



The Citizen

Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Working for the social and civic life of our community

www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

September 2015

Chairman's piece

Susan Johnson

chairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

The main talking points of Berkhamsted's summer (such as it is) seem to be the inability of anyone to make physical progress amidst the plethora of traffic control lights; and the fact that the police station is being knocked down. Well, I suppose we must all realise that this sort of inconvenience predates progress – if progress is exactly the word I am seeking. Destruction can be a precursor to transformation, and transformation of the centre of Berkhamsted is now underway – as well as the installation of new gas pipes.

The BCA has had an input into all the consultations of recent months; and has been campaigning on several issues. We have been active in alerting the Town and Borough Councils to the necessity to take full advantage of S106 monies (garnered from the legal agreements attached to planning permissions, researched diligently by our Vice-Chairman, Gordon Bluck). We have been involved in the new Library consultation, and discussions about a new multi-storey car park in Lower Kings Road; and we have represented the 'civic voice' on many local organisations. Also significant energy has been expended on defending the

Conservation role at Dacorum Borough Council. The outcome of the consultation of the draft DBC Conservation Strategy will come to a head this month when it is debated at Cabinet. The BCA has argued that the draft Strategy lacks teeth and, most worryingly, a detailed, funded plan of action for any area outside Hemel Hempstead. Please see our submission on our website; and Paul Crosland's TASC report in this newsletter. It would be marvellous if our membership generally would write to the Leader of DBC, Cllr Andrew Williams, supporting the stance of the BCA on this. The number of applications for unsuitable installations in our High Street – mainly relating to vinyl logos and the internal illumination of signs, but also extending to the demolition and replacement of a perfectly viable, handsome early Victorian building – is tangible evidence that conservation strategies and DBC officers on the ground are essential.

The next time I write to you will be in December, but we have been preparing since July for the Best Christmas Shop Window competition at the end of November, as part of the Town Council's Festival of Light. Hope to see you before that, at one of our many events.

Changes to local bus services

Hertfordshire County Council consulted on the future of council-subsidised local bus services during the spring. The BCA objected to the proposed cuts to evenings and Sunday on the grounds of reduction of amenity to local residents. Notwithstanding considerable pressure from residents and interested bodies such as the Campaign for Better Transport, Hertfordshire County Council voted through reductions in bus service subsidies which affect bus services across the whole county. New timetables came into effect on 1 September.

In Berkhamsted and Northchurch, there are no longer any evening services - last 500 bus to Hemel is at 1920, to Watford at around 1800, to Tring and Aylesbury (500/501) around 2000.

The Sunday 501 will still run between Aylesbury and Watford. Villages' bus 30/31 no longer runs on Saturdays and is reduced to 3 journeys a day, Monday to Friday, between Berkhamsted Town Centre and Hemel Hempstead via the Gaddesdens. There is no longer a service to Aldbury. Bus 354 still runs Monday- Saturday, and serves Durrants Farm (some journeys), Swing Gate Lane (some journeys) and Chiltern Park (all journeys). More, though not all, buses run via Emperor Close in Chiltern Park. Most 354 services no longer serve Northchurch. There are some timetable changes to Little Jim's 502 route between Northchurch and Hemel.

Timetables for the revised bus services are now on the Intalink website - www.intalink.org.uk. Follow the timetables link and type in the service number you require.

Town Amenities Sub-Committee

Paul Crosland, Chairman
tasc@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Police Station site

Preliminary site works have started on the redevelopment of the Police Station site to create sheltered accommodation, including relocation of the library.



Library Relocation

A big thank you to those of you who attended the joint Hertfordshire Libraries/B-Hive drop-in consultations on the new Berkhamsted Library which took place during July, or who completed the on-line questionnaire.

B-Hive members prepared a report on the findings of the consultations, which can be found at www.bhiveberko.org.uk. The Hertfordshire Library Service was impressed with the interest shown and the huge range of ideas from local people. They will use the findings in the report to inform the design brief and shape the internal layout for the new premises over the coming months.

