



**Berkhamsted
Citizens
Association**

NEWSLETTER

January 1984

1. It's our 60th Birthday!

Happy New Year! How are the resolutions progressing? No doubt many of us are reflecting on the cost of Christmas both on our pockets and on our weight! We have no particular solution to the former except determination. The latter case can be helped by generous doses of the Berkhamsted countryside - on foot. Those of us who have struggled (that is the correct word for several) down to the station and along the ridge behind Bridgewater School, braved the wind along the hedgerows by Northchurch Farm and along to Coldharbour, were rewarded by 12.30pm by a feeling of satisfaction and possibly a clearer head. There are many walks, short or long as you wish, which reward by giving many different perspectives of Berkhamsted and Northchurch, particularly along the north side ridge.

Stocks of the BCA footpath map are regrettably non-existent and those of you who have a clear copy should treasure it. We have looked into the possibility of a re-print but, the basic documents / prints have disappeared. In any case, so many corrections needed to be done, it would have been a massive job. The Ordnance Survey and the Chiltern Society have also produced some good maps meanwhile. The money in the Map Fund is therefore being directed to the production of a Book of Local Walks. After some delay we are now making positive progress and possibly the book will be published in our 60th year. We are also producing a pamphlet on the history of the Association over the last 30 years. There is in existence (a few copies) the history of the Association from 1924-49. It would be possible to re-produce /photocopy this, at a small charge and so anyone interested should indicate so to our Secretary. Requests will be actioned not one by one but in a job lot by April.

The first meeting of the 'Committee' was held in April 1924 and the first General Meeting of members was held in the following June. The Constitution set by the 'foundling fathers' has withstood the test of time with minor modifications and copies of it are being printed. It is felt that all members should have a copy and it will be distributed, with the Chairman's Report in February. The latter will contain a review of the past year, so no point in doing it here in any detail. However 1983 has seen some achievements.

 * 1984 Subscriptions are now due (£1.50 a family, £1.00 individual) *
 * *
 * Please give them to your distributor, or send them to the membership*
 * *
 * secretary Mrs Hazel Ward, The Red Lodge, Graemesdyke Road. *

2. Quick Look Back

- a) The open air swimming pool had a very successful time. Even though some swimmers may not be consistently warm, it did show the value of retaining this local amenity. We will continue to encourage Dacorum to advertise and 'market' the pool more energetically. The refreshment facilities could be improved and possibly a barbecue site provided. The car park needs to be resurfaced but the bridge over the canal and Bulbourne should be built by the spring and will allow use of St. Johns Well Lane car park.
- b) The Leisure Services Strategy has not been implemented completely even at Phase 1. We expect to see a Bowling Green to be started in Canal Fields during 1984. The planting of trees and provision of play equipment for children (and adults?) has been a step forward. The landscaping of the canal and Bulbourne area is a matter we are pressing Dacorum to complete more imaginatively although it is not envisaged that the natural look, will be destroyed by it being over planned and manicured.
- c) How strange it feels to ride along a well surfaced High Street after so many years of pot holes. The final phase from Cross Oak Road to Billet Lane is now being worked on. The Inspector holding the Public Inquiry last summer on the route of the Berkhamsted - Apsley - King Langley bypass is expected to issue his report soon. There can be no doubt as to such a roads contribution to improving an environment and there are high hopes of it actually being built starting perhaps in 1986. Herts, Dacorum and the Town Councils are all on record as to its urgent requirement and we will be pressing them to reinforce these arguments. If our Council does not shout for funds to be allocated other Town Councils no doubt will and we have been on the reserve list for too long.
- d) The Town Hall (phase 1) and the Civic Centre (refurbishment) have been officially completed and are to be applauded as contributing additional excellent facilities. In the Town Hall, the garden and restaurant should be open this spring and the Trustees are planning the completion of phase 2; ie. the Main Hall and the front upstairs rooms. They still need financial support as the rents from the Arcade are paying off loans taken out to finance the first phase.

3. Quick Look Forward

So 1983 has seen some significant achievements, what's in store? The main strategic matters are:-

1. Berkhamsted Town Centre Study - its implementation
2. Berkhamsted Leisure Services Strategy - further action
3. Tunnel Fields - Development Brief - This concerns the remaining building on Chiltern Park Estate.

