



**CHRISTMAS
GREETINGS
TO YOU ALL**

AND

VERY BEST WISHES FOR 1996

EDITORIAL

It has been our custom for several years to distribute the Christmas Newsletter to every household in the area and not only to those who are registered supporters. It is worth emphasising that the Society is non-political and its primary purpose is to "preserve the best and improve the rest". Everyone involved is an unpaid volunteer.

In the late '80s and early '90s a lot of time and effort was put into opposing inappropriate planning applications. However that spate of development mania has subsided and the Society has been able to get involved in wider issues with both Bromley and Lewisham Councils. Matters addressed include the Joint Working Parties on the future of Beckenham Place Park; Noise from Channel Tunnel trains and elsewhere and remedial measures; Open spaces and woodlands; Roads and junctions; Health Authority and Trust issues; Policing and crime; and more recently, improving Bromley's environment and discussions on Bromley's finances and the levels of Council Tax. Most of the foregoing is covered in more detail later in the Newsletter.

If you do not yet support us and would like to or would like to tell us which issues you think the Society should be involved in, why not complete the enclosed membership slip (the green one) and pop it through the letterbox of your Road Representative.

Also enclosed with this Newsletter is a notice about the formation of "The Friends of Beckenham Place Park". I am sure that many would wish to support this new organisation which will focus all of its efforts on the Park. If you do, it is the white enclosure.

In case anyone is wondering why we have included the notice about The Friends in our Newsletter, the reason is simple. We were a major player in resisting the David Lloyd proposed development and a group like the Friends should have a strong beneficial effect on the management of the Park, both with ideas and action. It is a worthy local cause which we felt we should support. Not least because until the inaugural meeting, there are neither the members nor the resources to properly advertise the meeting.

Finally our best wishes to everyone for Christmas and the New Year and a big thank you to everyone who has supported the Society both actively and passively over the past year.

Dates for the Diary

5/45

Thursday 4th January

Members Meeting, 8.0pm
Bromley Court Hotel

Thursday 7th March

Annual General Meeting, 8.0pm
Bromley Court Hotel

For both dates please check the Activities Board in the entrance of the hotel to find out which room we will be using.

Everyone is welcome at both meetings, but please note that only Members are eligible to vote.

Peter Pain (Editor)

OFFICERS and REPRESENTATIVES

Road Representatives Due to ill health Margaret Payne is having to give up as Road Rep for Coniston Rd, Ullswater & Hawkshead Closes. Happily Barbara Price at No. 85 Coniston has volunteered to take over. Welcome and thank you for stepping into the breach so promptly.

Planning Officer or Secretary Whilst on the subject of volunteers, most will know that Bill Jamieson our Planning Officer for Bromley, died earlier this year. Despite appeals for a volunteer to replace him no one has come forward. Perhaps you all thought that he was too hard an act to follow. Whatever the reason, it has meant that Leslie Tucker has been acting as Planning Officer for Bromley as well as being Secretary and continuing as Road Rep for Bromley Ave and 5 other roads in the south east corner of our area.

That is not good for Leslie and nor is it good for the Society. Consequently unless someone comes forward for the Planning officer job before the AGM in March '96, Leslie intends to stand down as Secretary. There are three reasons for this, overall the Planning officer job is more onerous than the Secretary's, so someone might feel able to take that job on rather than the Planning Officer. Next both Chairman and Secretary are due to stand down in March '97. Clearly if the Secretary stands down a year earlier there will be a smoother changeover. Finally it is bad for the health of the Society to have too many jobs held by too few people.

So, are there any volunteers for either Secretary or Planning Officer? Please take the foregoing seriously. Even if you feel unable to take on either of these positions, you might know someone suitable who might just need your encouragement.

PLANNING

Unitary Development Plans (UDPS)

Bromley Bromley's UDP was approved last year and currently a team is updating it. Mostly this will reflect facts such as Borough boundary changes and any recent government "advice" and "guidance" that has been issued since the UDP was published.

