



**Berkhamsted
Citizens
Association**

NEWSLETTER

December 1991

Editors musings

As predicted in the last Newsletter, events are now on the move which will, over the next two or three years, shape the future of Berkhamsted for many years to come. To be sure, they are at the preliminary stage at the moment, but none the less important for all that. The town (in the sense of its corporate spirit) is aware of it too.

The meeting organised by the Association at the end of October to discuss "Berkhamsted after the By-pass" surpassed all expectations. Some 200 citizens crowded into the Sessions Hall and indeed at one stage the numbers looked set to create a problem. The committee will take note of this for the future.

A more detailed account of the proceedings is included later but a summary and a few comments might be appropriate here.

The speakers covered three main areas: what the consequences might be for business and residential development, how traffic flows might be affected and Berkhamsted share of the "By-pass Demonstration project". The last is a Department of Transport project whereby a grant of £4 million is to be made available for environmental improvements to six towns affected by by-pass development. A considerable amount of interest was clearly generated judging by the many questions and comments from the floor and the general murmurs of agreement which greeted most of them. These predominantly related to traffic problems, both during and after the by-pass and shopping developments (together with the traffic problems they might themselves create).

There were few comments on the By-pass Demonstration Project other than a general welcome. Understandably at this moment there is little to comment upon. A lot more needs to be known. The official speakers stressed the point that we are only at the beginning and that they would like ideas from the public and a high degree of public participation at the various stages.

There is little doubt from the very high turnout that public interest is very high. There are, however, rather greater problems in bringing together the views of the interested public. These are often as variable as the individuals expressing them. The Association, however, will have to attempt the impossible over the next two or three years, and present as coherent a consensus as it can from the views and aspirations of its members. There will have to be further meetings along the line of the recent one. People can make their views known at these meetings or by speaking to representatives of the Association at any time.

A very good way of having your say is by writing to us. After all, not everybody is a confident public speaker but their views are equally important. In all proposals, however, please consider the town as a whole. What, if you do not like some aspect of a development, is the alternative? Let us know.

On that subject but in a different context, I asked for views in the last Newsletter on the open spaces in the centre of the town. I was pleased to receive several replies. For one there was a fair consensus of opinion. The area along canal is highly regarded and mostly the improvements suggested are fairly inexpensive - a few more seats in convenient locations, a few flower beds or shrubs, some improvement in walkways (particularly the tow-path) and sundry attention to rubbish and overhanging branches, etc. Correspondents will be pleased to note that the matter was raised with the Dacorum Council at a recent meeting, The Council is already in discussion with British Waterways on general improvements to the area and no doubt something will emerge in the fullness of time.

The Festive Season will soon be with us. I hope to see many of you at the annual Christmas Gathering, on Friday 20th December in the Old Hall, Berkhamsted School, but may I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Public Meeting – "Berkhamsted after the By-Pass"

Speakers: Brian White - Ailtchisons Estate Agents
John Hoad. - Dacorum Development Plans Manager
Alan Howling - Herts County Council Divisional, Highways Manager.

Chairman: Nicholas Nisbet.

Mr. White felt that the by-pass would not bring any dramatic change to the town. Improved access to the M25 might result in some increase in small local businesses. He saw little change in factory rents but thought that empty ones would fill. He thought there would be little change in either the retail area or much change in prices or demand for residential property. He thought there were few opportunities for development as the town is surrounded by Green Belt land. Any release of this for development would be at the top of Chesham Road. There would be scope for some improvements within the town around the High Street.

Mr. Howling gave details about the by-pass. The junction at the top of Chesham Road will not be signposted for Berkhamsted. Traffic through the High Street is expected to fall by 50%. He mentioned that Berkhamsted is one of six towns chosen to benefit from a share of £4 million. Consultant engineers are being engaged to study the effect of the by-pass and the effects of the traffic calming measures. He stressed that recent changes in the High Street were not traffic calming but attempts to make pedestrians crossing easier and thereby reduce accidents at well-known blackspots.

Mr. Hoad took a somewhat different view from Mr. White. He thought there would be some pressure for business and commuter development although these effects might not be felt until boom conditions. In particular he thought that the land between the town and the by-pass would be under pressure for development. He stressed the need for local input at an early stage and pleaded that proposals should consider the town as a whole.

There was a lively discussion predominantly on traffic problems in various areas. Some discussion on possible retail developments at Stag Lane and Kingsgate also took place, but this again was mainly concerned with traffic flows and parking problems.

The chairman summarised the mood of the meeting as that Berkhamsted should "reclaim" both its residential streets and the future of its centre. The Association will continue to meet with all bodies involved and report on progress.

A collection for the Town Hall Trust yielded £72.77p.

Planning

- (1) Tunnel Fields. The appeal has been upheld and plans will go ahead.
- (2) Town Centre Study In view of the present economic climate, no development is expected on the Kingsgate Centre for at least 18 months. The nature of the development is also under consideration with a different mix of shops from that originally envisaged. Apart from any other considerations, work could not realistically start until the by-pass is completed because of problems with constructor's traffic.
- (3) Bridgewater Road The traffic problems continue. A suggestion has been made for a 1 hour parking ban each day on both sides of the road to deter long- term parking. This would have implications for residents too, and it is suggested that Association members should canvass the views of their neighbours on this subject and contact Peter Braybrooke with their views.

