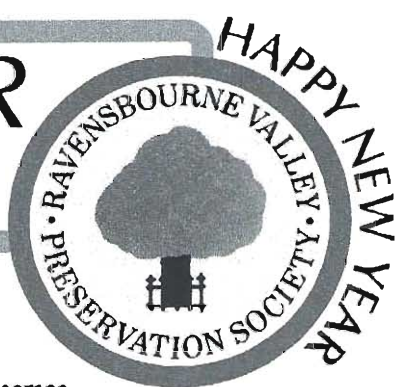


NEWSLETTER

1/2008

January 2008



EDITORIAL

Around this time of year our bi-monthly newsletter becomes an annual round up of the year's activities and is distributed to every household in our area. For those residents who are not familiar with us we should explain that, although the name of the Society sounds wide-ranging, we are in fact a Residents' Association covering an area roughly 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 with this newsletter, for those 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 post or deliver it to your Road Representative whose name and address appears on the slip.

There have not been any really major issues over the year but a whole series of planning and transport matters which have kept the officers and some Road Reps pretty busy. Also, of course, Beckenham Place Park which continues, some 15 years after the public inquiry, to be ongoing without any long term solution being found.

At the last AGM in March, our then Chairman, Elizabeth Davies, announced that she was planning to move away. By July she was settling into her new house in Colyton, Devon. The Society sent her a card and a floral display as a thank you and to greet her on arrival; this pleased her immensely. Meanwhile the Vice Chairman is covering the post. Hopefully we will be able to elect a new Chairman at the next AGM in March. The Vice Chairman will continue to cover any absences.

Finally, a big thank you to everyone who has supported us actively and passively over the past year. With your continued support we hope that we will be able to report at least as many successes during the coming year as you will find reported in this issue.

Dates for the Diary

Thursday 6th March - Annual General Meeting 8.00pm - Bromley Court Hotel

Thursday 1st May - Members' Meeting - 8.00pm - Bromley Court Hotel

Peter Pain (Editor)

PLANNING

At the last AGM Leslie Tucker stood down as Planning Officer for the Society for Bromley applications. Clive Lees volunteered to take over, since then activity on the planning front has increased considerably. Perhaps Leslie knew something we didn't. Whether the recent slow down of the housing market will have a knock-on effect on the rate of planning applications is debatable as an approved application is valid for 3 years before it expires. It used to be 5 years but Bromley reduced the time in an effort to speed up completions in order to achieve centrally imposed targets.

3 Highland Road:

A proposal for a block of 7 flats to replace a detached house was reduced to 6 flats and resubmitted. That was refused by Bromley and a subsequent appeal by the developer was dismissed. A further application, this time for 4 flats was allowed. The house has been partially demolished.

126 Madeira Avenue:

An application to build a terrace of 8, 4 storey town houses each with 5 bedrooms on the site of an existing single house caused a strong reaction from nearby residents. The site is behind the adjacent properties in Madeira Avenue with its only access up a steeply sloping and narrow driveway. The proposal would affect, not only Madeira Ave but also Elstree Hill, Hawkshead Close, and Lullington Garth. Some 60 letters of objection were sent plus a petition signed by 117 people. The application was refused by Bromley in February. A month later the developer appealed and requested an "Informal Hearing". Before that could be heard the developer submitted a revised scheme for a terrace of 6 town houses similar to those in the first application. At the risk of having a further appeal for "non-determination" within the required time-scale, Bromley waited for the appeal to be dealt with. In the event they were right to have done so as the Inspector, having read and heard submissions from the applicants, from Bromley, from the Society and the occupants of several adjacent properties, quickly produced his written decision dismissing the appeal. His reasons related to the access problems, loss of amenity to neighbouring properties and over development of the site. Shortly afterwards the developers withdrew the application for the 6 houses. However, nearby residents reported sightings of men taking measurements. Clearly a case of "watch this space".

