

NEWSLETTER

1/2007

January 2007



EDITORIAL

Around this time of year we distribute our bi-monthly Newsletter as an Annual, giving a round-up of the year's activities to every household in our area. Usually we try to get it through everyone's letterbox before Christmas and the New Year. For various reasons we have not achieved that this time. Nevertheless, we wish a Happy and Prosperous New Year to all, with a special thank you to all of you who have supported us actively or passively over the past year.

Although the name of the Society sounds wide-ranging, we are in fact a Residents' Association covering an area broadly bounded by London Road, Beckenham Lane, Downs Hill and the McDonalds at the end of Ashgrove Road. We aim to be a pressure group on issues which do, or could, affect us locally. This means that we deal with Councillors and Officers of both Bromley and Lewisham .

Enclosed in this Newsletter, for those residents who do not yet support us financially, is a green slip. If, after reading this issue, you would like to do so, just fill in the slip and pop it through the letterbox of your Road Rep whose name and address is shown on the slip.

Finally I regret to say that Leslie Tucker has decided to give up being the Planning Officer covering Bromley for the Society. On our behalf he has conscientiously been involved in planning matters which affect our area for about 15 years. He intends to formally stand down at the AGM in March but is willing to assist and advise his successor up to our regular meeting in September. Needless to say, this is a key position which must be filled if the Society is to adequately serve its membership. Anyone who would like to know more about the job should ring Leslie on 020 8464 4734 - PLEASE RING!

Dates for the Diary

Thursday 8th March - Annual General Meeting 8.00pm - Bromley Court Hotel

Thursday 3rd May - Members' Meeting 8.00pm - Bromley Court Hotel

In the meantime - if anyone has any ideas for a guest speaker for the AGM please contact Peter Pain on 020 8460 2828.

All are welcome at any of our meetings, but please check the Hotel's Activity board to make sure that you go to the right room.

Peter Pain (Editor)

TRANSPORT

Solar Powered Digital Speed Measuring Signs

Because of speeding traffic in Warren Avenue, the Road Rep successfully persuaded Bromley to erect one of their speed measuring signs in the section leading up to the traffic calming measures in Calmont Road. It is still there and appears to be having an effect.

Following the removal of free parking on the railway side of Ravensbourne Avenue and its replacement with pay and display parking, residents have complained about speeding traffic because of less parking. At the Road Rep's request Bromley revisited the area and agreed that there was a problem. They would consider a digital speed sign when one became free and put the area on the list for a camera. To date there has not been any action. Ostensibly the meters were installed because shopkeepers in Shortlands Village had complained that shoppers had difficulty parking and they were losing business. Meters have also been installed in some other streets leading off the shopping area. The net effect has been that although all day parking at the meters is allowed (£2) commuters now park further along Ravensbourne Avenue towards Downs Hill and beyond, causing problems there.

Sight Lines, Oaklands Road / Grasmere Road

Despite letters and phone calls over the last two years nothing has been done to prevent parking in Oaklands Rd very near to the junction. This effectively obscures oncoming traffic when exiting Grasmere Rd. Bromley have claimed lack of money, although it is difficult to believe that they cannot afford about 10 feet of yellow line!

Shortlands Junction Traffic Lights

Following the disruption caused by the renewal of a gas main in Beckenham Lane, we again asked Bromley to improve the light sequence for traffic exiting from Ravensbourne Avenue. We also drew their attention to traffic from Station Road jumping the lights at red. Bromley now tell us that they have tweaked the phasing to allow more time for traffic turning out of Ravensbourne Avenue, but cannot do anything about cars jumping the red lights.

Shortlands Railway Bridge

Following a long period of frustration because Network Rail would not replace the torn netting under the bridge, it was replaced earlier in the year. That meant that pigeons could no longer roost on the girders under the bridge with some getting snared on the damaged netting and the rest fouling the pavement below. However there are reports that some holes have reappeared in the netting.

Road Gritting and Salting

With winter weather likely in the New Year, Bromley have published a leaflet explaining how they will cope.

In essence, in winter Street Services review detailed localised forecasts with the London Met Office. They then predict when and where they need to salt to prevent icing. Gritting/ salting starts at 4.30am and they aim to finish by 700am. The effort is targeted on main roads, bus routes and roads leading to fire and ambulance stations, hospitals and schools. That is about 200 miles of roads. On roads that are not covered there are roadside salt bins as a self help facility for residents. Pavements are not normally salted unless forecasts predict severe icing then the most heavily used pavements in the main shopping areas and transport intersections are given priority. When snow is expected the priority routes are salted in advance and, as a further back up all of the Council's salting vehicles can be fitted with snow ploughs. The only local roads not dealt with are the A21 and A232, they are the responsibility of Transport for London.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Having completed a meridian marker in Farnaby Road as our millennium project we turned to seats at popular bus stops. More recently we have funded various projects at the Valley School. The most recent ones are playground murals, which have now been completed and rustic benches fashioned from logs to compliment the story telling chair previously funded by us.

