



May 1983

1. Forthcoming Events

- Friday 27 May - 'Meet Your Candidates' for the General Election at Northchurch Social Centre at 8pm
Candidates for the three main political parties will be present.
- Friday 10 June Take 'Summer Wine' with us at the Court House
6.45 - 8.30pm
- Sunday 26 June Visit to Ashlyns Hall
Meet at 3pm at the Hall
- Tuesday 12 July Tour of Hockeridge Woods
Meet at main entrance on Chesham Road (by the cottages)
7.30pm

The last three events are for members only, but new members may join on each occasion. The 1983/4 programme is nearly completed and will be available soon.

2. Nearly 60

This Newsletter is sent to you at a time of cautious optimism about local and national events. At the same time there is an air of doubt as to how events will bring about changes for the better. What's new you say? Not much really, because we have been learning to live with this sort of thing for several decades now. It does mean that we all have to work harder at learning and understanding what is going on - otherwise we are unable to influence anything locally or nationally. The BCA was created nearly 60 years ago to try to 'stimulate the interests of the inhabitants in local public affairs and to provide the sentiment of local 'patriotism' - among other aims. The Association has an excellent record, without being self satisfied and in the 1980's more than ever has an invaluable role, operating on an apolitical basis for the good of the town as a whole, in an environment where so many decisions appear to be controlled on a political basis. It is perhaps an unfashionable role and a hard one, but one which paradoxically is needed more than ever before. To quote Solzhenitsyn somewhat pretentiously "Hastiness and superficiality are the psychic diseases of this century". In some respects you may wish local authorities to have more not less hastiness but in their decision making we need thoroughness and consideration not superficiality; which takes us to:-

3. Town Centre Planning Study

This document is referred to as a Consultative Report and gives some thoughts on the development of the area between St. Johns Well Lane and Lower Kings Road. Some 4 years ago the BCA made approaches to both Town and District Councillors about taking a positive attitude to this area bordering the Canal and the Bulbourne. Eventually, our approaches have

borne fruit, particularly with the help of Councillor Bill Thomas. It is ironic and sad that the Report was announced the week of his death. We are hopeful that the Consultative Document will result in some positive action to make this largely dilapidated area available to the benefit of the Town in an imaginative but realistic way. This as much as anything would be a splendid memorial to the work of Councillor Thomas and colleagues who are involved in such local, affairs.

Your Committee has spent many hours considering the Report and have had informal discussions with Town Councillors in order to achieve, so far as possible, common views and priorities. The Town Council has sent its own comments to the Dacorum District Council. Our views have also been sent as follows:-

1. General Comments

- i) The proposed distribution of land uses does not respond sufficiently to the existing features on the site. The Phase 1 commercial area is partially located in an attractive area of the site which contains a number of mature trees and would be better allocated for more open uses such as a public area or carefully designed car parking.
- ii) The location of the existing car parking areas and other features such as the Civic Amenity tip should not inhibit consideration of the land use potential of the different parts of this site. Flexibility of approach is needed to secure the quality and variety of development desired.

2. The Objectives

The Association fully endorses the objectives of the Plan and cannot stress enough the importance it attaches to the need for imaginative planning, architecture, landscaping and building to a high standard.

We would like to suggest that specific attention be drawn to the need for community facilities within the new development. An additional objective should perhaps be added ie:-

Objective 4: The Plan should create opportunities for the provision of community facilities at present lacking in the Town.

3. Environmental Appraisal

- i) We consider it essential that the Household waste site be located outside the plan area as soon as practicable, since it is critical to the overall development.
- ii) Any proposals for the improvement of the access to Lower Kings Road must ensure the retention of the fine Catalpa tree. The problem here is the volume of traffic in Lower Kings Road which is now often at a standstill because of tailbacks from the traffic lights. The St. Johns Well Lane access in particular requires improvement now in view of traffic volumes.

5. Development Appraisal

The physiotherapy unit should be re-located but retained in the area as part of the new community facilities to be provided in the development.

The small triangular area of land between Broadwater lock and the photographic shop adjacent to Lower Kings Road designed for residential development should be retained as an open landscaped area, in order to preserve the attractive view westwards along the canal. Residential development on the other part of the land by the river should be low density, well-landscaped and avoid a 'block' appearance particularly flat

roofs. The architecture should be in keeping with the cottages already sited there.

The access at 228 High Street should be secured for public use to provide an essential pedestrian link with the centre of the Town.

