

SAVE OUR STOCKBRIDGE

SOS

UPDATE

We hope you are all keeping well and that the easing of lockdown is welcome.

A new Suggestion from Mr Wolstenholme and Frobisher Ltd

Nigel Wolstenholme, through his company Frobisher, owns the former police station in Stockbridge. You may recall that they and McCarthy&Stone were behind the proposed development in 2018 on the police station land and the property and meadows behind Thyme &Tides. Fortunately that proposal was not in the end pursued. A recent suggestion is, however, currently being floated by Mr Wolstenholme and Frobisher to build, on the same land, a large development including offices, a car park, a supermarket, a new surgery and new public lavatories. Most of the land is meadows and outside the Settlement Boundary; it does not belong to Mr Wolstenholme or Frobisher.

Stockbridge Parish Council considered this matter at their zoom meeting on 16th July and SOS attended. We were able to obtain a copy of Mr Wolstenholme's email from the PC. In his email Mr Wolstenholme wrote, '...I do think the scheme has merit but only if supported by the Parish Council.' The Parish Council considered the scheme and unanimously agreed not to support it.

It would be good to think that this is an end of the matter, but SOS are very aware that developers do not give up easily so we shall watch to see if anything further comes of this.

The Greyhound on the Test

The pub has put in an application to knock down a fishing hut near the River Test and replace it by 3 offices. The offices will not be used by the Greyhound to expand their business but will be privately rented out. As this development would be outside the Settlement Boundary, SOS wrote a strong objection and Stockbridge Parish Council voted unanimously to object to the proposal. We will keep you informed as to what happens about the application.

Stockbridge Water Meadows

We mentioned last November that one of our Committee had done a considerable amount of research into the water meadows in and around Stockbridge. We are delighted to inform you that, as a result of contacting a number of people and bodies who have considerable expertise in the subject, it is clear that the Stockbridge water meadows are of considerable historical, agricultural, cultural, environmental and educational interest. For those who do not know (as some of us did not at the start of this exercise) water meadows are a man made agricultural device employed historically to improve the quantity and quality of hay production. This was used to feed sheep, for example the sheep that drovers brought through Stockbridge from Wales on their way to London, Southampton and Portsmouth; and also for horses, for example the horses that were bred locally for racing by the Day and Canon families, and for the horses which were brought to Danebury to race, and later for the horses being taken on the train through Stockbridge to the docks during the Great War. The water meadows system used ‘drowning’ or flooding of the meadows from the river, and evidence remains (particularly seen from aerial photos and LiDAR imaging which now allow archaeologists to detect, recognize and record previously undetectable features of the landscape) which supports the fact that most of the original Stockbridge water meadows remain intact. We are hoping that this research will continue so that bridges, sluices and other parts of the system may still be found.

We are currently researching how best to preserve these historic structures from Stockbridge’s history, and protect them from any threat of damage or destruction. We will be seeking to have the areas which display signs of former water meadows incorporated into Test Valley Borough Council’s forthcoming new Local Plan so that the evidence on the ground that still exists can be protected and preserved for future generations.

Revision of the TVBC Local Plan

TVBC’s Planning Policy and Economic Development department have invited submissions towards the next revision of the Local Plan before the end of August 2020. SOS has decided to make a submission particularly on climate and environmental issues which, as we live on a floodplain, are of great concern. Furthermore, as stated above, Stockbridge water meadows are, we believe, also of considerable significance from an environmental and climate perspective, so that will also form part of our submission.

Annual General Meeting

We would normally have held our AGM in July this year but we have decided to postpone it until such time as we are allowed to meet in the Town Hall even if at a social distance.

In the meantime we hope you all continue to keep well and will enjoy the rest of the summer.

Jean Boney

Chair SOS

21st July 2020