



NEWSLETTER

3/93

June 1993

The previous Newsletter carried a summary of the AGM and an update on the situation at Beckenham Place Park. This Newsletter will be dedicated to the Park as it is the single most pressing and most important issue before the Society at the present time.

Firstly a brief summary. Lewisham Council have encouraged David Lloyd Clubs to submit 3 planning applications for the Park. They are

- To build a Tennis and Fitness Centre with parking for 250 cars on 13 acres of land between the railway and the river.
- To build a Golf Driving Range near the Mansion with parking for 250 cars. This will take up 5 acres. Associated with this is the intention to use the remaining playing fields between the railway and the river for golf, a further 35 acres.
- And finally to repair and convert the Mansion for use as a clubroom etc.

Following public outcry and lobbying of MPs, the DoE called in the applications for the Secretary of State to decide. However Lewisham went ahead and approved the first two applications. Bromley were against all 3 proposals and because the Mansion falls their side of the boundary, blocked the application for the Mansion and referred it to the DoE. There is of course much more to it than that, but they are the bare bones.

Recently Lewisham have reached a 4 year agreement with David Lloyd Clubs for the maintenance and management of the golf course and the Mansion. They have also agreed to grant David Lloyd Clubs a 99 year lease on the bulk of the Park, subject only to the decision by the Secretary of State.

This Society has opposed the schemes for several reasons. These are

- The Park is Metropolitan Open Land (similar to Green Belt in planning terms)

- The Park is part of the Green Chain.
- The Park is a proposed Area of Nature Conservation Importance.
- The proposals will result in increased local traffic.
- The areas of public access will be reduced
- The open nature of the Park will be spoilt.

Both the Tennis Centre and the Driving Range will be visually intrusive and will reduce public access by about 50 acres.

We now know the name and point of reference for the DoE Inspector who will chair the Local Inquiry and report back to the Secretary of State. We also know the date and venue. (See later for this information). From local lobbying we have established a working relationship with Bromley as both they and us are against the proposals. We have also persuaded the Bromley Federation of Residents Associations that they should oppose the plans as there is always the danger of precedents being set which could affect other areas of MOL or Green Belt. In fact they have asked us to speak on their behalf, so we will be representing not only our own members but about 40 other residents associations as well.

Meantime back at the ranch - a new campaign group has been formed known as the "Save Beckenham Place Park Campaign". The group has attracted a lot of previously untapped talent and is very vigorous. We are part of and strongly support the group as do all the residents associations abutting the Park in both Bromley and Lewisham. The group has been busy initiating a whole series of protest actions which have substantially raised the profile of the issue. Currently they are collecting signatures for a petition to the Secretary of State. As he will be making the final decision this most important. If you are asked to sign please do so. The more signatures the better and the more local signatures is even better still. If anyone wants to give them a hand I suggest you contact their Chairman Mr R.North on 081-658 1261.

Now to the Local Inquiry.

The Inspector is : Mr J.L.Gray Dip Arch. MSc.

Department of the Environment

London Regional Office

21 - 24 Millbank

London SW1P 4QU

The Inquiry will be held at 10 am on Tuesday 20th July and will last for 4 days.

It will be held in the the Council Chambers, Lewisham Town Hall.

It would be positively helpful if everyone wrote to the Inspector at the address on the previous page by the end of June as all evidence should be in 3 weeks before the Inquiry. It is important to record your opposition even if you wrote to Lewisham earlier. If you can also turn up at the Inquiry for all or some of the days, it would underline the strength of local feeling.

If you are unsure about the sort of things to say in the letter (bearing in mind that he has primarily to consider planning issues) some guidelines follow. Please use your own words and feel free to raise any other related matters that you feel strongly about.

Lewisham reference numbers 35392 and 35392B

These refer to the new golf driving range, rearrangements to the golf course and parking for 250 cars.

The key issues here are:

- The size and design of the driving range is inappropriate for land designated MOL and Green Chain, as it is neither ancillary to outdoor golf nor unobtrusive
- Its proximity to the Mansion (a Grade II listed building) will detract from its setting.
- The rearrangements to the golf course are too intensive and will mean the loss of sports fields and open land currently available for general public use.

Lewisham reference number 36054

This refers to the Tennis and Fitness Centre with parking for 250 cars.

The key issues here are:

- The structure which is some 500ft long, 300ft wide and 30ft high, is totally inappropriate on land designated MOL and Green Chain
- as it is primarily for indoor recreation and is neither ancillary to the golf nor is it unobtrusive.
- The complex will cover nearly 13 acres and will reduce the land available for outdoor recreation.

- it will also be visually intrusive.

Bromley reference numbers 93.381 and 93.382

These refer to the proposed alterations and change of use of the Mansion and listed building consent for alterations and repairs. We do not dispute the fact that the Mansion needs refurbishing and repair, both inside and out. How this came about is not strictly a matter for the Inquiry. For whatever reason in the past Lewisham did not keep it in a good state of repair and now wants someone else to do so.

However the key issues to be raised here are:

- The proposed repairs, renovations and changes to the Mansion are unsympathetic and will substantially detract from the character and quality of this Grade II listed building.
- The proposed changes to the Homestead and outbuildings are equally unsympathetic.

If you care at all about the Park or the additional traffic on these local roads, please write in the next week or so.

And whilst you are about it why not copy it or write a similar letter to Sir John Hunt our MP.

c/o House of Commons

Westminster

SW1A 0AA

Parliament will be off on their summer recess soon and then it will be difficult for either us to contact our MP or for him to contact the Secretary of State.

Once again please put pen to paper.

Peter Pain (Chairman)

STOP PRESS

To help us put together our case for the Inquiry, can anyone tell us of a site this side of the Ravensbourne which will give a view of the proposed Tennis Centre (near the present Lewisham Sports Club Pavilion).

If you can please let either Leslie Tucker (Secretary) on 464 4734 or Peter Pain (Chairman) on 460 2828, know as soon as possible.