



THE
NORWICH
SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR AUTUMN 2021 – SUMMER 2022



INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

I am delighted to be able to report that as we finally emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic The Norwich Society is in great heart and looking forward to celebrating our Centenary in March next year.

As I explained last year, throughout the pandemic our well supported Facebook page and our YouTube channel have enabled us to continue to keep in touch with you, the members, and the wider public, stimulating a deeper public understanding and appreciation of the history, character and beauty of this Fine City and for the work of the Society. However, it

has been quite clear from the fantastic uptake for our in-person events that the social side of the Society is important to many members. Indeed, so great is the demand that we are working to extend capacity where we can. So, a big thank you for both your support and to the events team for their hard work putting the events programme together.

The Society's Publications Working Group continued to turn out the high quality and much-admired *Aspects of Norwich* and work is now starting on a publication to mark our Centenary which will hopefully act as a springboard for a series of walks and talks throughout 2023. And the Civic Environment Committee are to be congratulated for their work in compiling the excellent Parks and Open Spaces Atlas. If you have not yet had a look at it, please do so and you will be inspired to go out and explore some of the 108 different locations they have identified and documented.

Once again, the Society played a key role, in association with The Norfolk Association of Architects and Civic Voice, in running the biennial Design and Craftmanship Awards. The entries were their usual high standard, and the presentation evening and dinner were a great success. Thanks to all involved in once again delivering an impressive event which helps showcase the forward-looking side of the Society. In a departure from its usual business the Society also sponsored a thought-provoking public debate, 'How should Norwich adapt to the adverse consequences of climate change'. It was fair to say this resulted in a lively exchange of views, not only from the speakers but from the audience too, and while the debate did not always focus on the adaptations needed by the City to cope with this crisis it hopefully helped to raise the profile of the issue. A recording of the event can be accessed from our website.

The day-to-day work of the Society has continued throughout the year with all of the Sub-Committees having plenty to do. Reviewing and commenting on the revised plans for the Anglia Square redevelopment have understandably taken centre stage. It is a testament to the Society team working on the project that having vigorously defended our position at the planning enquiry we have been able to enter into a reasoned and constructive dialogue with the developers and planners to try to influence them to propose a scheme which is more sympathetic to the area and the wider City. My ambition to improve our communication and collaboration with other organisations and the local authority is being fulfilled and I am confident we are entering a new era of engagement with both the City

Council and other interested parties to help achieve our charitable aims and ensure Norwich remains the top place to live and work in the East not only in 2022 but beyond.

It is a testament to all this hard work that our membership has remained almost unchanged throughout this difficult period. Thank you all for your continued support. The changes I announced last year have helped to put the Society on a more secure financial footing, we have successfully relaunched our Business Membership and the Society continues to be well placed to continue the work it has successfully undertaken for the past 99 years.

A very special thank you to Laura Davey, our Coordinator who has worked tirelessly throughout the year to keep us all on the straight and narrow. Thanks are also due to my fellow members of the Executive, past and present, the Chairs of the various committees and their members, and to the volunteers who have supported our online events programme. Without all that expertise and time commitment the Society could not function. We are also indebted to many sponsors and financial supporters whose support enables us to undertake much more work and to a higher standard than would otherwise be possible.

Barry Howell, Chair

THE SOCIETY AND CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

As the city's civic society, The Norwich Society is an independent community-based charity, supporting the preservation, development and improvement of features of historic interest in the city. It also uses the expertise of architects, town planners, surveyors and other industry professionals within its committees to comment on significant planning decisions in the area on behalf of the public. And it encourages exploration and enjoyment of Norwich's history through a range of talks, walks and other events, as well as regular publications.

From saving the historic Elm Hill area from demolition in the 1920s, to recent advocating for better development of the Anglia Square site, the Society has been championing the built environment and public spaces in Norwich and celebrating the city's unique character and beauty for nearly a century.

The Society was founded in 1923 and registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in May 2020 (registration number 1189593). It is primarily a voluntary organisation, but it also engages a contractor to provide administrative and support services. It rents an office at St Martin at Palace Church in Norwich.

OUR CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

The Society has three key areas of work:

To encourage public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of Norwich and its surroundings.

To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest in Norwich and its surroundings.

To encourage high standards of Architecture and Town Planning in Norwich and its surroundings.

