

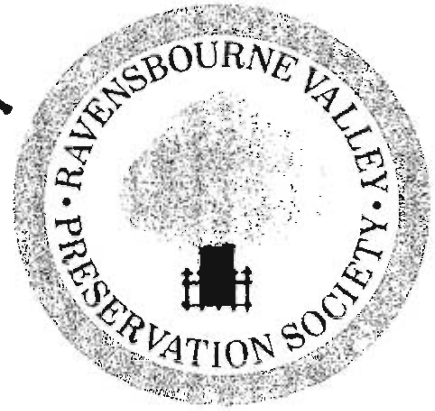
NEWSLETTER

January 2012

1/2012

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EDITORIAL

Despite the continuing economic situation we wish all our readers a very happy New Year.

At this time of year our normal 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, it should be explained that, although the Society's name might imply that we cover the whole of the length of the river Ravensbourne from Keston to Deptford, we are in fact a local residents' association covering an area roughly bounded by London Road, Beckenham Lane, Ravensbourne Avenue, Downs Hill, Calmont Road and the McDonalds at the end of Ashcroft Road. Beckenham Place Park is also included. We aim to be a pressure group on issues which do or could, affect us locally. This means that we have to deal with Councillors and Officers of both Bromley and Lewisham Boroughs.

The Society is strictly non-political and everyone involved is an unpaid volunteer (apart from being reimbursed for expenses). If you do not yet support us, but after reading this Newsletter you would like to do so, Please fill in the enclosed Green Slip to join for half price and drop it through the letter box or post it to your Road representative. You will find the name and address on the green slip.

A year ago we reported that Wally Carloss, our auditor, had decided to stand down due to ill health. He had been our auditor for 18 years and a presentation of a digital radio (his request) was made at our AGM in March. It is with much sadness that we now report that he died in November. Wally had been very active and was involved with many groups. We sent a floral tribute to his cremation and attended the service. The chapel was full of his many friends and family. We also sent a donation to the British Heart Foundation.

Last year we also reported that our final vacancy for Roads and Traffic Representative had been filled by Brian Atkinson. He has certainly got stuck in as you will read later in this Newsletter.

We also reported that Councillor Diana MacMull (Bromley Town) and Councillor Michael Tickner (Copers Cope) had been very supportive and whenever possible they attended our bi-monthly meetings. They have continued to do so over the past year and we are very grateful to them for giving their time and support and

for sharing their knowledge and experience.

Happily there have not been any major planning issues within our area during the past year but that has not stopped smaller ones cropping up. Similarly Roads and Traffic matters have taken a lot of time, mainly trying to get Bromley to make the improvements we seek. Last year we said that little progress had been made in resolving the future management of the Mansion and grounds in Beckenham Place Park. Regrettably the same has to be said for 2011. As always we live in hope and perhaps 2012 will see some progress.

Finally a sincere thank you to everyone who has supported the Society, either actively or passively over the past year. With your continued support we hope to be able to do as well in 2012 as we have done in the past.

Dates for the Diary

Thursday 1st March 2012 - Annual General Meeting 8.00pm, Bromley Court Hotel

Thursday 3rd May 2012 - Members' Meeting 8.00pm, Bromley Court Hotel

Peter Pain - Editor.

COMMUNITY MATTERS

Valley School New Pond: Over a year ago we made a commitment to fund the purchase of aquatic plants plus the provision of nesting boxes and insect refuges in and around a new pond to be made near the site of an ancient pond on the edge of the school field. Completion of the pond was delayed due to some site difficulties but planting was done in the Spring and this is now becoming well established. There are also signs that the bird boxes and insect refuges are being discovered and occupied.

Lollipop Lady: As part of their spending cuts Bromley will cease to fund the presence of the Lollipop Lady outside the school. The new head teacher approached us to enquire if we could fund a replacement. Unfortunately we could not as the cost would be several thousand pounds a year and that is well beyond our resources.

