00am and enter as a group.

Under this item, there was a discussion of whether this visit could be combined with a visit to the area south of the Ring Road round Wimborne Road. It was felt it was too much to do in a single visit, and it was agreed to meet on Saturday 29th February at 10.00am at the junction of Ventnor Road South and the Ring Road.

2.2 Records Office

RA and AA had visited the County Records Office in Wigston. There is not much information about the Victorian period, as the area was not in the City before 1908, and the same detailed records don't seem to have been kept outside the Corporation at that time. There was not much to be found out that isn't covered in Helen Boynton's books. They did meet the ex-head of a local school, PM, who has researched Portland House and the history of the High School there, who provided hard copy of a document.

It was suggested that RG knows some of the history of Portland Towers. It had not been possible to find out anything about the architect, Mr Blow, and it was suggested that much of the design had been done by the sisters who lived there, and for whom the property was built, and that Mr Blow might be a pseudonym.

There were later planning permission applications for alterations in the records, but not for the original building.

2.3 Luminaries of Knighton

RC had visited the reference library to follow up on biographies of people who lived in the area. The reference library doesn't have the book he has or much more information. They do have the 1880 Kelly's directory, and the property is recorded as separate from London Road. There is no reference to Mr Blow, but there were three separate names for Portland Towers, implying three households. RC will follow this up with a search of the 1881 census.

3. Areas of Special Townscape Character

3.1 Portland Enclave and Morland Avenue

RC had visited the area again a couple of times and written a revised version of the document describing the area under the headings that TH had used. This had been circulated to members together with some notes from RC regarding whether or not Grenfell Road and the London Road frontage should be included in the Area. The argument against Grenfell Road is that there are many other streets like it in Knighton and Leicester, so it does not really meet the criteria for being special. Many of the properties have been altered or had new, plastic windows installed, as have properties on London Road, some of which have been substantially modernised, while others are in a very poor state of repair.

TH raised the question of where the overall street scene is covered in the policies.

There was a discussion as to whether or not to include these areas, but it was agreed that the group was not in a position to decide there and then, but that members should read the Civic Society justification for the creation of a conservation area. It was agreed that, although some of the area was not in a good state, one of the possible effects of designation of some sort would be that original features might be reinstated in subsequent alterations. It was also agreed that the views of residents in the area needed to be considered. Finally, it was pointed out that the policy proposes a hierarchy of different levels of protection, and perhaps another type of protection would be appropriate for those areas (Grenfell and London Roads).

SB agreed to circulate the Leicester Civic Society report and the policy document.

3.2 Other Areas

There was a discussion of which other areas to include as Areas of Special Townscape Character. RC's map of the area, showing the different time periods when development had taken place was felt to be an important part of the evidence for preserving the character of parts of Knighton from different eras.

It was agreed to begin work on drafting documents in the same format as for Portland on Kingsmead Road (AO, TH, RC), South Knighton (RA, AA) and Pendlebury Drive (RG, GW). It was suggested that Pendlebury Drive should focus on the flats and South Knighton should consider Knighton Church Road to just beyond Elms Road, but that the people looking at the areas should make recommendations about the boundaries. RC will talk to a neighbour who was employed by the Council at the time of the Pendlebury Drive development.

4. Walks

This was covered under item 2.1 above.

5. Any Other Business

None

6. Next meeting

Next C&HWG meeting – Tuesday 10th March, 7.30 pm, College Court – subject to confirmation of the availability of the room.