Hillbrow, 14 Highland Road:

This locally listed building has been sold and we understand that the new owner intends to extend the rear of the house and convert it into 9 flats. No planning application has yet been made.

113 Foxgrove Road:

This is the first house in the Downs Hill Conservation Area. An application was submitted to demolish the house and erect a block of flats. Following objections from the Society, local residents and the Advisory Panel on Conservation Areas (APOCA), Bromley refused permission. The developer has since appealed. We, and others have written to the Inspector with our objections - a decision is awaited.

9 Ravensmead Road:

A proposal to demolish a single storey property and replace it with a pair of three storey asymmetrical semi-detached houses was submitted in the Summer. We objected on the grounds that it would be an over development of the site, one of the semi's was to be taller than the other and taller than adjacent properties. Additionally the pair were not mirror images (all the other semis in the road mirror their neighbour). Bromley has refused permission. No appeal has been lodged.

La Canpannina, Grasmere Road:

In a recent application this bungalow between Cameron House and Townend Court was to be replaced by a block of flats. The proposal virtually filled the site, it was taller than the adjacent blocks of flats. The Society and local residents objected on the grounds that it was too wide, too high, too intrusive on neighbouring properties and too dominating on the eastern skyline of the Ravensbourne Valley. The application has been withdrawn but doubtless a second one will be submitted on a smaller scale. With the help of the Council's Tree Officer, 2 mature trees in the front garden which were due to be felled, now have a spot Tree Preservation Order on them. After the withdrawal of the first application, surveyors were seen on site, presumably in preparation of a revised scheme and a second try. However the bungalow is now occupied, probably on a short term let.

17, Spencer Road:

This proposal is for an infill development on the corner of Spencer Road and Oaklands Road - adjacent to a fairly new terrace of town houses and opposite a new block of flats. The Society and neighbours objected because the development would have been very cramped, out of character with adjoining property and the flank wall was substantially in front of the building line in Oaklands Road. The Council has now refused the application.

51, Downs Hill:

An application for an extension to this existing house has been submitted recently. However the proposal was not just for a rear extension as first thought but it also included flank and front changes. If allowed, we consider that these changes would be unacceptable in this Conservation Area by making the house out of character with its neighbours and by reducing the generous spacing between properties which was one of the prime features used to justify the original designation of the area as a Conservation Area. Again, we, and other nearby residents have objected. Bromley have yet to decide.

Tree Tops, Kirkstone Way:

This application was also for a substantial extension to the property. Local residents objected and the application has been refused.

8 Madeira Avenue:

A very recent application proposes to demolish the existing detached house and build a 5 storey block of 9, 2 bedroom flats with basement car parking on this steeply sloping site. This would be 2 storeys higher than the adjacent town houses and the only purpose built flats in Madeira Avenue. The Society and many residents have written letters of objection.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Martins Hill / Queens Mead & The River Ravensbourne:

Earlier in the year we were approached by The Friends of Bromley's Parks and Gardens suggesting that we join them in a project to enhance the heritage and environmental value of Queen's Mead, Martins Hill and the river running through them. It was hoped that funding would come from the Heritage Lottery Fund - Landscape Partnership Scheme. We attended a preliminary meeting at which Bromley and the Environment Agency were represented. Both were supportive and made commitments in cash and expertise.

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The Secretary of the Friends was invited to our next meeting to give a presentation to the members present. The meeting agreed that we should become involved as partners. After the Friends had completed and submitted the necessary paperwork for the pre-application they had a call from the Heritage Lottery Fund to say that their proposal was not appropriate for the particular landscape grant scheme applied for. It was considered to be too small and too urban. After further discussion it was recommended that they should apply again under the "Heritage Grant" scheme. This has put back the earlier time tables but Bromley and the Environment Agency are in discussions which could allow some of the proposals to go ahead. A meeting and a report on progress are expected shortly. It is also expected that the Shortlands Residents' Association will announce their commitment to the scheme.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