Bench Seat The Common, Beckenham Place Park

Following agreement at a Members' Meeting last year that we would fund a new seat east of the railway line and near the river, we sought permission and a quotation from Lewisham who passed the request on to their parks and gardens contractors, Messrs Glendale. Their quote was acceptable and we arranged to meet their representative to discuss the exact siting and details. The manager did not turn up at the agreed time which he himself had suggested. We managed to meet someone else and we placed our order in June for the seat to be delivered and fixed in early August. In the event it did not happen until October. Perhaps the unwanted delay was just as well as some weeks after the promised time a large willow was blown down part of which fell over the spot originally chosen for

our seat. We found another equally suitable location close by and the seat is now in position and providing a resting place for tired walkers just off the new cycle path and near the river. Glendale, the maintenance contractors for the Park, intend to leave the fallen tree as deadwood to encourage biodiversity.

The bench seat was chosen for its ability to resist most vandalism with its strong metal frame and thick planks of tough fire resistant plastic.

Warren Avenue Playing Field

Trees: Over many years there has been a progressive loss of trees around the perimeter of the Playing Field. For the last couple of years we have been trying to persuade Lewisham to replace them. The waters were muddied because the last boundary change put the whole of the field in Bromley although it continues to be maintained and used by Lewisham. That was eventually sorted out and Lewisham agreed to plant seven Lombardy Poplars although many more trees had been lost.

Unfortunately they were ordered, arrived and were planted well outside the recommended planting season during a very warm and dry spring. That was compounded by Lewisham failing to instruct Glendale to water them. Two of our members did the watering until Glendale finally took it over but the trees nearly died. There are still a lot of gaps and we started to consider whether to purchase some trees and ask Lewisham to plant and maintain them. Opinion was divided and before it was resolved Lewisham told us that they had authority to buy a further nine trees. We had a meeting with Lewisham and Glendale and agreed their type and positions. We were also assured that they would be planted between November and February and that Glendale would maintain them from the outset. The trees will range from Hornbeam, Alder and Lime to Field Maple.

Footpath

Following the resurfacing and partial rerouting of the Green Chain Walk between Calmont Road and Ravensmead Road, Lewisham closed off two entrances to the Playing Fields from the new path. That did not please many locals and the entrances were soon open again - only to be reblocked by Lewisham. That went on for some time until Lewisham gave up the fight. However the football club which uses the field had other ideas and closed them off again. That closure only lasted for a couple of weeks. Lewisham have now proposed to fit a proper gate with a notice asking people not to walk on the pitches. We have agreed and Lewisham are now awaiting approval for the expenditure.

Pavement Parking

May we take this opportunity to remind residents that they should not park with two wheels on the pavement unless it is specifically permitted. Traffic wardens have the power to issue penalty notices to offending vehicles. Wardens no longer visit residential roads on foot but often tour round in cars.

Untidy Pavements

The Council no longer has a "Contracts Supervision Manager" whose role it was to make sure that pavements were swept properly. It is now up to residents to

report problems. If you believe your road is not being cleaned properly then telephone the Council on 8313 4557 - the Customer Service Centre or E-mail louise.hudson@bromley.gov.uk

101 for Police

An additional number (101) to contact the police has been introduced. This new number is part of a national programme to ease the pressure on 999 calls. It is intended to be used for problems that do not require an urgent response - ie, to report a crime which has already happened, seek crime prevention advice or make police aware of local police matters. 999 should continue to be used if an urgent response is required - such as a crime in progress or public disorder.

Burglaries

There has been a recent increase in burglaries and we have had several in our area in the last few months. Householders should always make sure that all doors and windows are securely locked and bolted. Burglars are opportunists.

In an earlier Newsletter we listed several basic precautions which are worth repeating.

