

THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

Founded 1974. Charity Registration No.508024.
'Guarding the Past, Safeguarding the Future'

Website: www.gatsoc.org.uk E-mail: info@gatsoc.org.uk

Officers for 2005/06

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Membership Subscriptions

Household £3 Single pensioner £2 Company, etc. £5
(all plus £1.50 postage if outside our old 'hand-delivery' area)
You may pay for up to three years in advance, if you wish, at these annual rates.

Already a member?

To find out whether you are a paid-up member of the Gateacre Society, please check your address label, which indicates your membership expiry date (e.g. 31/10/06).

Not a member? Want to join us?

If you wish to join the Society - or to renew - please send the appropriate subscription to the Membership Secretary, Mrs Rosemary Doman, 6 Hayles Grove, Liverpool L25 4SL: cheques payable to 'The Gateacre Society'.



The Gateacre Society

Registered with the Civic Trust and as a Charity

NEWSLETTER - March 2006

Our next meeting:

NUNS IN WOOLTON

A talk by
Dr Janet Hollinshead
on Sunday
19th March 2006
at 2.30 pm
in the Chapel Hall,
Sandfield Road,
Liverpool L25

Dr Hollinshead is a local historian who has made a special study of 'Lancashire's first female religious house': the convent established in Woolton Street, in 1795, to house some of the nuns forced out of France during the Revolution.

Following the success of our January event, we are once again holding this meeting on a Sunday afternoon - which many members seem to find more convenient and attractive than turning out on a wet winter's evening!

**ALL INTERESTED ARE
WELCOME TO ATTEND**

Gateacre Society members
free of charge -
Non members 50p

DID WE SEE YOU THERE?

Around 60 members and visitors packed into the Chapel Hall on Sunday 29th January, to hear Beryl Plent's talk about the Gateacre Time Capsule, and to see the various items on display. Lack of space in this Newsletter means that our report of that meeting has had to be held over until the next issue.



NEW PLANS FOR CLEGG'S

In early February, local residents received letters from the City Council inviting their comments on a revised planning application - ref.06F/0294 - for the former Gateacre Brewery/Cleggs Felt Factory site at the bottom of Gateacre Brow. (The Council's website indicates that these 'neighbour notification' letters were also sent to the bronze bust of Queen Victoria and to the Wilson Memorial Fountain, but we doubt whether either of them will have responded!).

The previous application - withdrawn last June - was for 21 new-build apartments and 2 new town-houses, in addition to 9 apartments created within the Grade II Listed brewery building. In our objection to that proposal, we suggested that the number of units should be greatly reduced, because of the difficulty of accessing the development, the shortage of on-site parking space, and the excessive height and bulk of the proposed new buildings. We also objected to the materials proposed for the apartment blocks, which included 'stacked slate' walls and steel-mesh screens.

The current application is for 13 new-build and 9 converted apartments. Having carefully considered these revised plans at our February Committee meeting, we have once again objected to the scale of the development - which exceeds the Council's density guidelines, and which we feel will harm the setting of the Listed Building - and to the inadequate parking provision (still only 22 spaces for the 22 proposed flats). While welcoming the use of sandstone panels and oak window frames in the new three-storey blocks, we have criticised the choice of copper and zinc for the roofs and 'Cor-ten' (i.e. rust-coloured steel slabs) for some of the walls. We have also, once again, drawn the Planners' attention to the traffic problems of Sandfield Road. This narrow road will be the sole exit from the site, though the new plans do show cars entering direct from Gateacre Brow.

We cannot understand why an all-apartment development is being proposed, when there are so many vacant flats in the Gateacre area at the present time. A 'mews-style' development of two-storey houses would, we feel, be much more in keeping with the Conservation Area. We know that a large number of local residents have also sent in letters of objection - and we await the Council's decision with interest.

GATEACRE COMP ON THE MOVE?

The City Council is currently considering the future of a number of school sites and buildings, following the government's announcement of the 'Building Schools for the Future' investment programme. Among the proposals is to relocate Gateacre Comprehensive School to a new site, on the present Our Lady of the Assumption playing fields in Belle Vale. New sports pitches would be created next to the former Lee Manor School - and the existing Grange Lane site would be sold off to help finance the scheme. Obviously we shall be keeping a close watch on what is being proposed. A report submitted to the Gateacre Area Committee has indicated that housing development is the most likely option - but only within the 'footprint' of the existing school, not least because the fields behind are a former landfill site and hence potentially contaminated. If you have any particular views to express, please let us know so that we can take them into account when formulating our own comments.

Friends' Progress

The Friends of Gateacre have continued to meet regularly during the winter months and - apart from 'Gateacre in Bloom 2006' - have two major projects in hand. The first is the improvement of the old Cricket Field in Belle Vale Road. Here, the Council will be starting work in May/June laying out a wheelchair-accessible (and buggy-friendly) pathway and providing new bins, while later in the year wildflower seeds will be planted round the perimeter. This work - which follows a survey of local residents and businesses carried out by the Friends last year - will be funded using money given to the Council by Bellway Homes, under the terms of the planning permission for their flats in Belle Vale Road.

The second project is the refurbishment of the Unitarian Chapel Hall in Sandfield Road. The Friends have been talking to the Prince's Trust Volunteers, who aim to provide young people with training opportunities while at the same time benefiting local communities.

They were delighted when the volunteers chose the Chapel Hall from all the various projects offered to them - and for two weeks in February the young people worked magnificently, painting the main hall and an ante-room, clearing the grounds and planting a new garden. In the longer term the Friends - and the Chapel Committee, who own the building - would like to see further improvements, with a view to the Hall becoming a well-used centre of community life. If you would like to help with this project, particularly if you have any relevant skills or experience, please contact Lynn Cheng on 0151 222 4006.

SANDFIELD ROAD

Apart from the Cleggs application, the other major planning proposal affecting Sandfield Road is the conversion of the former Electric Lighting Station to 5 apartments (see last Newsletter). We have expressed our general support for this plan, though have suggested that the south elevation should be clad in traditional brick, with conventional window openings, rather than the large panels of 'opaque glass' and concrete shown on the current application drawings. We have also suggested that the entrance to the proposed access road in the south-west corner of the site should be made available as a turning facility for the benefit of visitors and residents of the existing houses, not just the new development.

Meanwhile a start has been made on the highway works we have advocated for several years (see for example our January 2004 Newsletter), to try and reduce the impact (literally) of vehicles on the Listed Building near the junction with Gateacre Brow. Unfortunately the work done so far - narrowing the carriageway alongside the overhanging portion of the building - seems to have made the problem worse rather than better, as it is so easy for lorries to mount the new pavement. The measures we proposed included higher kerbs, better-positioned bollards and clear warning signs - but none of these have yet been provided.

BLACKWOOD AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT

As local residents will be aware, an 'infill' development site has been created at the side of 16 Blackwood Avenue. The plot includes a large number of mature trees, and we have written to the Planning Department asking for these to be protected both during and after the planned building work. We also criticised the 'grandiose' design of the proposed new house - with full-height pilasters and a pediment - which we felt would be out of keeping with the surrounding properties. This particular planning application has since been withdrawn, but an alternative design will presumably be drawn up and submitted for approval in due course.