

No. 163 Spring 2017

St Mary's University's Plans Revealed

At the Leader's Question Time launch of the Strawberry Hill Village Plan, Lord True and his colleagues were brought face to face with the opposition of Strawberry Hill residents to St Mary's University's plans for expansion.

The University's plans and current traffic and parking issues, the latter in large part created by the presence of the University, dominated the Question Time event at the Golf Club on 11th January. It was evident from the number of questions and widespread applause from the packed meeting every time criticism was voiced about the proposed growth in the student population, or further building on the campus site, that those present want none of it. Do they speak for the wider population of Strawberry Hill? From our informal contacts across Strawberry Hill we think they do.

The University has grown from its roots as a Catholic teacher training college with a student population of around 1300 back in the 1980s, to a fully fledged independent university with a current student population of around 5,300 students studying a wide range of different courses. As the impassioned arguments from the floor indicated, this growth has had a huge impact on Strawberry Hill and its residents, and all without any consultation with the community. The clear message from the residents at the meeting is 'enough is enough'. Whilst they were not brought into the picture on the University's detailed plans, they knew enough.

SHRA has been given a preliminary insight into some detail of the University's plans and what senior management of the University intend for the campus. And it's not pretty. The plans involve student numbers rising from the current 5,300 to around 9,000 by 2026, a massive increase of 70%, well above the 40% we had been advised by the University when we reported on this subject in our last Bulletin.

And where are all these students to be accommodated? If the University pursues the proposals outlined to us, an extra

1,980 will be housed in new student blocks built on current open land on the campus, with the athletics track scrapped and replaced by a series of accommodation blocks. Another longer stretch of blocks will run from the old sports hall down to the existing student halls at the Strawberry Vale end of the campus. A later stage will involve demolition of the tennis hall, and its replacement with more accommodation blocks. A teaching block between the new sports hall and Waldegrave Road is also proposed.

All this proposed new building will be on Metropolitan Open Land, land which carries the highest level of protection and should therefore be sacrosanct. The importance of this open land was acknowledged when the Council and the University signed a deed in 2010 agreeing that there would be no further development on the campus's Metropolitan Open Land. This deed represented the Council drawing a final line when they approved planning for the new Sports Hall. It now appears that the

University has been in discussions with our Council to tear up this agreement. We don't know how far these discussions have gone, but we believe that the University must have received some encouragement from the Council to progress their plans to the stage they have reached.

And what is the timescale for all this? The University and the Council are working towards a Supplementary Planning Document for the campus being issued for public consultation by early Spring 2017. We understand that this will outline the broad scope of the development which the Council and University envisage for the campus. The University are working on the basis that this will be finalised in time to enable a consultation with residents on their detailed plans ahead of the submission of a planning application in summer 2017 for the first phase of student accommodation on the campus.

continued overleaf



Part of the Planned Development Site at St Mary's University

University's Plans continued

In all this, like so many residents, SHRA finds itself in an uncomfortable position. We don't want to be in opposition to the University. We understand St Mary's desire to improve its standing in the university league tables, and to ensure a financially secure future. We value the young people it brings to live and study in our community, and we want it to succeed and become a beacon of educational excellence. We also understand the need to replace those buildings that are no longer fit for purpose with newer buildings. Of course, universities need to balance their books, but it cannot be fair that the amenities of our residents are to be sacrificed for the benefit of providing more student accommodation that will be used out of term time for conference and language school trade to bolster the University's coffers. And is the strategic aim to increase international student numbers to 25% of the student population a genuine move to enhance the educational credibility of the University, or a means to increase the number of students paying significantly higher fees than students from the UK?

We do not understand why the University is not valuing the special nature of its small, attractive, relatively open campus,

and seeking to preserve this, along with the on-site sports amenities of the running track and the tennis hall that it fought so hard for just a few years ago. It has always represented the existing open campus and on-site sports facilities that it now proposes to sacrifice as a major asset in its recruitment armoury, and an opportunity for use by the community. Previous vice-chancellors of the University have repeatedly committed to SHRA that any further development on the campus would be by way of renovation or replacement of existing buildings on the existing footprint. Why is the University turning its back on all this and renege on previous commitments?