Home Security

- Mark valuable property with your post code and house number either by etching or by using an ultra-violet pen.
- Do not leave house keys, ID documents or valuables near doors, the letterbox or windows where they can be seen.
- Close and lock all doors and windows even if you are going out for only a few minutes.
- Have locks fitted on all opening windows
- Leave some lights on if it will be dark when you return.
- Always keep sheds and outbuildings locked when not in use, even if you are at home.
- Cancel milk or other deliveries if you will be away for even a few days.
- Have a visible burglar alarm installed. The installer should be affiliated to either the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) or the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB).
- Final locks on all exterior doors should be at least a 5 lever mortice lock.
- Fit movement sensitive security lighting to the perimeter of the property.
- If you have a neighbour that you can trust let them know when you will be away and how you can be contacted

Waste and Recycling Bins

For some time now we have been corresponding with Bromley about the bin men not always replacing the bins where they found them - ie, on the edge of the property boundary. Since we started complaining there has been an improvement but not universally. We are keeping up the pressure.

Householders should not leave their bins on the pavement but just on their own

property and visible from the road. If, for any reason it is not possible to do this, the position of the bins should be agreed with Bromley who will decide whether they should go on the Special Requirements List and if agreed they will inform the contractor. The number to contact is 8313 4557 - Bromley's Customer Service Centre. It is also undesirable to use plastic sacks containing anything which smells of food as invariably a fox will rip it open in search of a free meal and scatter the contents. The bin men would not clear this up.

Age UK

Since the amalgamation of Help the Aged and Age Concern to form Age UK, they have not only effectively combined but also enlarged the services that they offer for the over sixties. It is worth visiting their local website on ageuk.org.uk/bromley/ to see whether what they offer could be of benefit to yourself or to someone you know.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

Red Line Oaklands Road / London Road junction

Because of the problems when entering or leaving Oaklands Road we started to look for ways to find a solution. It became obvious that cars parked in Oaklands Road were a major contributor. We then noticed that one of the red lines was much shorter than the other. Two e-mails to Transport for London (TfL) prompted a response. After consulting the GLA Side Road Designation Order, TfL found that the shorter red line should have been about 6 metres longer. Within a month TfL's contractors had extended it. Although not perfect, exiting and entering Oaklands Road is now markedly easier.

Brackenhill Lane

Following a request from a member we have asked that a yellow line be extended by a car's length. The reason was that parking on both sides made it difficult, if not impossible, for a refuse lorry or a fire engine to get through. Bromley Highways visited the site at our request. To our pleasant surprise, in view of the next item, it was done in a couple of months.

Yellow Line Oaklands / Grasmere Road Junction

For several years various officers have tried to get the yellow line in Oaklands Road extended by a car's length in order to improve the line of sight when exiting right from Grasmere Road. Finally, after disabusing Bromley that we were talking about the yellow line in front of the Care Home and getting support from Councillor MacMull, the message got through and it was agreed to extend the line by 10 metres. After several months and several reminders something happened - but not what was expected. Instead of extending the single line they just turned it into a double line. We pointed this out to Bromley and the contractor returned and extended the double line but only by one metre because a car was in the way. Again e-mails flew and Bromley promised to sort it out. Once again the contractor returned and extended the line further but still not to the 10 metres intended. We did more pointing out and the line grew by yet another small increment but still

had not reached the 10 meter mark. This time it was pointed out to us that if the line was made any longer it would mean that only one car could park outside the corner property. After further consultation with the occupants of the corner property we decided not to press for the full 10 metres as we had already achieved our initial request of one car's length. As part of our compromise we asked that the line be completed by a foot up to the mark on the pavement. This has yet to be done - we only hope that we do not have to return to this issue yet again!

Ravensbourne Avenue / Station Road / Beckenham Lane Junction

Another long saga. For many years there have been delays when exiting right from Ravensbourne Avenue into Beckenham Lane due to the shortness of the green phase and the high number of vehicles which jump the red light when turning left out of station Road. Initially Bromley and TfL who control the traffic signals were reluctant to do anything. In the main this was because these lights control 5 roads which have 8 lanes between them plus 3 sets of light controlled pedestrian crossings. They all have to operate in a strict sequence with the A22 (Beckenham Lane and Bromley Road) getting the priority.