Town Centre Study

The BCA drew attention in 1981 to the need to have a plan for the area between Lower Kings Road and St. John's Well Lane, ie. the area between the High Street and the canal. There was an urgent need to improve car parking, remove the tip area and improve town facilities by

translating the 'jungle' into a useful site which is owned partially by Dacorum and partially privately. There are therefore many problems to overcome. The first step is however a strategic plan against which to make decisions. The plan is now available to the public at the Civic Centre, Berkhamsted. It is somewhat disappointing after three years effort to have only a general blue print (a planning brief) with no positive recommendations or time-scales but, no doubt, the Town Council and Dacorum Council will need to decide their views on these points. We do hope that there will be some action during 1984.

The objectives given were:-

1. 'To provide an overall framework for guiding improvement and development initiatives.
The purpose of the Brief is not to specify a detailed scheme, but rather to indicate a comprehensive plan for the area into which proposals should fit.
2. To create opportunities for environmental improvement in the area recognising the importance of its location adjacent to the Grand Union Canal and within the Berkhamsted Conservation Area.
The Brief pays particular attention to removing land use conflicts, promoting landscaping proposals and encouraging sympathetic layout and design.
3. To support the community needs of the Town and the commercial viability of the Town centre.
The Brief reflects various demands for community and commercial uses and the consequent needs to make adequate provision for car parking, servicing and access arrangements in support of justified development requirements.'

The main points emerging are:-

1. 20,000 sq. ft. of office space, but with a small amount of retail development.
2. No community facilities required except for Youth.
3. Possible building of an hotel, but that may have doubtful viability due to constraints of site and other uses.
4. Rejection of decking the area to provide second level for car parking.
5. Improvement of access at St. John's Well Lane junction.
6. Small scale residential development with high standard of design between Lower Kings Road and the canal.
7. Additional car parking (35 spaces in Phase 1) and long term linkage of 2 car parks whilst preventing through traffic.
8. Landscaped pedestrian route linking Canal Fields and the existing walk way through to the High Street.
9. 'Long Term' removal of Household Waste Site.

The plan is divided into three phases. Provision has been made in the Council's capital budget for extension of lower Kings Road car park and this is likely to be constructed during the 1983/4 financial year.

Landscaping of land south of the canal and provision of a footbridge as part of the Canal Fields improvement are likely to be completed in 1984.

Tunnel Fields (Chiltern Park Estate) – Development Brief

This has been drawn up to guide the next stages of development in order to protect the skyline and improve landscaping. Much concern has been expressed at the high density of housing in the earlier phases which will preclude the growth of trees between dwellings which followed the Bridgewater Road development. A view from Shrublands Road or Durrants Lane shows the stark contrast of the sea of uninterrupted rooftops marking the earlier phases at Chiltern Park. In an attempt to minimise the visual impact of development and in order to create a more interesting residential environment, the District Council wishes to see the introduction of a range of building densities. This is to be applauded, and is what the BGA and Town Council, as well as Northchurch Parish Council have been pressing for.

At last the District Council is insisting on fully detailed landscaping schemes to be submitted with every detailed planning application. It also requires the retention of the woodland strip along the northern boundary of the site, which is critical to the retention of a wooded skyline. Extensive tree and shrub planting is required throughout the site by (a) woodland afforestation in the north west corner, (b) screen planting, (c) amenity planting alongside footpaths and residential roads. Developers often transfer much responsibility to house purchasers but the District Council seems at last to have got much tougher and requires that this shall not happen. Landscaping schemes within plot boundaries 'shall be carried out to the satisfaction of the local planning authority prior to occupation of the dwellings'.

All this is a great step forward and we hope they mean it. Ironically, it is better for the ultimate home dwellers, as well as the local community to have such greater attention paid to the environment. It probably helps the houses to sell quicker as well! Even in these expensive times developers should not be allowed to ignore the long term impact of high density building particularly on such an open site critical to the aura of the whole Town.

4. Environment Award

The following have been nominated and decisions on awards will be made known at our AGM on 14 March:-

1. Chapel - conversion to offices - Park View Road.
2. Town Hall - refurbishment - Market Hall, Façade and Arcade
3. Baileys - Jewellers - conversion of shop premises - Lower Kings Road
4. Berkhamsted Photographic - New shop conversion - Lower Kings Road
5. Willow Cottage, Meadway - Extension
6. Thomas Court, Westfield Road - DDC. Protected Housing
7. Springwood Estate, Northchurch (behind The Old Grey Hare) 1st phase

5. Events

14th March	AGM	8pm	Court House
11th April	Talk by Gerald Priestland	8pm	Sessions Hall - Town Hall
23rd April	Easter Monday Ramble	10am	Meet at the station

Chairman - Guy Moores - 44 Gaveston Drive, Berkhamsted Tel. 6783
Secretary - Sheila Walton - 11 Murray Road, Berkhamsted Tel. 5986