We had been led to believe the University would be communicating the outline of its plans directly with you, but things appear to have got a bit delayed. We sent an advance copy of this article to the University and they responded to us that "the statutory consultation is underway and plans are evolving as a result of that process. The options around accommodation and sport provision remain options". It is clearly good that they are now looking at other options than the one set of proposals that they shared with us. We can only hope that these other options reflect the concerns of local residents as well as those of statutory consultees.

We, along with the residents at the

11th January meeting, believe the University's plans pose a significant threat to the residential character of Strawberry Hill. We wish to know your views. For or against the University's proposals, please let us know, ideally by contacting us via our website, **SHRA.org.uk**, or, if you don't have an internet connection, you can drop a note into the Strawberry Hill post office addressed to SHRA. And please also let us know if you have skills in the legal, planning or architectural design area, and a bit of free time, which would enable you to help us in our discussions with the University and Richmond Council.

Also please try and go to the Council's 'drop-in' session for the Strawberry Hill Village Plan where you will be able to register your views directly with the Council, and also talk to a SHRA representative, on this and any other issues you may have about the area.

This is being held on: **Saturday 25th February (10am to 4.00pm)** at the Emmanuel Centre, St James Church, Popes Grove.

All in One Consultation on Village Plans

Richmond upon Thames Council has been carrying out a series of meetings across the Borough, talking to residents about their vision for the future of their area. It was Strawberry Hill's turn on Wednesday 11th January, and the audience was packed to overflowing.

Questions were addressed by a panel of councillors, consisting of:

Cllr. Susan Chappell (Cabinet member for Voluntary Sector, Community and Planning)

Cllr. Pamela Fleming (Cabinet member for Environment, Business and Community)

Cllr. Paul Hodgins (Cabinet member for Children's Services and Schools)

Cllr. Nick True (Lord True, Leader of the Council)

The panel was chaired by Philippa Nunn (Head teacher, Waldegrave School)

In addition to questions and comments on the proposed expansion of St Mary's University (as described in the main article), other issues were raised:

1. Problems of parking and traffic management in Strawberry Hill (from students and staff at the university, but also commuters and school

parents) and the need for more Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ).

2. Anti-social behaviour of students
3. Improvements to the centre of the village and relations with Network Rail
4. Demolition of houses for replacement by flats
5. Planning density and development, and maintenance of open spaces
6. The parlous state of pavements in Strawberry Hill

The following additional events also form part of the Village Plan consultations. Do come along and give your views.

DROP-IN:

Saturday 25th February (10.00am – 4pm)
Emmanuel Centre, St James Church, Pope's Grove.

WALKABOUT:

Sunday 26th February (10.30am – 12.30pm)
meet outside Emmanuel Centre.

If you miss these events, don't worry.

The period of consultation runs between

17th February and 31st March 2017,

email: **allinone@richmond.gov.uk**



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Strawberry Hill House

Happy New Year!

2017 is a year of great significance for Strawberry Hill House. It is the 300th anniversary of Horace Walpole's birth. Horace was the fourth son of Britain's first Prime Minister. He was the writer of the first gothic novel, an MP, a witty social commentator through his letter-writing, and a good friend.

He created Strawberry Hill House to reflect his quirky taste for history and theatrical effect, and to show off his extraordinary collections.

Leased to our charitable trust by St Mary's University, our close neighbours, landlords and owners of the building, Strawberry Hill House is a place of international significance for its architecture, and for its representation of Horace Walpole. We have international support, particularly in America, but we have a vital local dimension too.