Initially we tried to stop, or reduce, the red light jumping from Station Road by asking for an enforcement camera to be set up. That was not agreed as there are strict guidelines which, among other things, require a number of serious injuries to have been suffered before this can be considered. Thankfully this condition has not yet been met. Nor would a dummy camera be of any value as traffic light cameras have to be grey and have no warning signs like speed cameras and so would not be noticed by motorists. Our attempt to involve the police was fruitless as they do not have the manpower. Even if they had sufficient officers they pointed out that there would be no suitable space to pull over a car without causing a hold up. We also suggested the possibility of setting back the stop line in Station Road but that was also vetoed as it would not help the situation. A green filter arrow was also considered and rejected by TfL as elsewhere these had caused more accidents.

In parallel with the above we lobbied to have two lanes in Ravensbourne Avenue, one for turning right and the other for straight ahead or for turning left. At first this idea was rejected due to the space said to be needed for a cycle lane. We had almost convinced Bromley that the cycle lane was not necessary when they had Ravensbourne Avenue resurfaced. The contractor did not reinstate the little used cycle track but they managed to move the central white line enough to make 2 lanes impossible. Eventually 2 lanes were agreed with the stop line of the right lane set back to give lorries a reasonable turning circle. That has been in situ for some months now and seems to show an improvement. TfL also installed a more sensitive traffic sensor for vehicles in Ravensbourne Avenue.

We still persisted for a solution on the traffic light sequencing and finally a meeting between us, Bromley and TfL was set up to observe exactly what

happened at this complex junction. As most of the participants were wearing high visibility jackets the observations had to be discreet. TfL did accept that improvements could be made to the light sequences and they were made before Christmas. They will be evaluated in a month or two to see if the expected improvements materialise.

It was also noted that many Ravensbourne Avenue drivers at the head of the queue to turn right did not venture very far into Beckenham Lane. This meant that, at best only two cars made the right turn before the lights went to red. Bromley are looking at what road markings can be made to encourage drivers to get nearer to Station Road before turning right.

It seems that we are nearing the end of the road on this issue. If it becomes too easy to turn right from Ravensbourne Avenue word would soon spread and we could find more drivers taking that option leading to an increase in rat-run traffic in our area. That would not be a good outcome!

PLANNING

113 Foxgrove Road

This block of flats was the subject of six planning applications and four appeals. We objected to each one as the development is in a Conservation Area. The last application was for an alteration to the roof profile to accommodate a lift shaft. We objected to that also as each application had either made the footprint larger or changed the external configuration. Bromley also recommended refusal. The application was withdrawn just before it was to go before the committee. Since then the block has been completed. This has been an extreme case of incremental changes once the basic application was approved.

Billingford, Elstree Hill

This is another long running case lasting nearly two years. It all started with an unauthorised flank extension overlooking a neighbouring property. Two retrospective applications were made and both were refused. Finally the extension was demolished but only after an enforcement notice had been served by Bromley. Whilst that was going on Bromley noticed that the front and flank boundary walls were higher than permitted. After four applications, most of which were so badly drawn that they could not be interpreted and after an equal number of enforcement notices there was movement. First the flank wall was reduced and then progressively the front wall. Finally, last June, the front wall was reduced to an acceptable height.

Travelodge, London Road / Blythe Road

An earlier application for a three storey block of flats in place of the Blythe Road Hotel and a four storey block in place of the snooker hall was approved. Travelodge then submitted an application for a 5/6 storey budget hotel with 96 bedrooms and 34 parking places. We objected on grounds of overdevelopment and insufficient parking. Bromley refused the proposal on similar grounds. Travelodge then resubmitted for a 4/5 storey hotel with 92 bedrooms and 33 parking spaces. To our mind this was still too large but the application was

approved. There was then a submission for signage. This was for two internally illuminated signs of 18m² and 14m² respectively. They were refused by Bromley. The second application for two smaller signs each of 10m² were more acceptable; we did not object and Bromley approved. Construction is now at third floor level.