5. Potential for Development

1 Offices - The Association has considerable reservations about the amount of office development proposed in terms of scale of building and associated car parking requirements. An 'office block' style of building with all its undesirable visual connotations⁵ should be avoided at all costs. The buildings could, however, be more than 2 storeys high in part. Consideration should be given to meeting the requirements of small professional offices. The potential for a hotel development as an alternative commercial use could be considered.

2 Retail - The showroom-type facility would be incompatible with the objectives of the Plan.

3 Community Facilities - A site for a new Youth Club building is urgently required in the centre of the town. A suitable location might be in the Canal Fields rather than within the current proposals. Youth facility would probably be incompatible with a facility used for example by the elderly. That is not to say a Youth Club need necessarily be outside the plan area.

Toilets in the community facility might be arranged so that they could be open for public use.

Access and Servicing - The arrangement of car parking and servicing of the commercial development should maximise the shared use of access roads and parking areas in order, with the aid of generous landscaping, to reduce the environmental impact of the vehicular areas.

6. A Possible Development Option

i) The proposed location of the community facilities 'close to the High Street frontage' should be regarded as one of a number of options at this stage. Access to the High Street at this point is severely restricted.

ii) For convenience of vehicular circulation there should be a circuitous route between the St. Johns Well and Lower Kings Road car parks on a trial basis, subject to review if it becomes a short cut between the A41 and Lower Kings Road. There seems to be no reason why this should prejudice the landscaped pedestrian route between the High Street and the Canal Fields bridge. This access would avoid traffic coming from the Northchurch direction having to come through the town, down Lower Kings Road into the office area. The return journey back to Northchurch would cause even greater congestion in Lower Kings Road.

7. Implementation

Whilst it is recognised that the development will take place over a period of time, a positive landscaping strategy, including temporary landscaping proposals, should be implemented at the outset to avoid the area assuming an unfinished appearance for a long period.

Temporary car parking facilities should, be made available, immediately on part of the derelict land in the Council's ownership.

Priority should be given to the re-location of the Household waste site outside the study area.

4. No Change

This is the brief summary at the end of each Ward's results as printed in the local paper. It indicates 'no change' to the political party winning the ward and / or control of the Council. In fact there were some changes in certain wards by the introduction of a new councillor and a few changes in the party winning the seat. Overall, the Dacorum Council remains controlled by the Conservatives with a slightly increased majority. The Councillors elected to serve on Berkhamsted Town Council are:-

J.A. Bandy	16 Swing Gate Lane, Berkhamsted	Tel. 71227
Mrs J.J. Boulter	11 Berkley Court, Berkhamsted	5592
W.E.A. Brooks	12 Bell Lanes Northchurch	74287
*K.J. Coleman	Kenslea House, Frithsden Copse, Potten End	6344
Mrs D.N.J. Cox	14 Queens Road, Berkhamsted	6688
Mrs J.V. Crawley	1 Whitewood Road, Berkhamsted	4122
Mrs J.A. Dunbavand	Little Oaks, Darrs Lane, Northchurch	75250
*B.A. Everall	4 Castle Hill Court, Castle Hill, Berkhamsted	73878
P.J. Ginger	2 School Gdns., Water End Rd., Potten End	73916
*G.G. Jones	4 Bulbourne Close, Berkhamsted	3080
*Mrs W.E. Lees	13 Hall Park Hill, Berkhamsted	3010
A.W. Medcalf	Cedar Heights, Browns Spring, Potten End	2005
Mrs H. Host	Norcott Court, Dudswell, Berkhamsted	6123
A.W. Webster	Woodlands, 10 Alderley Court, Berkhamsted	3671

* also serve on the Dacorum District Council together with:

J. Carter	1 Chalet Close, Shootersway Lane, Berkhamsted	6134
V.D. Milrath	7 Shootersway Park, Berkhamsted	73647
R.W. Peake	Lismere House, Bank Mill Lane, Berkhamsted	4328

There was certainly no change in attitudes at the last meeting of the 'old' Town Council, as Dacorum got slated again, this time on the Bulbourne landscaping, a project that was discussed nine months ago! There appears to be communication only via newspaper headlines. Its not so long ago that letters were exchanged between Town and Dacorum Councils, based purely on impressions, gained by reports in the Gazette, of a Town Council meeting. Unfortunately, these outbursts are not isolated incidents and of course the Gazette is not going to pass up a good strong headline. The communication between councils at Officer or Councillor level is not satisfactory and will not be unless much more effort is applied to improve things. The system is wrong because there is apparently no regular personal contact. The Town Councillors normal response is to 'write a letter to Dacorum' which in isolation is inadequate. Regular person to person discussions should be held so that better understanding occurs of options, problems and decisions. The BCA have never had problems in having discussions with Dacorum Officers or Councillors when they have been asked for in order to discuss specific matters. We may not always get the answer we want - but at least some sensible dialogue has occurred and points of view exchanged. There has been one meeting on the Leisure Services Plan between DDC and the Town Council which was agreed as worthwhile. Why does it not happen more often? When will our Dacorum Councillors meet

