



# NEWSLETTER

## 5/93

Sept. 1993

In case you thought that the only issues of concern are Beckenham Place Park (reminder - DO ATTEND the resumption of the INQUIRY at Lewisham Town Hall, Catford 10 am on 29th Sept) and the Christ Church (Highland Road) extension appeal inquiry (on 12th Oct at the Bromley Civic Centre), the old problem of the 'rat-run' along Ashgrove, Calmont and Warren has resurfaced.

The suffering of residents has not changed at all since we first took up this issue back in the founding days of the Society in 1987. Our initial attempts led to a meeting which we held at a house on Warren Avenue back in June 1988, and enclosed is a copy of the Newssheet reporting what occurred.

Our efforts following that meeting were directed at Bromley, where with the strong and able support of the newly elected Councillor (Hollobone) we were able to persuade Bromley Traffic Department to provide a solution to the dangerous junction at Farnaby Road, Bromley and Warren Avenues. The changed right of way has reduced the number of accidents and the number of potential accidents when exiting Bromley Avenue, and has reduced the speed of through traffic on the 'rat-run'. Against this, there has been a noticeable increase in traffic using Bromley Avenue, and start of a bus route along Farnaby Road has invited more through traffic.

Less about the past. The residents of Ashgrove Road, particularly those nearest the corner leading to Calmont Road, persuaded the Councillors of Downham Ward to take up their grievances with the police and Lewisham Traffic Dept., which led to a meeting being held at Lewisham Town Hall on Monday, 11th September, 1993. This was chaired by Councillor Hawkins and was attended by over 30 residents.

Inspector Wisdom, from the Catford Traffic Police, opened the meeting by reporting that they had surveyed the traffic on Calmont Road on 16th April, 1993 and out of the 4000 vehicles some 23% exceeded the speed limit by more than 10 mph. This qualified for further attention by the police, but because of limited resources they can only set a speed trap for may be 1-2 hours a year. As a deterrent to speeding, this only has the required effect for a few weeks, and quite often the police trap catches local residents. The police figures for accidents showed that there were very few personal injuries, which caused several residents to explode because of the damage they had suffered, 4 cars written off, and the fences and walls that have been knocked down without being noted in the statistics.

Peter Sullivan of the Lewisham Traffic Survey Unit continued with this point saying that there were more dangerous roads elsewhere in the borough that demanded their attention. The priority list was based on numbers of personal injuries and on this road there were only 2 accidents reported recently and 1 of these was caused by speeding. He said that there were no fewer than 8 measures they had taken to improve safety on the corner, but only listed two - the erection of bollards on the pavement and providing an anti-slip surface on one side of the road. This was greeted by disbelief from residents who stated that whenever it was wet it was like a skating rink with many vehicles out of control. The other major complaint were the number of large lorries that used the road, particularly ones that backed into the light industrial estate at the corner of Ashgrove and Calmont.

John Couch, the Director of Environmental Services for the Borough Engineer, poured more cold water on the subject by adding that road humps would not be considered as the emergency services in the form of the fire brigade had named this as a priority route for which they would need fast access. These priority routes were only designated towards the end of 1992 as a result of complaints by the fire service over the increasing number of roads with road humps and also road closures. Bellingham Road was named as an example. The other factors of cost and the need to cooperate with Bromley was also explained. Width restrictions would only deter the largest vehicles and have little effect on speed, although it was agreed that, with Calmont only being parked on one side, this straight wide stretch of road invited speeding. Road closures required central government agreement as the A21 Bromley Hill and access to it was controlled by the Department of Transport as a major route. Other suggestions such as speed cameras and yellow lines were briefly discussed.

Residents were naturally very disappointed at the outcome of this meeting with practically nothing achieved other than an airing of views. The only actions promised were that Lewisham Traffic Survey Unit will do their own survey to classify the different type of vehicles (unlike the police survey), and John Couch would go back to the fire brigade to question their need for this to be a priority route as no residents have ever seen the fire brigade using this road.