Dacorum Conservation Strategy

It is worth noting that the BCA has raised objections to the paltry sum allocated to conservation by Dacorum Borough Council in its budget for 2015-16. The Borough has twenty-five Conservation Areas and to say that the £49,000 allocated for the year to fund Conservation projects in all of these areas is insignificant is an understatement! We have requested (Borough) Councillor David Collins raise this as an agenda item to be discussed by the full Borough Council.

Dacorum recently went to the expense of consulting on a borough-wide Conservation Strategy – which the BCA responded to as constructively as it could. It transpires that there is now no funding available to implement any of the strategic proposals to any meaningful extent, and the conservation team at Dacorum has become depleted and downgraded. Consequently, it is left to organisations such as the BCA to review planning proposals in order to ensure that protection of our Conservation Areas is maintained, for the benefit of us all.

Berkhamsted's Train Service

I have been lent some back copies of the *Berkhamsted Review*. Articles on transport always catch my eye, so one from the May 1969 edition stood out for me.

THE NEW RAILWAY TIMETABLE					
The revised times of trains between Berkhamsted and London (Euston) are as follows:					
To London			From London		
Depart Berkhamsted	Arrive Euston	Depart Euston	Arrive Berkhamsted	WEEKDAYS	
6.02	6.34	5.55	6.34		
6.29	7.05	6.35	7.14		
7.02	7.40	7.10	7.43		
7.14	7.54SX			and at ten and thirty-five minutes past each hour until	
7.29	8.05SX	16.35	17.14		
7.37	8.13SO	16.50	17.29SX		
7.39	8.08SX	17.10	17.43		
7.44	8.21SX	17.14	17.53* SX		
7.54	8.31SX	17.26	17.57SX		
8.08	8.40	17.35	18.14		
8.19	8.52SX	17.46	18.22SX		
8.29	9.05SX	18.10	18.29SX		
8.37	9.13	18.14	18.43		
9.03	9.38	18.35	18.55SX		
9.37	10.13	18.35	19.14		
10.08	10.40	19.10	19.43		
10.37	11.13	19.10	19.53* SX		
and at eight and thirty-seven minutes past each hour until		19.35	20.14		
	23.13			and at ten and thirty-five minutes past each hour until	
	23.21			23.35 00.14MX	
				except that there is no train at 22.10	
				SUNDAYS	
8.43	9.23	7.50	8.34		
and at forty-three minutes past each hour until		and at fifty minutes past each hour until			
22.43	29.23	22.50	23.34		

* denotes a slow train stopping at Harrow, Apsley and Kings Langley as well as Watford and Hemel Hempstead.
SX—Saturdays excepted.
SO—Saturdays only.
MX—No train arriving 00.14 Monday.
We publish this new timetable which comes into force on 5th May 1969 by kind permission of British Rail, who are to be congratulated on this much improved service.
Residents with an eye to the future will note that not only can their frequency be increased but that the ultimate capacity of trains on the line is 12 coaches. At present the maximum is 8 coaches for this service.

I found it interesting to note that, in May 1969, there were nine trains from Berkhamsted arriving at Euston between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. on a weekday morning. In the current timetable, there are nine trains from Berkhamsted arriving at Euston between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. on a weekday morning! Today's fastest timetabled peak hour journey is 31 minutes (on the 0734), whereas in 1969, the quickest journey was 29 minutes. Average end to end journey times were also marginally quicker forty-six years ago than they are today. This raw data hides some important considerations. There are many more people commuting from stations along the Euston line now than there were then, travelling by more trains; so there is more train congestion. This has also meant that while there were probably non-stop or single stop trains from Berkhamsted years ago, even the fastest train now has intermediate stops at Hemel and Watford. Local trains would have been able to use the 'fast' lines then; these are now the sole preserve of Virgin trains and the London Midland express trains from further up the line (and the overnight sleeper!). There is a note on the 1969 timetable which states that "all trains are limited to 8 coaches", with a long term aim to increase this to 12. This aim has, of course, now been realised and many of our peak hour trains are of that length. More passengers means longer dwell times at stations. Some capacity has been added by the hourly Southern train via west London, but the fact remains that our commuter trains are interlaced with freight trains meaning that our railway line is one of the most intensively used in the London area. It is also designated as a priority 'Trans-European Networks' route for freight.