Crab Hill / Ravensbourne Avenue:

Earlier proposals to make up and adopt the unmade section of Crab Hill and the unmade part of Ravensbourne Avenue between Farnaby Road and Crab Hill have now been approved in principle by Bromley. However, there will have to be further consultation with Transport for London (TfL), local residents and landowners. Consultants will also have to be employed to work up and price the scheme. The Society will be monitoring progress and hope to have the opportunity to comment. Local views will certainly be mixed, with some in favour and some against especially if the 354 bus route is diverted to pass Ravensbourne Station. One compromise solution suggested might be that the buses pass the station during commuter periods and at other times the existing route along Downs Hill is followed. Another could be that alternate buses could be routed via Downs Hill. Such options are for future consideration.

Speeding Traffic in Bromley Avenue and Ravensbourne Avenue:

Following complaints about traffic travelling at excess speeds on these rat-runs, we have approached Bromley to see what could be done to reduce speeds. After some delay we now learn that the Safer Neighbourhood Team have these roads on their schedule for speed check signs. These should be in position in the next few months.

Downs Bridge Road:

This is an unmade up link over the railway between Downs Hill and Albermarle Road. Recently an increasing number of heavy goods vehicles have been using it, possibly under the guidance of their Sat/Nav systems. Whatever the reason, cracks are appearing in the parapet walls of the bridge. We reported this to both Network Rail, whose bridge it is, and to Bromley. The bridge is now scheduled for a structural check (Network Rail) and Bromley are considering erecting weight restriction signs. Presumably Bromley will have to consult Network Rail to find out the maximum load the bridge was designed to carry.

Junction Oaklands Road / Grasmere Road:

There are very poor sight lines when exiting from Grasmere Road to Oaklands Road. This is made worse by commuter and local street parking near to the junction. For

several years now we have been asking Bromley to extend the yellow line on the eastern side of the junction but after much badgering all they managed to do was to extend it by about 12 inches when the lines were repainted.

Junction Oaklands Road / London Road:

Road repair works in Oaklands Road obliterated part of the red line near the junction with London Road. This now allows commuter cars to park very near to the junction making it dangerous for vehicles entering from London Road. The situation is made worse by the parking on both sides of this part of Oaklands Road, effectively making it a single track. We have reported this to Bromley drawing their attention to the fact that the red line was not reinstated after road repair work (that was the contractor's responsibility). So far nothing has happened.

BECKENHAM PLACE PARK

Despite being told earlier that nothing was likely to happen until 2010 when all of Lewisham's parks contract were due to be renegotiated, we learnt at the end of last year of potential changes. Lewisham propose to commission a further feasibility study into the future of the Park and its buildings. They intended to let a contract to Land Use Consultants and a landscape architect. The remit for the contract covered:

- * Developing proposals for a 9 hole golf course with proper practice holes.
- * Relocating the car park away from the Mansion.
- * Landscaping around the Mansion and Homesteads, including service areas.
- * Renovating and extending the Homesteads and Stable Block to provide for:
 - Golf management and shop.
 - Café / Bar.
 - Function / classroom.
 - Public conveniences.
 - Park studies / visitor centre / gift shop.
 - Parks and contractors' administration.
- * They were also asked to produce ideas for:
 - Providing a new Park depot.
 - Renovating the Southend Lodge and 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 Grade II* listed Mansion was excluded from the above study because the cost of repair and renovation would be beyond the funding capability of the Council. Consideration would be given to letting it on a long term lease subject to any repair and renovation being done to English Heritage's recommendations and satisfaction.

The consultants subsequently submitted an interim report:

- * Giving 4 options for a 9 hole golf course with full size practice holes.
- * Resiting the car parking to a position nearer to the entrance gate and the Homesteads.
- * Outline proposals for converting the Stable Block and Homesteads.
- * Improving the landscaping by removing recent inappropriate planting and replacing

with native species, except near to the Mansion where an attempt would be made to base new planting on the layout and species indicated on the 1860's Ordinance Survey Map. This reflected work done by and earlier owner - John Cator.