Having been the charitable trust's Director here for just a year, I am constantly struck by the local affection for the house and grounds. In season, our volunteers and guides are a core part of the front of house visitor experience. But a place like Strawberry Hill House needs such support behind the scenes too, all year round. In this winter period, teams of people volunteer their time, skills, efforts and passion to look after the place. Garden volunteers litter-pick, mulch, and brush down the walls for the repainting of our front wall which we will do soon, using a volunteer team of painters. The beautiful wooden floors and fine interiors within are enjoying a thorough 'deep clean' carefully undertaken by conservation volunteers, working with our interns.

Just now we have welcomed a maintenance volunteer, a time-served carpenter whose

work has already made a difference in just one day. Others help us in all manner of ways and I thank them all. Our small staff, and our Trustees, who also volunteer their time, hugely appreciate this help.

Volunteering is a two-way thing, of course, and it has been interesting to hear from our volunteers the reasons why they love to be part of the team. They appreciate the social side, and the learning of new skills, helping to make a difference.

In such a busy world, the idea that people would dedicate so much of their time in this way is heartening.

The restoration of Strawberry Hill House came about through local, national and international support, and of course we still need donations of money to continue our work. When such help and involvement is willingly given, and is gratefully received, then places like Strawberry Hill House can not only survive, but flourish, by playing an important role in the local community as an inspirational, safe and friendly place to visit, enjoy and admire, and as an eccentric icon of the local area.

Horace Walpole would surely appreciate his house being looked after with the same level of affection he had for his creation. So when you see Strawberry Hill - the name, or the house - spare a thought for Horace in his 300th birthday year, and think of our remarkable volunteers too, keeping alive



Horace Walpole in his library by G P Harding after J H Müntz, (Strawberry Hill Collection).

Horace's happy home with enthusiasm, dedication and passion.

Nick Dolan

Director, Strawberry Hill Trust

Strawberry Hill Trust is an independent charity dedicated to restore and look after Strawberry Hill House and garden, Horace Walpole's 'little gothic masterpiece'. Strawberry Hill House reopens for visitors in the spring, with a series of events and activities celebrating Horace Walpole's 300th anniversary. The house is available all year round for private and corporate hire, weddings and filming – an important source of income for us to enable our care of the building. Please check our website and get in touch. www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk



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Carol singing

The annual SHRA carol-singing event took place on 9th December, this year at the café in Radnor Gardens. Marcus and Michael provided the mulled wine and mince pies on SHRA's behalf, and we were delighted that three members of the Fulham Brass Band, which has played for us before, arrived with instruments to accompany the singing. The three musicians live in Orford Gardens and

decided to lend their support with cornet, trombone and tenor horn when they heard about the event. It was a wonderful surprise, for which we were very grateful. Steve Carney, Paul and Victoria Van Uden, please come again next year! The annual charity collection (this year for Pope's Grotto restoration fund) came to £150. So thanks to everyone who came along to support the event.



Fulham Brass Band play at the 50th anniversary of Strawberry Hill Residents' Association, May 2015

'The Legacy and Ghost of Pope'

Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust has teamed up with Strawberry Hill Trust to hold another symposium, this time at Strawberry Hill House, on Friday 17th March 2017.

This fundraising event will provide an insight into the literary scene and landscape of Twickenham in the 18th Century.

Tickets £35 to include lunch, lectures and viewing of the House.

Book on:

www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk/events

and find out more information on:

www.popesgrotto.org.uk

Strawberry Hill Residents' Association Annual General Meeting

The constitution of SHRA states 'Notice of the AGM shall be given to members who may submit nominations for the Committee and items for discussion by notification to the Secretary not less than 7 days before the date of the meeting.'

Contact Pam Crisp by telephone or on www.shra.org.uk

This year's AGM will be held at the Golf Club on **Wednesday 26th April 2017**, starting at 7.30pm. Everyone living in Strawberry Hill is a member, so note the date, come along, meet the neighbours and have your say.

THE COMMITTEE

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Payment may also be made by standing order.

Forms are available from Cathy or from the SHRA website: www.shra.org.uk

Larger donations are always welcome!