

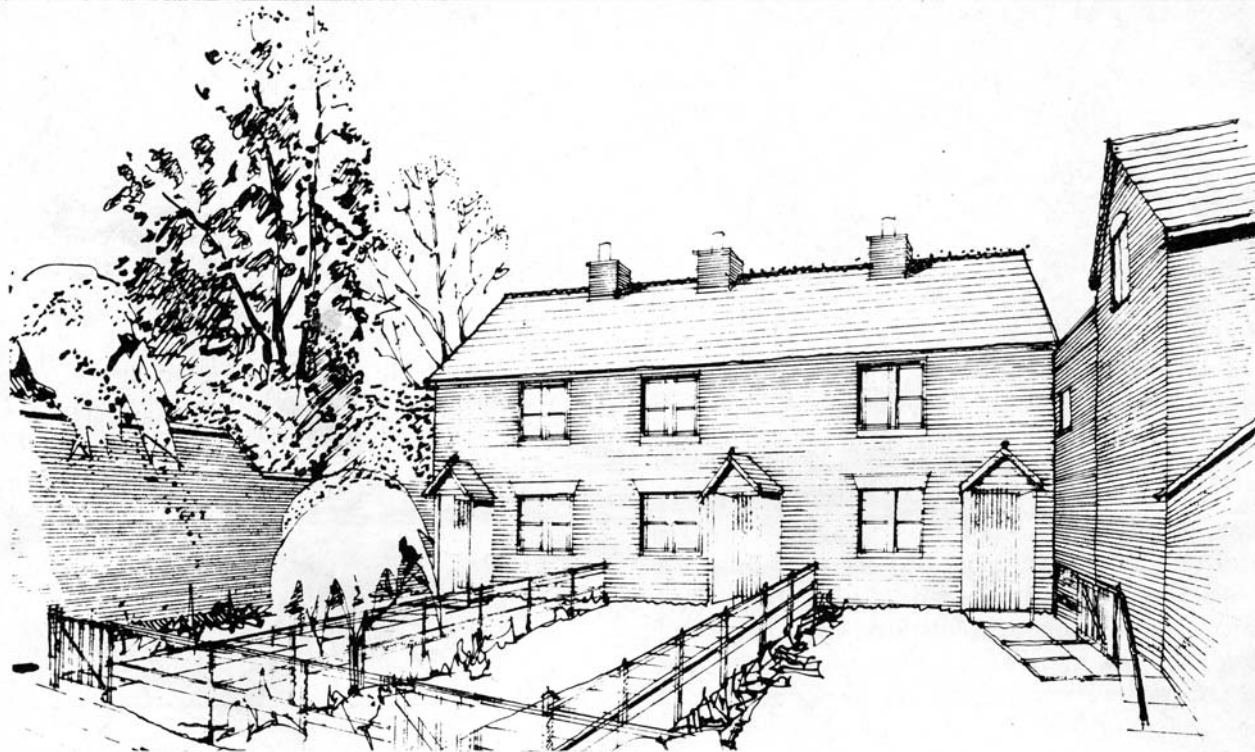
NEWSHEET

SEPTEMBER 1976



NUMBER TWO

ROMSEY
AND DISTRICT SOCIETY



Preservation Trust's first project

Reproduced above is the Architect's drawing of 64, 66 and 68 The Hundred as they will look in November when the current works are finished.

Many people will be surprised to find that these properties exist at all since they were subject to a closing order and would probably not be standing now had it not been for the Trust. Although not in themselves of special importance these cottages will, when rehabilitated, provide needed accommodation at a reasonable cost. We have been fortunate in obtaining the same grant aid as would be available to a private owner and this, coupled with the generous interest-free loans from Romsonians and others, has enabled us to get this, our first project, started.

Success in this venture will mean that the Trust will find it easier to fulfill its purpose of restoring neglected properties which contribute to the background and interest of our surroundings.

Geoffrey
of Romsey



The shop near The Abbey with lovely things for the home and gifts for every occasion.



4 CHURCH STREET, ROMSEY, HANTS. TEL: 516466

Spring Place:

D.o.E. to decide

The fate of Spring Place will shortly be published by the Department of the Environment. It will then be known if the actions of a few Romsonians and the concern of many was the right combination to prevent a planning blunder which could merit the scorn of future generations.

The Test Valley District Council seemed to be uncertain of their course of action. In fairness to them they eventually followed the procedure which gave the people of Romsey the most opportunity to express their point of view. Many people became involved in heated arguments on the subject of the demolition of the cottages, but few could be bothered to write to the Council, even fewer attended the Public Enquiry.

The Society seems to be gaining a "preservationist" label and its stand against the demolition of Spring Place has done nothing to eradicate that title from the minds of some Romsonians. It is easy to take this view if the Society's arguments are not fully studied. Most of the people who are scornful of the Society's work in this field cannot see



any merit in saving Bell Street or Cherville Street and certainly not Spring Place. Because the public and private developers are unable to foresee, or economically build, the type of property which Romsey requires, the Society has had to take a stand. From past mistakes it would certainly seem that the Council's planning office are not up to the task. What has this to do with Spring Place? Well, it is the



whole basis of the Society's argument. The cottages may not be of outstanding architectural merit but they are there. They are an integral part of the Abbey surrounds and contribute significantly to its character. I agree that this is difficult to imagine when they are boarded up and delapidated but they are part of our heritage. Any new building is bound to alter the outlook from the Abbey and, therefore, must change the atmosphere. That is a premise upon which there can be no argument. Who then is capable of accepting the enormous task of ensuring they any new building will improve the area?