As many of us know, trains running on a 15 minutes' frequency are full throughout the day now. In 1969, trains ran half-hourly during the day, all day on Saturdays and only hourly on Sundays. There were definite 'rush hours' on Monday to Friday. Coming home, trains thinned out after 6.30 p.m. and ran only every half hour after 7 p.m. Last train was at 11.35 p.m. (10.50 p.m. Sundays). In

many ways, therefore, our train service has improved, within the constraints that the existing infrastructure allows.

Is there any relief on the horizon? Capacity on our line can only be increased by building new infrastructure, for example HS2, to transfer the medium and long distance express trains to a newly-built high speed line and free-up train paths on the lines out of Euston. The Government is also carrying out a study into linking 'our' line to Crossrail by a short stretch of new line in West London. The proposals, which might see Crossrail trains running to Tring by the mid-2020s, would reduce capacity issues at Euston while the station is partially closed for HS2 rebuilding works, and also reduce the current Underground transfer congestion at Euston station. Other benefits would include providing increased connections to a range of destinations in Central London, Kent and Essex. As a scheme of national importance, funding would largely be secured from Department for Transport budgets. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has recently been consulting on a draft of the Hertfordshire Rail Strategy, the aim of which was to set out the County Council's aspirations for the development of the rail network in Hertfordshire. The County Council strongly supports the proposed extension of Crossrail, and has provided encouragement to it by developing plans to create a Watford Transport Hub at Watford Junction station.

Planning Matters

The Town Amenities Sub-Committee (TASC) of the BCA has commented upon or raised objections or concerns in response to the following development proposals in the past three months:

254 High Street: We objected to the demolition of this early Victorian building fronting onto the High Street, the premises of Robert Martell & Partners, next to the footpath through to Waitrose, and the replacement of the same with a retail unit, commercial space at first floor and residential units at second floor, including bridging over the right of way. We also followed up on what we felt were misleading statements made by the applicant to the Town Council. The BCA recognises that the centre of our town is a Conservation Area, not a 'Preservation Area'. However, in this context, we felt that the demolition of 254 High Street to be wholly inappropriate; and that opportunity must exist to sensitively develop a commercially viable solution, by incorporating at least the early Victorian building into a development scheme.



199 High Street (NatWest Bank): We objected to the internally illuminated signage, light pockets in the windows and an external lighting scheme which are all inappropriate in a conservation area.

Haresfoot School, Chesham Road - Proposed

High Ropes Course: We raised concerns on the grounds a tall structure is proposed, visible amongst the trees, within the Green Belt. It is evidently not for the use of the nursery and pre-school children at the school i.e. it is for 'outsiders' who will be transported in, generating additional traffic; and the structure could potentially be lit in the future.

41A Lower Kings Road (the Berkeley Gallery): We objected to the proposed change to "PVC, Heritage style" rear windows in this Locally Listed building; and also noted that the roof slates on this building have also recently been changed.

New Lodge, Bank Mill Lane: We have highlighted to Dacorum's Enforcement Officer that the obligations imposed on the developer by the Section 106 Agreement have not been fully complied with, especially with regard to the public access and environmental obligations. Public access will be available on foot between the Hall Park/London Road junction and the Bank Mill Lane/Bank Mill junction, although the developer has only recently submitted a planning application for the replacement of a footbridge at the latter point; this, despite having known that a new bridge was a condition of planning permission being granted two years ago. We have also commented on the timber footbridge that the developer has applied to install at this location.

49A High Street, Northchurch: We have raised concerns over the installation of advertising boards on 53A High Street, Northchurch for the car wash facility operating at 49A within the Northchurch Conservation Area.