So what are the lessons to be learned? Quite clearly a serious accident with loss of life would dramatically alter things and action would be taken, though what this would be, the experts were not able to explain. The success at Farnaby/Warren is largely down to politics and being represented by a vigorous person who is in the majority party, which happens to be Tory in Bromley, but would be true if it was Labour in Lewisham. Such is the dominance of these parties in the two boroughs that they dictate what happens when and where. Unfortunately, the Liberal Democrats can only pick up the crumbs from the table no matter how hard they strive. Much good effort was put into arranging the meeting, but with nothing to offer residents at the end of the day it proved a disappointment.

As this notice will go out to our membership, our sympathy goes to all who have the misfortune to live on a 'rat-run', and perhaps at least we can take note of this and drive a little slower and more carefully, particularly near the corner of Ashgrove and Calmont Road. We would be pleased to take up any other suggestions, but as things are it is difficult to perceive any solution to the problem.

Draft 1993 Advice on Strategic Planning Guidance for London

We know how keen you are to read about planning matters - I can see you all visibly groan! Seriously though, Lewisham Planners invited us to attend a conference on Wednesday evening 15th Sept to discuss the above draft document prepared by LPAC (the London Planning Advisory Council is the quango set up to coordinate planning between London Boroughs and advise Central Government, continuing the planning role of the old GLC).

The meeting was attended by about 20 representatives from similar groups such as ourselves. We split into two groups and discussed with Planning Officers two major topics of the draft in turn for about an hour - firstly Housing and Employment and secondly Employment and Transport. The most important factor affecting Lewisham is the high level of unemployment caused by the recession. In some parts of the borough it is as high as 25% against an average for London of 12%, whereas nationally it is at 10%. Seen this way all other issues would appear to be secondary, and generally the document is full of good intentions, but has few practical suggestions on how to resolve the serious problems of unemployment and lack of subsidized (affordable) housing.

In contrast, Bromley did not consult with residents, but has provided us with a copy of their response to LPAC. This generally supports the good intentions without being critical of the major omissions of the document, which particularly concern Lewisham and Inner London.

This highlights the different approach adopted by the two boroughs - one democratically consults with residents in a somewhat disorganised way, only to do what it originally intended, whereas the other high-mindedly knows best and goes ahead without consultation. Which is the better I hear you ask? Well, the second is certainly more efficient! Who really cares about the bureaucratic games in any case - apathy rules, until the problems land on your doorstep!

Paul Bennett  
Lewisham Planning Officer and Membership Secretary

P.S. REMINDER to Road Reps and those who have yet to pay - 1993 subs should have been collected by now.

NEWSHEET September 5th, 1988



1. Ashgrove/Calmont/Warren/Farnaby Roads.

The speed of traffic and the use of these roads as a 'rat-run' has been on our agenda for a long time. It was decided to hold a meeting to further our cause especially after a spate of accidents in Ashgrove Road. This was held in June and we invited a representative from the police and Bromley and Lewisham Traffic Departments. The intention was to firstly agree that there is a problem and then find a solution and a date for implementation. Unfortunately, we failed on the first count due to a difference of opinion. Lewisham were prepared to consider Calmont Road for a scheme to install road humps, but Bromley do not perceive a problem. Their view is based on the low accident statistics of only one accident in the past three years and that as London Road runs at capacity in peak times any other roads such as these should be available to take the surplus. The police agreed with this view with the proviso that there should not be excessive speeding. It was admitted that the sight-lines at the junction of Bromley Avenue with Farnaby and Warren Avenue were difficult, but they did not warrant any action. The only successful outcome of the meeting was that the police would monitor speeds more frequently. Our advice to residents is to keep up the pressure on Bromley and request that each accident is recorded. The person to contact in Bromley is Mr. D. Chilver, Senior Traffic Engineer, Technical Services, London Borough of Bromley, Bromley Civic Centre, Rochester Way, Bromley BR1 3UH.

2. Cedarhurst, Elstree Hill.

This also has been on our agenda for a long time. The fourth scheme to redevelop this site into a block of flats we fought with success at the Lewisham Planning Meeting of 18th August. Our thanks goes to all those who wrote and to those who attended the meeting. An action committee is being set up and anyone with suggestions on how best to fight the undoubted appeal (as the developer now owns the site) is welcome to attend a meeting at 27 Elstree Hill on Monday, 12th September at 8 p.m..