Berkhamsted Youth Club

In less than two years after the situation seemed hopeless, the Berkhamsted Youth Club has collected enough money to erect and equip its own building on Lagley Meadow.

This is thanks to a Community Council Grant and the generosity of St. Peter's Church and many other organisations including the Berkhamsted Citizens' Association – individual townspeople were very generous, and a small band of young people worked hard.

Now clubs have started, in different age groups, and membership is growing, after years of fragmentation, meeting where and when they could. But running costs will still be high. The Dacorum Borough Council is, surprisingly, charging £500 a year ground rent after one year free, and this will be reviewed after three years in line with the Retail Price Index.

Insurance (probably about £800), heating, lighting, water, administration, cleaning, provision of maintenance, repairs and building replacement will probably all add up to about £5,000 a year, even after the County Council grant is taken into account.

This is the position today. How the Youth Club can bridge this gap is a knotty problem. Letting the building (which is available for hire when not needed for Youth Club activities), Club membership fees, and fund-raising will all help, but donations will still be needed to keep providing the facilities for the young people of this town that we all know are so important.

Citizens' Association Monogrammed Leisurewear

Sweatshirts	- £12.86p)	
Lambswool jumpers	- £25.79p)	All Colours
Polo shirts	- £15.21p)	All sizes

These prices include the embroidered 3" x 4" logo and VAT.

For details telephone: 865592

It's time to nominate for the Citizens' Environment Award

This year is the twelfth since the Environment Award scheme was introduced in 1981 and we again anticipate a varied selection of entries. Nominations can be made to any member of the Committee by mid January. Adjudication will take place in February when the panel will decide which, if any nomination should receive the coveted plaque.

The result will be announced at the A.G.M on 26th March.

PUBLIC MEETING “NICK OWEN: LIFE AS A TELEVISION JOURNALIST”

There was a full house of around 100 people for this interesting and informal evening. As most of us know, Nick Owen lives in Ashlyns Road and is part of the Berkhamsted scene, especially on Market days when his familiar face is to be seen about the town. He told us he was brought up in Berkhamsted and lived in Castle Street in his early childhood. He didn't have far to go to school because he was a pupil at the Boys' School where his father was a schoolmaster.

He explained how he started his career as a journalist on a local paper in Birmingham and then thanks to a telephone call from Billy Wright, ex- football England captain, he was invited to take part in a sports programme. From then he progressed rapidly to TV AM. In view of this programme's uncertainty, he feels lucky to be offered the post of commentating for ITV Snooker. He related numerous stories of well known people, and his love of sport, particularly football and cricket, have stood him in good stead. He feels privileged to have met many leading personalities, including the Princess of Wales and Princess Michael of Kent.

At the end of the meeting he asked if he might put in an appeal for a new charity that is very dear to his heart, It was for Chronic Granulomatous Disease Research Trust. CGD is a rare inherited disease associated with the defective function of certain white cells produced by the bone marrow. The collection raised £75.20. For further information about this charity, where donations can also be made, please contact the CGO Support Group c/o of Rene & Paul Numan, Seafields, Shootersway Lane (Tel: 863116)

Town Hall Trust

At a recent meeting with members of Dacorum Borough Council financial support was again sought to complete the work. The sums quoted were of the order of £15,000. The Council was adamantly opposed to this, arguing that they had already provided money for refurbishing the Civic Centre and the completion of the new Sports Centre in Berkhamsted. Despite strong pleading from the Association's chairman that the Trust, even in an adverse economic climate, had made great strides in the restoration, Dacorum Council was completely unmoved. There was little more to be done. Even Mrs. Dunbavand who represents a Berkhamsted ward, was opposed to any support. It appears we have no friends in court and there the matter rests at the moment.

Your Subscription

Less than one percent of you have so far forgotten to pay this year's subscription (I suspect that this is primarily because the reminders went out before last Christmas). There are now 567 household members (an increase of 23 households on last year). We have, therefore, decided to send out the 1992 renewal notices with this newsletter to those concerned. Only 35% of households are now paying single-year subscriptions. This means that they will have to pay the revised subscriptions (£1.50 for a single member, £2.00 for a family). So why not hedge now against inflation and avoid a further increase by taking out a subscription for five years at £7.50 or £10.00 respectively?

We now have almost a thousand individual members. So well done in almost reaching our target for this year. If your friends would like to join, application forms are normally available in the library or alternatively from me.

C. Talbot-Ponsonby

Chairman	Giles Clark, The Bothy, Berkhamsted Place, HP4 1HG	874347
Newsletter Editor	Eric Hoey, Fleetwings, London Road, Bourne End, HP1 2RJ	866270
Membership Secretary	Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, 38 Kitsbury Road, HP4 3EA	865882