Farm Place

The first new social housing in 25 years (built by the local housing authority, Dacorum Borough Council, as opposed to a housing association) was officially opened by the Mayor of Dacorum on 6 July. The Chairman can prove she was there to represent the BCA because she is standing next to the Mayor in the photo in the latest edition of the *Dacorum Digest*. The BCA welcomes this development as it represents at least some of the £106 million intended for Berkhamsted social housing being spent here. It was only possible for DBC to achieve this notable feat in such an expensive area because it already owned the land. Let's hope the Borough Council continues to find small parcels of land on which it can assemble funding to build much-needed housing.

Towpath upgrade and mooring rings

You will remember we reinterpreted our Constitution at the AGM so we could make small contributions to projects in which we were involved. Well, the first was our contribution to the CARP project by the Canal & River Trust upgrading the canal towpath and installing additional mooring rings for leisure boaters. Our small contribution to the mooring rings was rewarded with an invitation to the opening of the new towpath on 8 June. There was coverage in the *Gazette*, and the project (although not the BCA) was mentioned in the latest *Dacorum Digest*.

Activities

Elaine Mercer
activities@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Midsummer Walk

This year's summer walk took place on the actual summer solstice on 21st June. Only five of us left the Station but the group was strengthened by two more joining at Shootersway.

Our route crossed that of the Aviva Women's Tour Cycle Race near to Wigginton, so we stopped to watch the riders and their accompanying phalanx of police motorcycles and media vehicles go past. Lunch was taken at the Full Moon Cholesbury, who were suffering a minor crisis as someone had unwittingly switched off the freezers, so food delivery was somewhat erratic! Our route back to Berkhamsted was via Hawridge, Ashley Green and Hockeridge Woods.

The Committee feels that the 11 mile length of walk might be putting some people off. Would a shorter walk be welcomed? The views of the membership would be appreciated.

Programme of Talks

Please find enclosed your programme for the whole year ahead, including walks as well as talks. Do bring family, friends and neighbours, particularly if you think they would enjoy and could contribute to the BCA.

Pre-Christmas our talks begin with:

Telling the whole story of Britain's first Saint – Thursday 7th October 2015

Mistakenly, many people believe that Christianity arrived first with Augustine in Canterbury in 597. They are unaware that Alban died some 300 years earlier on the site where St Albans Cathedral now stands. In this talk we will hear about the transformational project underway to reveal the importance of Alban and to widen access to the Cathedral's story as well as protecting its rich heritage and history. The aim is to build visitor numbers and national profile which together will safeguard the unique heritage of the Cathedral for future generations

Living in the Computer-Cut House – Thursday 12th November

Deciding to build a new home from scratch may be considered brave, but to undertake a project like this without an architect and using new technology was taking a giant leap into the unknown. Come and hear what it is like to see your house being built using a new computer-assisted method for cutting precision-engineered building blocks from scratch. And more importantly hear about what it has been like to live in this innovative building.

Both talks are at 8pm in the Sessions Hall.



Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby
membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

We continue to circulate our members, by email, on important issues that may affect you and the town. Nearly 50% receive these messages together with reminders of our events. Of these a third choose to receive newsletters electronically, either as or as well as a hard copy. Would you like to be added to this list?

E-mail addresses are maintained confidentially by the BCA. They will not be disclosed to other members nor made available to third parties under any circumstances. Any correspondence is of course sent out as blind copies.

A warm welcome to our new and lapsed members who have joined since the last newsletter. This means our membership remains at 357, the same as when the renewal slips were sent out in November. This shows that we are more than keeping our head above water. Is this something we can congratulate ourselves on in our 90th year?

We have consistently said "joining is not just going to meetings, or receiving newsletters, but it is to help us have influence, in having a say." It is therefore important that we maintain our membership because, if it falls too low, we may no longer be listened to.

We have 14 members with outstanding subscriptions. If you are one of them, a reminder is enclosed with this newsletter. This may be your last chance to renew. If you feel you have already paid and have received a reminder, please let me know.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

Contributions and comments to: Katy Collins
360 High Street HP4 1HU or
chairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Published by the
Berkhamsted Citizens Association ©
Printed by Strongs Printing Services tel: 878592