Lewisham Lewisham have completed their round of consultations, public inquiry and more consultations. The finished document is expected to be laid before the full Council soon and assuming no further changes it will be forwarded to the Secretary of State for final approval. For the first time Lewisham will then have it's own formal planning policy document.

Planning Applications

18 Warren Ave Following approval for a loft conversion there was a subsequent application for retrospective approval of additional work. That application was refused and an order made for the loft to be reinstated to match the approved drawings. That was done.

40 Madeira Ave This site has been the subject of 3 applications. The first for 2 detached houses, the second for a pair of semidetached and the last for one detached house. The final application was approved and has now been built. We objected to the first two applications but not the last as it was an appropriate development for the site.

Midland Bank Sports Ground, Calmont Rd Earlier this year the Midland Bank sought approval for housing on part of their sports ground. This was a clear breach of the planning policies for Metropolitan Open Land, which the sports ground is designated. We spoke at the Planning Committee meeting on behalf of ourselves as well as others opposing the application. The application was rejected and the ground is now used by Millwall Football Club.

Christ Church, Flank Extension, Highland Rd The Church has had a new design for the flank extension produced by a different architect. They sought our views informally about the new scheme. The new plans do not exceed either the footprint or the height of the plans which were finally approved at the public inquiry, so we have no material objection on formal planning grounds. However, we have asked them to consider several constructive suggestions which could improve the exterior.

The Synagogue, Highland Rd Plans have been submitted for a flank extension. Although these were acceptable in principle and owners of neighbouring properties had no serious objections, we did point out several anomalies in the drawings. The Council asked the Applicant for clarification and new plans were produced. The revised application was approved.

Tennis Centre, Langley Park Sports Ground We were asked by the Park Langley Residents Association for support in opposing the application for an indoor and outdoor Tennis Centre at the above sports ground. Because the ground is designated Metropolitan Open Land and therefore has a high degree of protection we were able to do so using some of the arguments we used for Beckenham Place Park. The application was refused.

Tennis & Leisure Centre, Bullers Wood School Playing Fields Many may have noticed reports of this application by David Lloyd Leisure in the NewShopper. Those reports tended to be exaggerated. The ground was stated to be Green Belt, when it actually is Urban Open Space, a designation with much less protection. And, by talking about the building being the size of eight aircraft hangers they omitted to say how big the aircraft were. In fact the proposal was for 8 indoor courts with associated offices and fitness rooms etc. with car parking underneath. There would also be 5 outdoor courts. We were not asked for support by the local residents association and in our view would have found it difficult to identify material planning objections. However, Bromley's Planning Committee refused the application. It is not known whether it will go to Appeal.

BECKENHAM PLACE PARK

The Joint Working Party and the Management Plan Subcommittee continue to meet regularly and slow but steady progress is being made in charting the future of the Park. In the meantime the day to day maintenance appears to be slipping and individual problems are regularly reported to Lewisham Leisure Services. However it seems as though no sooner is one issue addressed than another one crops up. If regular users of the Park spot anything that needs attention, don't just mutter under your breath or even out loud. Report it to the Parks Department via the main switchboard on 695 6000 and they will deal with it, whether the responsibility is direct or contract labour.

Subject to 3 or possibly 4 amateur football clubs putting together an acceptable Business Plan, it is likely that Summerhouse Fields pavilion will be rebuilt and team games reintroduced. Any proposals will not be allowed to prejudice the 18 metre boundary of the proposed Riverwalk Way alongside the Ravensbourne.

Lastly your attention is again drawn to the white insert with this Newsletter telling you about the formation of the "Friends of Beckenham Place Park". If you use the Park and/or care about it you really ought to go along and support them.

TRANSPORT

Rail

Channel Tunnel Link Traffic Whilst discussions continue and decisions are awaited about who will fund and build the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link, we continue to see a lot of the Tunnel traffic. Both passenger and freight traffic passes through Shortlands, either on the main-line or the Catford loop.