PROMOTING HERITAGE; SHAPING TOMORROW

ENCOURAGING THE PRESERVATION, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF FEATURES OF GENERAL PUBLIC AMENITY OR HISTORIC INTEREST IN NORWICH AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

PARTNERSHIPS PAGE

The Norwich Society collaborates with a number of groups and has representatives in organisations with similar goals to effect positive change and champion the historic character of the city.

A new page on the Society's website has been created to provide more information and highlight the connections with organisations including Civic Voice, Norwich Heritage Alliance, River Wensum Strategy Board and Mousehold Heath Conservators amongst others.

This page can be found at www.thenorwichsociety.org.uk/about/partnerships

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES REPORT

In November 2021, the Civic Environment Committee published their Parks and Open Spaces Report. This is an atlas and directory of parks and open spaces in Norwich, together with details of

volunteer groups which help to look after the sites.



Wensum Park



City wall on Bakers Road

The report predominantly covers the area managed by Norwich City Council, with a slight extension to cover nearby areas of interest. 108 spaces are indexed, including some spaces not previously included in other data sets such as Earlham and Rosary cemeteries and marshland along the river valleys. 11 spaces are particularly noted as nationally significant and are listed in Historic England's National Heritage List for England as a registered park or garden. The directory also

provides additional details for sites that have features of particular interest such as sports facilities and children's play areas.



From Sandy Park to the city centre

The report also draws attention to the importance of volunteering in maintaining them; highlighting organisations such as eight 'Friends of' groups, the Plantation Garden Preservation Trust, The Heavenly Gardens project and many community run areas.

WEATHERVANES REPORT

The Civic Environment Committee has started preparatory work on its next project, which is a study of the city's weathervanes.

The study will cover over 30 weathervanes within the City Council boundaries, with both historic and more modern versions included, accompanied

by photographs. The report is expected to be published later this year.

PRESERVATION AND HERITAGE AT RISK

The Society has continued its representation on the Norwich Preservation Trust (NPT). This charity was formed in the 1960s as a joint venture between Norwich City Council and The Norwich Society with the primary purpose to preserve and restore historic buildings in the city. It regards itself as a 'restorer of last resort' and often takes on commercially non-viable projects with properties owned by the City Council.

The work of the NPT was most recently recognised at the Design and Craftsmanship Awards 2021, with the work on 16 Elm Street presented with the Sir Bernard Feilden Conservation Architecture Award. This Grade II timber-framed building was previously derelict and unoccupied, but after extensive repairs and thoughtful reconfiguration of the internal layout it now provides a sustainable, liveable house with modern amenities. Judges particularly noted the project's environmental considerations and sensitive restoration of historic features.

ENCOURAGING HIGH STANDARDS OF ARCHITECTURE AND TOWN PLANNING IN NORWICH AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

DESIGN AND CRAFTSMANSHIP AWARDS

The latest Design and Craftsmanship Awards took place on the 14th October 2021 at The Assembly House in collaboration with The Norfolk Association of Architects and Civic Voice.

The 2021 awards were judged across categories – Housing, Non-Residential, Conservation and Community as well as an inaugural Student award, and the judges were particularly looking at aspects of design, craftsmanship, sustainability and community throughout.

Recognition for nominations in Norwich went to a variety of projects. In the Community category, an Award went to The Matthew Project which is a recovery centre supporting vulnerable adults to reduce substance misuse, and there was a Commendation for Old Library Woods as a small urban space supporting its local area as an attractive place to live.



Old Library Woods received a commendation in the Community category

Modern design was recognised, such as the Ella May Barnes Building at Norwich Research Park and the St Benedicts Gate development, as well as conservation work on historic buildings such as Weavers' House Mountergate. Additionally, The Sir Bernard Feilden Award was presented by The Norwich Society to the Norwich Preservation Trust for 16 Elm Hill.



The Sir Bernard Feilden Conservation Architecture Award was awarded to 16 Elm Hill

The Student Award was presented to Molly Agnew at the Norwich University of

the Arts for her design of an Urban Community Farm in Shoreditch.

The event also raised money for two charities, The Architects Benevolent Society and St Martin's Housing Trust.

The full programme of shortlisted projects and the list of Award and Commendation recipients has been published on the Society's website.

