Dear Member,

Although many activities have had to be suspended because of the Coronavirus pandemic, there are things happening which are involving the Society. So my apology if this is rather a long email but it is important to keep you informed of the Society’s agenda.

**Street Closures**

You are all probably aware now that High Street, Market Place and George Street have been temporarily closed to traffic and pedestrianised. There are also measures on other roads (eg. Hatfield Road) throughout the city. The main reason for these actions has been public safety as a result of the need for social distancing - a consequence of Covid-19. A campaign, Inside Out, to support local businesses, organised by Save St Albans Pubs/ St Albans, Independent Hospitality and Retail Association and the Business Improvement District (BID) have also called for the pedestrianisation so that there is the opportunity for local businesses to utilise the frontage outside their premises while maintaining social distancing. The Civic Society, along with the Cathedral, has lent its support for these temporary measures as it is vital for the future of our city to sustain local businesses whilst protecting public health. Do let us have your views on the impact of these measures as it is very uncertain what the ‘new normal’ will look like after the Coronavirus crisis.

**City Centre Vision**

Prior to the pandemic, the Council, through BID, had invited the Society and Conservation 50 to help revise and develop a City Centre Vision (the last Vision document was drafted in 2009). Because of Covid-19 the planned schedule for this exercise has been delayed but there will now be an open virtual conference (using the Zoom platform) on 26th June at 2 pm to consider what the future looks like for city centres, taking in account the change in retail and a post Covid-19 world. BID will be organising this so look out for their publicity nearer the time. It is hoped that following the conference, which will be exploring...
St Peter’s Street
The work of the Society’s Planning Advisory Group, who regularly look at planning applications, and the Design Advisory Group, who advise on new developments, goes on despite the lockdown. The latter group are engaged in the proposed developments in the north of St Peter’s Street, where Poundland and Thomas Cook were, and demonstrate the importance of having a City Centre Vision that emphasizes quality and coherence rather than arbitrary developments.

CCOSS
Following the selection of option 2, the Space and Place architect’s design, for the City Centre Opportunity South Site (CCOSS: the old Police Station and NHS building), some Councillors have called it in to the Planning, Resources, Housing and Commercial Scrutiny Committee with concerns about the decision with regard to the “proportionality, consultation, clarity of aims and desired outcomes, openness and explanation of options considered in arriving at the decision”. The Civic Society has accepted an invitation to address (virtually) the meeting on Thursday 11 June (more details here), and will reiterate its support for an architectural competition which not only took account of public opinion but also aimed for the highest architectural quality, to give St Albans a development it would be proud of in future years.

Local Plan
The Council have suffered a setback in their hopes to have their Local Plan (LP) accepted by Government and in mid-April the Examining Inspectors wrote in detail about their previous “serious concerns in terms of legal compliance and soundness” of the draft plan. The Society has always challenged the validity of the Government target of 15,000 new homes and continues to argue that the Green Belt should be preserved. The National Planning Policy Framework requires ‘exceptional circumstances’ for building on the Green Belt, which the Local Plan has failed to demonstrate. The Society has also campaigned against the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) at the old airfield at Radlett, which is part of the LP. The Society would prefer this Green Belt land to be left but if Herts County Council are determined to sell it should be for housing rather than the SRFI. The Council now has to respond to the Inspectors letter but it is very unclear what the future is for this draft of the LP.

AGM
Because of the Coronavirus crisis the Society has had to suspend the Annual General Meeting. At present the committee is looking to September as a possible future date but of course this will depend on the
Finally, as part of the Society’s contribution to the St Albans festival on 20th June, I will be running a quiz on St Albans - it will have three parts, starting with relatively easy questions and moving on to the more difficult. Watch out for it nearer the time on the website Enjoy St Albans

Best Wishes
Tim Boatswain
Chairman
07873 586074

St Albans City Centre Pollinator Project
Wilderhood Watch is an action group of St Albans residents that has its roots in Lancaster and Gurney Court Roads. It is focused on sustainable local projects and campaigns, particularly relating to wildlife and our urban eco-system. The St Albans City Centre Pollinator Project aim is to make the City Centre a far more friendly place for pollinators. To do this they are collaborating with the St Albans BID (Business Improvement District), to create a Pollinator Highway. Permission was given to install a number of planters, funded by BID, in the seating area around the clock tower.

To find out more about their work click here

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?
There are still a few people who have yet to renew your membership. Rates remain unchanged at Individual £10, Family (2 or more) £15, and Pensioner/Student/Unwaged £7.
Click here to download the renewal form

Webinars from Civic Voice
Civic Voice is running a series of online presentations that can join from your computer. The next one are shown below and you can register using this link http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/get-involved/events/
June 10th: In Conversation with Cllr Karen Rowland from Reading - Why we need Heritage Champions!

June 11th: In Conversation with Nottingham City Council’s Heritage Officer: Alice Ullathorne - The difference investment in heritage makes!

June 15th: In Conversation with Laura Alvarez - "Putting design quality at the heart of placemaking"

June 18th: In Conversation with Joel Mills - The perspective from the United States