regularly with Town Councillors to discuss Dacorum resources for Berkhamsted? Without solid improvement in communication and relationships, Berkhamsted will not get better facilities. It is not what you do but how you do it! Whilst on this theme, some initiative from Dacorum would not go amiss. Townsfolk who phone Dacorum often get the repost "Berkhamsted folk grumbling again!". Why not, a forum for regular meetings with Councillors and quarterly informative reports (in the Review?) from our Councillors. The BCA seeks to inform members of Council affairs by the members Newsletter and by articles in the Review. The Town and Dacorum Councillors have their part to play in improving dialogue and understanding. That is assuming they want it, or is it really 'no change'.

5. Adventure Playground

The Canal Fields and Bulbourne landscaping is a classic example of good objectives spoiled at the implementation stage. The children's play area is excellent in concept and in equipment. It is spoiled by being sited in mud and puddles. Some of the area is provided with flooring to minimise accidents. The remainder is a mud bath. Surely this was not part of the plan and is not being left without remedy? No one appears to know at Berkhamsted and the Leisure Services Office interpret questions as 'grumbling'. That's what comes from poor relationships.

The information on landscaping is similarly plagued. The map of the area dated September 1982, appeared at a Town Council meeting in April 1983. Given a little more effort on communication, full information on the clearing and planting could have been made available. It could be obtained by Town Councillors; it could be presented at an early stage by Dacorum. Instead, we have outbursts and slanging matches.

Instead of words, Berkhamsted needs more constructive action. So, we suggest the 'new' Town Council and Dacorum Councillors make this a priority. Previous Chairmen of the DDC and Town Mayors have made reference to improved relations and some progress breaks out from time to time. We have a long way to go before words are matched by deeds at both ends of the A41.

6. Other Town Topics

Much effort is expended on discussions and fact finding by the BCA concerning various aspects of the Town environment. This is largely done by members of the Town amenities sub-committee who have recently been involved with:-

a) Tree Preservation Orders

The Catalpa tree by the entrance to the car park in Lower Kings Road is covered by a TPO. All trees in the Conservation Area of the Town are said to be automatically covered by a TPO. There are 120 TPO's in Dacorum and approximately 6 new ones per annum are created. To be eligible the trees must be in good health and accessible. There are two types of fine for ignoring a TPO ie. for wilfully ignoring - max. £1000, or for non-wilful acts a lesser fine. We have the TPO details for Berkhamsted. The Tree Officer of Dacorum District Council has advised that residents of Potten End and Tring have, under her guidance, prepared a tree survey of their area. Reports have been given on trees covered by existing TPO's, street trees, the need for new planting; often with photographs and giving details of species, height, age, spread (of a tree, that is!). Please help us by sending such information concerning prominent trees in you area to our Secretary.

b) Tree Planting

We are exploring the possibility of planting trees in additional Town sites eg. the island site at the western end of Bridgewater Road /Billet Lane junction and at Chiltern Park.

c) Conservation

We have contacted the local Branch Secretary of the British Trust for Conservation to ensure he knows of the BCA's interest particularly on Conservation matters.

d) Town Conservation Area

Details of the existing Conservation Area are being reviewed including its geographical extent to see if extension is appropriate. Certain buildings are 'listed' and others are being reviewed to see if special protection can be given. We have made such requests for the houses in Manor Street which were to be pulled down and now have been agreed as worth preserving and refurbishing. We have contacted Fullers the Brewers on their plans for the Boat public house in Ravens Lane. They are planning to refurbish it as soon as possible to its original appearance. As a canal side building it has character which may disappear if action is not taken soon. Similar enquiries have been made concerning the old 'Jersey Shop' building in the High Street. It is almost unbelievable that no powers exist to prevent the tatty state of such a prominent site next to the Civic Centre. Please inform the BCA Chairman or Secretary if you see or hear of a threat to any buildings which you believe would be a loss to the Town.

Chairman - Guy Moores - 44 Gaveston Drive, Berkhamsted.

Secretary - Mrs Sheila Walton - 11 Murray Road, Berkhamsted.