ANGLIA SQUARE

Following Weston Homes' decision not to challenge the Secretary of State's rejection of their plans for Anglia Square, The Norwich Society welcomed the opportunity for meaningful engagement. Since then, the Society has met repeatedly with Weston Homes and their agents and also with local community representatives and with national heritage bodies including Historic England and SAVE, helping to develop and refine the Society's thinking.

A statement of interim comments in November 2021 was circulated to City Councillors and a second statement of further comments was published in February 2022, both resulting in media coverage. These statements provide background and an overview of the

Society's approach as well as addressing issues such as design, sustainability and viability. Aspects such as the removal of the 20-storey tower block were welcomed, while other aspects such as the high density continued to cause concern. These statements can be read on the Society's dedicated Anglia Square website page.

In May 2022, the Society officially responded to the latest planning application for the site. The Society commended the applicants on their willingness to engage with the community and at the resources and efforts they have dedicated to the task, and reiterated the desire to see a final and successful resolution. However, issues regarding the character and appearance of the Norwich City Centre Conservation Area, height and massing, density and the layout remain unsatisfactory, and the Society therefore formally objected to the latest planning application.

The Society has also produced a guide to navigating the application documents on the Council's website to help explain these for anyone who wants to look at the plans themselves.

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR GREATER NORWICH

The Society's Strategic Planning and Transport Committee (SP&T) was represented at online sessions examining the Greater Norwich Local Plan. In particular, the Society objected to the plan's phrasing on the heritage protection policy, resulting in improved wording which now refers back to stronger national policy.

The Society has responded to the informal engagement on the East Norwich Masterplan; a strategy which will cover the redevelopment of a large area which includes the Colman's site, the Deal Ground and Utilities site. The Society welcomed the City Council's engagement process and supported proposals for walking and cycling routes as well as plans for a new river crossing and re-purposing of Trowse Pumping Station. The SP&T continues to caution against overdevelopment on both density and traffic generation grounds.

TRANSPORT, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES

The Society continues to be an active participant in the Transport for Norwich consultation. Written considerations have

been submitted on issues of access and loading times in Norwich city centre, and proposed changes at Kett's Hill and on St Giles Street. The Society has particularly noted its support of plans which reduce the climate impact of transport, the notion of the '15-minute city' and the focus for capacity improvement being based on numbers of people not of cars.

PLANNING RESPONSES

The Planning Appraisal Committee (PAC) has continued to comment on planning applications on a weekly basis, focusing on significant developments and those affecting historic assets.

The PAC has looked at a wide range of projects in this period, including the change of use of St Peter Parmentergate Church to a skateboard school and café, a retirement complex of 45 flats on Mousehold Lane, and 23 affordable homes for the City Council on two sites at Ber Street and Argyle Street.

The committee is grateful to those companies who have taken the time to give presentations to the Society, including on zoom via shared screens. This included a presentation from Lanpro for 2 additional floors and re-cladding of Vantage House on St Giles Street.

The PAC has also particularly welcomed opportunities for presentations of proposals prior to planning submission to provide proactive advice on the applications; last year there was an in-person presentation about the re-development of 30 flats at the Warehouse on Fishergate, as well as a site visit and presentation from the Crosslane Group for redevelopment of the Richard Nash showrooms on Stepping Lane.

The PAC is also closely involved with the biennial Design and Craftsmanship Awards and has been gratified to see projects which have been supported through planning become reality.

CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATE

In April 2022, the Society sponsored a climate change debate at The Forum, which was initially proposed by a member of the SP&T.



The Climate Change debate took place in April 2022 (photo credit, www.mike-page.co.uk)

This event saw speakers from across the political spectrum discuss questions such as; ‘what adaptations will Norwich have to make’, ‘what’s the timeframe and outlook for the city’, and ‘what are the main obstacles we need to overcome?’.

Hosted by The Reverend Dr Fiona Haworth of St Peter Mancroft, each speaker presented their views and ideas in turn followed by an audience Q&A. In order, the speakers were:

- Simon Jones, Norwich Conservative Federation Chair, Conservatives
- Steffan Aquarone, Norfolk County Councillor, Liberal Democrats
- Catherine Rowett, former MEP East England, Green
- Emma Hampton, Norwich City Councillor, Labour and Vice Chair of The Norwich Climate Commission

It is hoped that resulting ideas will help shape conversations around emerging concepts such as a Citizen’s Assembly, and feed into strategies of organisations such as the recently established independent advisory body, Norwich Climate Commission.