14, Highland Road

This property was purchased about four years ago for £1 million and subsequently obtained planning permission for a very substantial rear extension. Before work began the financial crisis hit and as a consequence the bank foreclosed on the mortgage and receivers were appointed. We believe that the property has just been sold again with the new owners boarding up the windows to protect it. There may be some activity on the site shortly.

10 Madeira Avenue

The first application for an extension to this property was refused. A second application for a modified extension has recently been approved. As the property is set well back from the road and well screened it will not affect the street scene.

Ravensbourne Station

After several years of pressing for something to be done, Network Rail have finally fitted cowls to the overhead lights on the pedestrian access ramp which had been causing light pollution to adjacent houses. They have also put a large black screen next to the ramp pending 30 laurels maturing enough to screen the ramp from the houses. However many have died. The Council are pressing for the dead laurels to be replaced as they were required under the conditions for approval of the ramp.

We are grateful to Councillor Colin Smith for his actions in this matter. He has now formally asked the Chief Planning Officer to initiate enforcement procedures against Network Rail.

Evening Hill, Foxgrove Road

An application for a 10 metre mobile phone mast and associated equipment cabinets has been refused.

Cycle path Summerhouse field/Crab Hill

At present the cycle path in Beckenham Place Park ends at Ravensbourne Avenue. An application has been made to extend it along the unmade section of this road up to its junction with Crab Hill. South East London Transport, part of TfL will be funding it. Work has just started on site.

7, Calmont Road

Having felled an oak tree that was thought to be protected but turned out not to be, the owner applied to build a two bedroom bungalow in his back garden. We objected on grounds that it was backland development. The application was refused.

Other planning issues

In addition there were five other planning applications in our area for extensions to various residential properties. After examining the plans we raised no objections in these cases.

There were also several applications for felling trees in Downs Hill/Crab Hill Conservation Area. All of them were supported by structural engineers' reports claiming that the roots were causing damage to property. In these cases it is almost impossible to challenge an expert's opinion so we did not object.

Important Applications out of our area

Bromley South Central This is the name for the redevelopment of the Westmoreland Road car park. It is very large, at one point it will be about 24 stories high tapering down to about 10. It will comprise a 130 bed hotel, 9 restaurants, a multiplex cinema and 200 flats. It will dominate the properties in Newbury and Ravensbourne Roads to a degree that the occupants may find unacceptable. The integral car park which is to be mainly below ground, will have 400 spaces; 100 are reserved for the flats and the remaining 300 will serve the 9 screen cinema, 9 restaurants plus the existing commuter and shopping usage. It looks tight. Being taller than the nearby RBS building it could set a precedent for tall buildings in Bromley. There is no doubt that when completed it would rejuvenate a part of central Bromley that is at present somewhat rundown and little used outside business hours.. There are a great many benefits and as a first step in the Town Centre Action Plan it is important. However there are also disbenefits particularly for near neighbours; we intend to point these out and try to seek amelioration. We will also point out the apparent inadequacy of the car parking provision.

Queens Gardens An application has been made by Aviva Life and Pensions UK Ltd to build a 1053 square metre restaurant complex partially on the terrace north of the Pavilion and partly on the "Italian Garden" section of the Queens Garden. The Company, which owns the Glades, feels that this would be an important addition and would increase footfall. The Glades is said to be their least profitable shopping mall. The Queens Gardens are designated Urban Open Space and is in the Town Centre Conservation Area. The proposal is also at variance to the Inspector's report on the Town Centre Action Plan. If approved by the Council it would probably have to be referred back to the Inspectorate as a variation to the previously approved document. If approval is finally achieved, Bromley intend to grant Aviva a 123 year lease with effect from November 1988 which is understood to line up with the lease they have for the Glades as a whole. We intend to object to this further loss of open space in Bromley Town Centre.