Despite arguments in some quarters about the sound barriers, there is no doubt that they do reduce the noise. The initial proposals however did not include any track north of Shortlands station. We together with others have been pressing for recognition that residents near Shortlands junction should be protected by barriers. The point was agreed by Bromley and supported by their Acoustic Consultant. Railtrack have now conceded that there is a need and the additional work has been planned to follow on after the existing programme of barriers. There will be a

reduction in airborne noise, but the barriers do not reduce the vibration from heavy freight trains. The only amelioration likely in the near future will be the replacement of diesel locos by electric ones. It remains to be seen whether these will bring the benefit that has been claimed. Meantime any resident concerned about the effect of vibration on their property is recommended to have it surveyed, so they have a basis for any future claim.

South Eastern Rail Franchising In common with other parts of the rail network, South Eastern Rail is due to be franchised soon. To see this through an office of Passenger Rail Franchising (OPRAF) has been set up. They have issued Passenger Service Requirements (PSRs) for each franchise, which give minimum service levels. For services to and from Shortlands and Ravensbourne, they seem to be very similar to the present timetable.

At a recent meeting at Bromley Civic Centre to discuss this issue., it became clear that the present management would be bidding for the franchise and they spoke optimistically about what they wanted to do if they were successful. But, of course, Railtrack will own and manage the track over which they intend to run the service, so a pinch of salt is in order. The latest twist is that a Rail User Group elsewhere in the country, is challenging the schedule of requirements from OPRAF and seeking judicial support. The whole issue could yet be derailed.

Road

Ravensbourne Ave/Beckenham Lane junction We are being persistent on this issue and have joined forces with the Shortlands RA as we are both affected. The matter is continuing to be raised not only with our Councillors and the Officers concerned, but also through Road Safety Committees and Police Consultative Committees. To date progress is slow, very slow. If anyone knows of an avenue worth exploring, please let the Secretary know on 464 4734.

351 Bus Route There has been an increasing number of people complaining about the speed and road manners of these buses when driving through Ravensbourne Ave & Farnaby Rd. If you have cause for complaint, contact Metrobus direct on 01689 861432. Please remember to be as precise as you can, ie. time of day, whereabouts, and if possible registration number of the bus. Our feedback is that Metrobus take their public image seriously.

CRIME IN THE COMMUNITY

Earlier in the year we were involved in discussions on how to tackle local crime. Apart from general support for the concept of Neighbourhood Watch schemes as one means to combat burglary. We also supported an increase in the local presence of the police. Although accepted in principle, the problems of finance/manpower and conflicting priorities were cited as reasons for not seeing as many "Home Beat" policemen as most would wish.

On the same issue of local crime, there was general support for closed circuit television (CCTV) in areas such as the Hill carpark and Bromley Town Centre. Both of these schemes have now been implemented and are integrated with the Glades system. So far there seems to have been a reduction in crime in these areas, without a consequential increase in crime outside of them.

BOROUGH FINANCES 1996/7

More recently we attended a seminar by Bromley for a group of people involved in a wide range of community activities. The purpose of the seminar was to discuss Bromley's forecasts of income and expenditure in the next financial year. There was a very cogent presentation by the Chief Executive and the Finance Director, which clearly explained where monies came from and went to and the increasing restraints by central government which were expected next year. They also explained why these would result in a potential shortfall in income of £9-10m. The sort of choices that would face the Council were indicated and the meeting was asked for any questions/comments and ideas.

Given the very balanced presentation, when the floor were asked for their comments and views, it was sad to see how when disparate special interest groups were present, rationality flew out of the window and emotion reigned. Ultimately, the final decisions will have to be made by the full Council. It is to be hoped that their aim will be to minimise the misery and spread it as thinly as possible over all services. Including perhaps a critical look at capital spending and possibly making a limited raid on the reserves.