The event was recorded and can be viewed on the Society’s YouTube channel.

ENCOURAGING PUBLIC INTEREST IN AND CARE FOR THE BEAUTY, HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF NORWICH AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

TALKS AND EVENTS

Due to continued concerns about the coronavirus pandemic, the Publicity and Events Committee (PEC) decided to run their winter events programme online. These Historians Talks have been in the form of live webinars with audience Q&As.

The talks have covered a variety of subjects about Norwich's past:

- 150 Years of Sewerage in Norwich
- Shardlake's Tudor History of Norwich
- The Great Thorpe Railway Disaster 1874: Heroes, Victims, Survivors
- Jarrold 250 Year: a History
- The Jewish Heritage of Norwich



The Shardlake's talk was particularly well attended

The Society has recently decided to restart its popular in-person events

programme this summer. The PEC has put together a range of walks and a talk in the city and a special visit to a historic property in Norfolk for members to enjoy. These have already proved extremely popular, selling out within a week.

PUBLICATIONS

The Society's Publications Working Group (PWG) has continued to publish its twice-annual *Aspects of Norwich* book which includes illustrated articles across a variety of topics about Norwich's history and the influences making today's city.

Aspects of Norwich, Autumn 2021 included a look at Will Kemp's 'Nine Daies Wonder' in 1600 and the garden nurseries of Eaton in the 19th and 20th centuries. Articles in *Aspects of Norwich, Spring 2022* ranged across the city's history from the 16th century Great Fire of Norwich to the Norwich Peace Ballot of 1934.



Aspects of Norwich, Autumn 2021

A complimentary copy of both editions was sent to members. The cover price for sale to the general public has been increased to £5, which does not appear to have detracted from its popularity. Work to redesign the format and cover has also led to a modern, consistent feel.

SELF GUIDED WALKS

The Society's latest self-guided walk is the 'Norwich Textile Trail'. This covers a 3-mile route taking around 2 hours which explores the buildings associated with the city's textiles trade and manufacture from Weaver's House in Mountergate to St James' Mill.



Norwich Textiles Trail
Explore the buildings associated with Norwich's world-famous textiles industry



Starting at Foundry Bridge, walk up Prince of Wales Road, branch left into Rose Lane and then turn left into Mountergate.

1 Weavers' House in Mountergate is a former weavers' factory and latterly shoe and boot factory, built around the 17th and 18th centuries with 20th and 21st century alterations and adaptations.
///scouts.teach.mice



End of the textiles industry

By the 1870s shawl-wearing was in decline. Dress styles changed and the new bustle skirts did not allow shawls to drape well. Women were becoming more active and a mantle with sleeves was much more convenient than a draped shawl over the shoulders.

The Norwich Textiles Trail

The trail is available for download in a smartphone compatible format on the 'Explore Norwich' section of the Society's website.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Society's social media presence continues to grow. As of June 2022, the Norwich Society Facebook page (@TheNorwichSociety) had around 6,800 followers, and the Twitter account (@NorwichSociety), had over 1,300 followers. Social media is now an established tool in communicating the Society's events and updates as well as providing a channel to inspire the public with our passion for Norwich.

The Norwich Society's YouTube channel (youtube.com/c/TheNorwichSociety) hosts videos about the city's history; recordings of Historians Talks, Exploring Norwich videos and Video Shorts. This channel has also provided a platform for promoting other aspects of the Society's work in video form, such as an overview of the DCAs 2021 and a summary of the Parks and Open Spaces report. As of June 2022, the Society's YouTube channel had over 400 subscribers and around 17,000 views.

ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

CENTENARY PLANS

The Society will celebrate its centenary in 2023. Plans are underway to recognise this important milestone with a programme of events, activities and commemorative output as an opportunity for engaging with both members and the wider general public.

ADMINISTRATION

The Society's office address is St Martin at Palace Church, 15 St Martin-at-Palace Plain, Norwich, NR3 1RW.

The Society's Coordinator for this period was Laura Davey who managed the day-to-day operations and provides administrative support to the Trustees, committees and Society members.

The Society can be contacted by emailing admin@thenorwichsociety.org.uk or calling 07503 951195.