A synopsis of both of these applications can be found on our web site - rvpsbromley.org

BECKENHAM PLACE PARK

Park Maintenance and Golf Course Management

Following several public consultations to elicit the degree of use and what people expected from the Park, Land use Consultants were commissioned to report on and to recommend future options. That report formed the basis for the renewal of the contract for the maintenance and management of the Park (except the Mansion).

The tendering process began towards the end of 2010. Following the initial advertisement inviting expressions of interest there were 13 responses. These were reduced to 7 after the pre-qualification questionnaire and the submission of outline proposals. That was followed by a series of competitive dialogues resulting in a short list of 5 who were invited to submit formal tenders. In the event, only one made a submission. This may have been because part of the contract involved taking over the Stable Block and Homesteads, their refurbishment, and upgrading and extending them to become a focal point for all users of the Park. This would require a substantial investment.

The single tenderer was not acceptable as they wanted more money than Lewisham was prepared to pay. Lewisham then set about negotiating a short term (3 year) extension to Glendale's existing contract for the rest of Lewisham's parks and gardens. Those negotiations foundered and currently Glendale only maintain Summerhouse Field, the Common and the Children's Play area - all east of the railway.

Negotiations are continuing with Glendale Golf to maintain and manage the course and pro' shop. Meantime Lewisham's labour force are maintaining the course and Glendale's professional is managing it on behalf of Lewisham.

Matters were made worse in the summer when a fire broke out in the Stable Block and one of the Homesteads - gutting them. Arson was suspected but not proven. The buildings were insured but the insurers will only pay to reinstate them to their previous dilapidated state which is not what Lewisham had in mind. High level discussions are taking place with English Heritage to try to salvage the situation.

For the moment it looks as though Lewisham's dream of the Stable Block and Homesteads becoming a focal point will have to be put on hold.

The Mansion

Running in parallel with the tendering for the Park, Lewisham started a similar process for the Mansion. This time the invitations to express interest were based on reports from two consultants, one reporting on the fabric, the other on the options for future use. There were 25 replies this time, but, after the pre-qualification questionnaire and the outline proposals only two remained.

Both went through the competitive dialogue stage, both had to be called back for further clarification. Lewisham were still not happy and asked the two to get together and produce a joint tender. That did not happen because one of the tenderers was a “not for profit” community trust and, the other was a commercial company - primarily in it for profit. Both were then asked to resubmit their tenders but this time they were to specifically address their weaknesses as identified by Lewisham. The resubmissions were deposited in the autumn and the latest information we have is that they have been presented to the Mayor and Cabinet and a decision is expected in a month or so.

Meanwhile Lewisham have paid for some fairly urgent repairs to the roof, guttering and the portico. Following thefts of lead from the roof they have also installed external security cameras linked to the internal camera recording system.

The Squirrel Statue

This statue, near the mansion has been breaking up. Lewisham Arts Council donated £750 towards its restoration. That has now been completed. Originally, in the early 1970's, it was created by Goldsmith's College.

Sensory Garden

The Friends of the Park have applied for, and have been granted, funding for the creation of a sensory garden. It will be in part of the rose garden using raised planters, a water feature and sensory planting. To meet the grant conditions the first job was to bring the ramp for the disabled up to current standards. That was held up because of a fractured water pipe and a dispute over the responsibility for its repair. Work has now resumed.

JUST IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW

Old Accountants never die - they just lose their balance.

Old Bankers never die - they just lose interest

Old Lawyers never die - they just lose their appeal.

Old Doctors never die - they just lose patience.

Old Limbo Dancers never die - they just go under

Old typists of Newsletters never die - they will always have fonger tribble