BECKENHAM PLACE PARK

Despite being told at earlier meetings that nothing was likely to happen until 2010 when all of Lewisham's parks contracts would be renegotiated, at the last meeting of the Working Party Lewisham announced that they proposed to commission another feasibility study into the future of the park. The study would be done using 2 highly regarded consultants - Land Use Consultants, who had successfully delivered lottery Funding for projects at Manor House Gardens and Telegraph Hill Park - and also Adrian Wikely, a landscape architect who recently prepared guidance for English Heritage on golf in historic landscapes.

The study will be asked to produce proposals for:-

- * Developing a 9 hole golf course with practice holes
- * Relocating the public car park.
- * Landscaping around the Mansion and Homesteads - including service access to both buildings.
- * Renovating the Homesteads to include the following uses and an analysis of potential uses for any remaining spaces.
 - Golf Management and Shop.
 - Café / Bar
 - Function Room / Classroom.
 - Public Conveniences.
 - Park Studies / Visitor Centre / Gift Shop
 - Parks and contractors' administration

- * Providing a new park depot.
- * Renovating the other buildings (South Lodge & Garden Cottage).
- * The preparation of a master plan to include park infrastructure and the management of the Common and Summerhouse Field to the east of the railway.

The Mansion has been excluded from the above study because the cost of repair and renovation would be well above the funding capability of the Council. Separate options are to be investigated for its possible sale, conditional on it being renovated to English Heritage recommendations.

The study would also be required to examine the sort of boundary treatment there should be - if any - between the Mansion and the Park.

The proposal for the feasibility study was sent to Lewisham's Overview and Sustainability Group before it went to the Mayor and Cabinet.

The first submission included the following points made by the Overview & Sustainability Group:-

- * That attempts be made to ensure that the Mansion would be made available for continued community use - or, at least public access is retained.
- * That officers be asked to look at successful examples in other parks with buildings of historic interest being made available for community use.
- * That a communication campaign be considered to aid promotion of the park for wider use of the community.
- * That officers examine additional funding options including a lottery bid to fund the refurbishment of the Park and buildings.

At this stage we do not know the reactions of the Mayor and Cabinet. If approved, then, following the completion of the feasibility study, a business case will have to be prepared and presented to the Mayor and Cabinet recommending an Action Plan. Lewisham say that the plan will also take account of the views of users and stakeholders obtained from consultation.

The possible sale of the Mansion was strongly objected to by the non-officer members of the Working Party. However Lewisham's approach is understandable. Since well before the Public Inquiry in 1993 the Mansion has been a continuing problem because of its state of repair and the costs involved in tackling it. Nor has it always been freely available to the public. Realistically it may be the only way forward for the Mansion - that is if anyone can be found to take it on with all of its costs and constraints.

PLANNING

Unitary Development Plans (UDP) & Local Development Frameworks (LDF):

Both Bromley and Lewisham have recently formally adopted their new UDP's which, in theory will be their planning bibles for the next five years. However, a new system, LDF's is being produced. This is a more piecemeal arrangement and some

consultation drafts have already been distributed for comment.

Planning Applications:

100 / 102 Madeira Avenue: There have been 3 planning applications for this site. The first was for a block of 14, 2 bedroom flats which was refused by Bromley. That was followed by an application for a block of 7, 4 storey, 4 bedroom town houses which was deferred by Bromley's Planning Committee for the developer to reduce it to 6 town houses. A plan for 6, 4 storey, 4 bedroom town houses was duly submitted, but the developer made each of the houses wider which resulted in the terrace being longer than the first application for flats. That application was also refused and the developer has not appealed.

"Kowloon" & "Penfro", Highland Road: This application proposed to demolish these two adjacent detached houses and build a block of 12 flats on the two sites. The application was refused and the developer initially appealed but has apparently since withdrawn.

8, Highland Road: This application was made by the same developers as for Kowloon & Penfro and was for demolishing the existing house and replacing it with a new block containing 10 flats. Part of the garden of number 10 was also to be taken for car parking. That proposal was refused by Bromley but in February last the developer then made a second application for a smaller block still to provide 10 units but with more 1 bedroom flats and fewer with 2 bedrooms. This was approved by Bromley but in July a further application was made, this time for modifying the existing house to provide 1, 3 bedroom flat and 4 with 2 bedrooms. This was refused but yet another conversion scheme to give the same accommodation has recently been permitted. The developer had lodged an appeal against the first scheme's refusal but has since withdrawn it.

3 Highland Road (near London Road) An earlier application for demolition of this house and the construction of a block of 7 apartments was withdrawn before a decision was reached. This was followed by a second application for a new block with 6 two bedroom flats. This was refused and the applicant appealed. The appeal was dismissed.

Shortlands Golf Course: following the failure on appeal for an earlier application for a telecom mast on the course, T-Mobile submitted a second application. This time the mast was to look like a "dead elm tree". Bromley refused this application and T-Mobile again appealed. That appeal has also been dismissed on the grounds of the mast's visibility and due to the fact that the course is designated as Metropolitan Open Land and it would detract from its openness and visual amenity.