GOVERNANCE

The last AGM was held on September 22nd, 2021. Due to coronavirus, this covered the period 2019 – mid 2021 as the

2020 AGM was cancelled and the regular scheduled date for the AGM in April 2021 was postponed.

As the event itself was socially distanced with a limited capacity, a postal vote system was implemented to ensure everyone could take part. Members received a voting ballot paper as well as other documentation in the post. The Officers and all those re-standing were elected, while Peter Threadkell, John Howkins and Michael Jordan joined as Trustees.

The Society's governing constitution provides for the management of the Society to be in the hands of an Executive Committee, who are also the Trustees. The Executive Committee consists of four Officers – Chair, Vice-Chair, Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary – and up to eight other members, to a maximum of twelve in total.

Current Officers

Chair - Barry Howell

Vice Chair - Jon Boon

Honorary Secretary - David Taylor

Honorary Treasurer - Neil Sturgeon

Current Executive Members

Paul Watson

Kate Nash
Michael Jordan
Simeon Jackson
Peter Threadkell
John Howkins

Under the CIO Constitution all offices and Executive Committee member roles are open for election at the AGM 2022, with the exception of the Chair as this is a fixed term position which has not yet expired.

The Society's Patron is Sir Richard Jewson and the President is the Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Norwich. These are both Honorary positions bestowed by the Executive Committee.

MEMBERSHIP

Member subscriptions are the predominant source of revenue for the Society, and as such a decision was made in late 2021 to increase the rate as part of a range of measures being implemented to boost the Society's income and help secure its financial future. As of January 2022, annual membership was raised to £28 (individual), £45 (joint). The Trustees were heartened to see so much support for this move, and the many warm messages of appreciation for the Society's work which were received.

The membership rate rise does not appear to have affected membership numbers; after the 2022 renewals process, The Norwich Society had 741 individual members, which is very steady across the past couple of years (732 in 2021 and 745 in 2020).

Recent trends have seen online membership continue to grow as the predominant administration type (502 online to 239 postal), and for the first time (in recent records), there are now more individual members than joint ones (381 individual to 360 joint).

The Society is currently supported by 17 businesses. This is an increase on 14 last year after a proactive approach to growing business membership during this period. The Society also introduced Business Patronage as a new level of membership designed to demonstrate a significant further commitment to the work of the Society and gained their first Business Patron, IDSystems.

FINANCE

Year ended 31 December 2021

The Society's total income for the year ended 31 December 2021 was £21,387 compared to £33,590 in 2020. However, 2020's figure included generous legacies totalling £15,000 - excluding these, total income for 2020 was £18,590. This means that total income increased by more than £2,500 on a like-for-like basis, which is a pleasing increase especially considering the impact which Covid-19 continued to have on the Society's activities during 2021.

The majority of the Society's income continued to be in the form of membership fees - total membership income for the year was £16,173, compared to £14,141 in 2020.

Costs in 2021 totalled £34,233 compared to £46,785 in 2020 - a decrease of approximately £12,000. This year on year decrease was mainly due to the tail end of rent payments to The Assembly House in 2020 as well as the rent settlement payment of £8,000. Other costs for 2021 were very much in line with 2020.

Overall, the Society incurred a deficit in 2021 of £12,846 compared to a deficit of £13,195 in 2020. This meant that the

Society again needed to draw on its reserves. At 31 December 2021, the Society's total reserves amounted to £56,516.

Looking forward to 2022...

For the first four months of 2022, the Society achieved a pleasing surplus of £6,288 compared to only £190 in the same period of 2021. The surplus improvement primarily arose due to an increase in membership income, higher income from donations and no depreciation charge as the related assets are fully depreciated.

The hard work of the Income Generation Group has resulted in a successful relaunch of our Business Membership scheme, with a number of new members and our first Business Patron.

At 30 April, the Society had total reserves of £62,804.

SPONSORSHIP AND BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Society would like to thank its business members for their ongoing support. New business members joining in this period are Alan Boswell Group, JG Poole & Co and Lanpro Services.

The Society has also introduced a Business Patron membership designed to demonstrate a significant further commitment to the work of the Society. The Trustees were delighted to welcome the first Business Patron in April 2022, IDSystems.



The Trustees would also like to extend a special thank you to the following organisations for their generosity in providing the following assistance:

Postage administration and costs:

Larking Gowen

Design and Craftsmanship Awards sponsorship:

IDSystems, Howes Percival, Jarrold, Hussey Knights and Archant Media

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The Norwich Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registration number 1189593