From discussion it was confirmed that Lewisham would try to market the Mansion on a long lease. Any future leaseholder must satisfy the Council and English Heritage on the proposed standard and sensitivity of refurbishment and repair. They would also have to show that they have the resources to complete the job within an agreed time-span.

To date the proposals have been seen and accepted by Lewisham's Sustainability and Development Sub-Committee. They are now with the Mayor and Cabinet who are expected to make a decision by the end of 2007. A specialist company will then be tasked to organise and carry out a full public consultation in the spring of 2008. That will be followed by consideration of any potential changes and followed by an initial submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2009. The full submission should follow a year later, in 2010. The target completion date is 2013.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Tree Preservation orders: (TPO's)

Following the loss of about 20 fairly mature trees at a site which was the subject of a planning application, we entered into discussion with the Council's Tree Officer. This resulted in the northern end of Madeira Avenue being re-surveyed with the aim of protecting some of the better trees which had matured since the blanket TPO was made in 1960. The consequence of that survey was that some 15 trees were identified and new spot TPO's will be raised. Affected residents will be individually notified.

Road Gritting and Salting:

With the coming of winter, Bromley have issued a leaflet explaining how they will cope. In essence, Street Services review localised forecasts with the London Met. Office. They then predict when and where salting will be necessary.

Gritting and salting starts at 4.30am and aims to be completed by 7.0am. The main effort is on main roads, bus routes and roads leading to fire and ambulance stations, hospitals and schools - some 200 miles of roads. Roadside salt bins are also topped up as a self help facility for local residents. Pavements are normally left unsalted unless severe icing is predicted, then the most heavily used areas, such as main shopping streets and transport interchanges are given priority.

If snow is forecast, the priority routes are salted in advance and as a back up the Council's vehicles can be fitted with snow ploughs. Transport for London are responsible for the A21 and the A232.

Junk Mail:

Bromley have produced a leaflet explaining how to stop junk mail. It tells you how to:

Remove your name from direct mailing lists.

Remove a previous occupier's name from your address.

Remove your name from mailing lists to your previous address.

Remove the name of someone who has died.

There is also a free sticker for the front door reading - "No Junk Mail Please".

More information can be obtained from Green Team N105, Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH.

Bromley Town Centre - Area Action Plan:

At our AGM last March the Guest Speaker was the Town Centre Project Director. He described the proposals in the Town Centre Action Plan and how, since the Glades opened in 1991, commercial competition at other centres had increased. He also pointed out that towns either evolve and prosper or fail to compete and stagnate.

At that time a consultation document was available which described the preferred options for change, the thinking behind them and likely time- scales. That initial consultation ended mid 2007 and a fresh document, giving revised preferred options, was produced in the autumn with a second public consultation period which ended in December.

The next stage will be to submit the draft Action plan to Central Government for examination and then formal adoption. As each of the 14 preferred options comes to be implemented they will be subject to the normal Planning process. However, once adopted, the Action Plan will become a material consideration in that process.

None of this can happen overnight and the current time scales are for three, five year phases.

More information is available in local libraries, at Planning Reception at the Civic Centre or on www.bromley.gov.uk Copies of a summary leaflet are also available from 8461 7637.

This part is our **"Stop Press"** - when you have read it you will probably wish we had stopped before it was included!

As distinct from any typographical errors included elsewhere in this Newsletter the following ones are intended. They are culled from a variety of sauces. (In fact about 57).

"Psychic available for consultation ---- contact with relatives who have pasted over".

"Activity at the maternity unit in ----- has increased by 30% as a result of very diligent activity by the authorities in that area".

"She said that a consultant does hold a clinic on Wednesday morning at ----- but is now looking to specialise in infidelity treatment - a move that will benefit hundreds of couples in the area".

"The cost for attending the National Fasting and Prayer conference includes meals".