Other Telecom Masts: There are two other potential masts in our area. One is at the northern side of the junction between Farnaby Road and Ravensbourne Avenue and the other is at the northern junction of Oaklands Road and London Road. Both are on the public highway (ie on Council property) and are intended to look like lamp posts, albeit tall ones. Neither appears to materially conflict with the planning requirements of Bromley's new UDP.

1107

126, Madeira Avenue: This is a recent application to demolish the existing multi-level house which is on a hillside behind the adjacent properties in the road and replace it with 8, 4 storey 4-5 bedroom town houses. Because of its position the application affects not only properties in Madeira Avenue but also some in Elstree Hill, Hawkshead Close and Lullington Garth. Many residents have written to object and a petition of 117 signatures has been sent to Bromley. It is likely to be considered by Bromley at a meeting at the end of January or early in February.

SECURITY

Car Key Theft

There have been three recent cases in Warren Avenue of the attempted theft of car keys. This was when the keys were left on a hall table or similar and the thieves used a fishing rod through the letter box to try to hook the keys. Fortunately they failed on these occasions - perhaps because they were inexperienced. Not all car thefts are of expensive vehicles, some cars may be more valuable for spare parts.

Of course security of keys applies to all keys, not just those for cars and houses - keys of garden sheds where tools and appliances are stored are also a favourite target - keep them all out of sight.

House-breaking, entering and assault

One of our members in Ravensbourne Avenue had her house broken into at 2am one morning. Apart from the theft, she was assaulted and ended up in hospital. Christmas and New Year is a time when burglars expect to get rich pickings from presents etc and many houses are unoccupied. It is a sad fact that in today's world we need to make our homes more like fortresses especially at vulnerable points such as doors and windows.

SCAMS

Cash Machines

If you withdraw cash from a machine, do be careful. One of the latest dodges is to approach somebody after they have put in their card and entered their PIN and tell them that the machine is out of order. They then take the money after the victim - often elderly - has left. There have been several such incidents in Bromley High Street.

Parcel Delivery

We wrote about this in a previous Newsletter, however a variation has come to light. A card is posted through the letterbox from a company called Parcel Delivery Service saying that they were unable to deliver a parcel and to make arrangements for delivery you should ring 0306 661 1911 - a premium rate number. Trading Standards advice is DO NOT RING THIS NUMBER. It is a mail scam originating from Belize. If you do ring, at the start of the recorded message you will have run up a bill for £15.

If you get one of these cards call either Royal Mail Fraud on 020 7239 6655 or the local Trading Standards office on 020 8313 4830.

Debt Collection

Another scam from a false firm is mail from Astra Delph International Debt Collection who claim that an outstanding debt is owed to an electronic web site. It continues in a threatening manner. This is now being investigated by the Office of Fair Trading who advise that anyone receiving these letters should ignore them and not send any money or call any of the numbers listed.

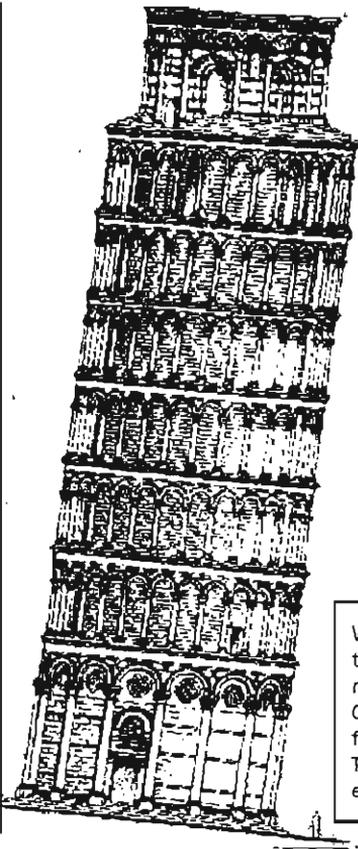
Lottery Scam

Finally, a Bilbao based firm calling itself Euro Millions Lottery Primitiva tells you that you have won a share in a multi-million pound lottery - usually the sum quoted will be in the order of half a million pounds. The scam comes when, to claim the win, they ask for name, address, national insurance number, telephone and fax numbers, occupation, marital status plus full details of your bank account and a copy of your passport or driving licence.

This is clearly an attempt at identity theft - do not fall for it!

And Finally -Here are a few more typographical errors culled from various sources:-

- ⊗ "...was fined £100 with five penalty pints for using a vehicle without insurance"
- ⊗ "... bushes to dampen the traffic noise and screen the eye saws creeping in and around our park"
- ⊗ "no parking, no barbeques, no flames aloud on site"
- ⊗ "... must have good customer service kills"
- ⊗ "pensioners grouped together for a money making scam to raise money"
- ⊗ "a large detached period property converted into 4 self contained holiday apartments. Available as a hole"
- ⊗ "a village blacksmith who was seen making and shooting horses"



Will this mast, disguised as a famous tourist attraction, be the next telecom mast design proposed for our area? Other options in this top range include full size replicas of the Eiffel Tower, The Tower of Babel or a real artificial dead elm tree.