I do not wish to malign the owner of Spring Place or her agents because I am sure that they will plan the best scheme possible, bearing in mind any scheme has to meet with the approval of a builder who will only be interested in the development if it is going to be economically viable. An architect of vision could design a scheme - but would anybody be able to afford it?

The Society has proved that these cottages can be renovated so that the main argument for their demolition has been quashed. Let us hope that the Department of the Environment accepts our case. If it does not then there must be a concerted effort by the residents of Romsey to ensure that the new buildings are what they want. If the enquiry is in favour of the District Council the odds are on Spring Place disappearing within one week. Talking amongst ourselves will then be even more of a waste of time than it has been until now. Do not let the Society, which is working for you, be left in the cold this time.

DIARY

- 7th Dec. '76 - A.G.M.
Abbey Hall 8.0.pm.
- Feb
26th ~~Mar~~ '77 - Jumble Sale
Crosfield Hall.
- 20th Oct. '76)
19th Jan. '77) Watch out for
16th Mar. '77) meetings to be
arranged on these
dates.

The continuing heritage

A great deal is spoken about conservation and the growing wave of concern by those who strive to preserve our heritage. The dilemma facing Civic societies, amenity societies and conservation groups is how to respond to pressures where accountancy and devotion to profit has promoted the rape of our towns. It is not so much a desire to retain all the old buildings as a fear and mistrust of what the entrepreneurs are likely to build in their place.

All too often seemingly attractive buildings have been allowed to decay to the extent that their derelict condition constitute a health hazard and must be demolished. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that local pressure groups attempt to resist the inevitable in an effort to conserve and enrich the environment.

Last year was European Architectural Heritage Year. It was heartening to see that so many buildings which previously would have been demolished are now refurbished and conserved. The new lease of life is reflected in excellent examples of rehabilitation of vernacular buildings to present-day standards, often enhancing fine architectural detailing. Had the event been staged five years earlier it would probably have passed unnoticed except by the few who would have been dubbed reactionary members of the planning and architectural professions.

EAHY presented the general public with an opportunity to renew an awareness of existing buildings and revalue their important contribution as a building resource. Despite the good intentions, however, something in the order of one thousand applications were made throughout the country to demolish buildings LISTED as being of architectural importance. Thousands more suffered similar fate.

It is disappointing to see that the same is in danger of happening in Romsey where buildings have been allowed to decay to the extent that they no longer present viable grounds for refurbishment. While it is acknowledged that we should not become obsessed with conservation, succumbing to the danger of becoming backward looking, the opportunity to conserve must be carefully considered for the trapping mass of bureaucratic controls will prevent the location, proportion and scale of old buildings ever being created again.

The corollary is to call for better design, to raise aesthetic standards and establish a balance in the 'street scene' so that new development is an equal substitute for the past. Good design need not necessarily be expensive but until the unqualified are prevented from perpetuating low standards of design, both commercial and domestic, creativity and the opportunity to improve will be stifled. Conservation and new building must go hand in hand in order to maintain the gradual process of 'cell renewal', for the heritage we are shaping today is no less important than caring for the heritage which has been left to us.

Letter from the chairman

"Conservation of the environment is one of the most important functions of Local Planning Authorities".

This is the opening sentence of a new pamphlet published by the Planning Offices of the County and District Councils of Hampshire. Is the local planning authority doing so in Romsey? One way of finding this is to see how they are looking after their own properties, after all they should be able to set a good example to the rest of the community.

With King John's House they are trying hard. However, with Cherville Street they are allowing the properties to fall into disrepair. The Council should really be serving a repairs notice on itself. If the Council cannot set a good example what authority has it to insist others keep their properties in good order?

Latimer Street now seems to be blossoming with Latimer Arms Coffee House charmingly restored. Even Bell Street has had the sign 'Can Romsey Survive' painted out. The fate of this building now rests with the Department of the Environment. It is important to emphasise that the Society is not against new developments but

their design must be of high quality. One way of achieving this is to employ an architect.

The Building Preservation Trust is to be congratulated on the work that is commencing on three cottages in The Hundred. I am sure the Trust will have an increasing role to play in the rehabilitation of similar properties such as Cherville Street.

Eighteen months ago the Trust made a recommendation to the Council that these properties should be sold. While the T.V.D.C. had been reviewing the evidence; time, weather and vandalism has hardly made the properties more attractive. The Cherville Street affair well illustrates the appalling difficulty the new T.V.D.C. has had adjusting to the role of Caretaker to an historic town. The spectre of the old Borough Council still looms large, and some of those adept with a bulldozer ten years ago remain active and vocal today.

To lighter matters - I would like to thank Mr. Don Baker for allowing the Society to use Millwater Gardens again for their summer party and also the ladies who produced the delicious food and all others who worked so hard to make it such a success.

With best wishes,

John White