



May 1979

In last month's Newsletter we made the point that if the Association is to sustain its claim to represent the views of the Citizens of Berkhamsted and District then we need to include in our membership as wide a spectrum of local people as possible. Needless to say we have not been inundated with people clamouring to join so once again we appeal to you, our members to help. Please during the next few months try and interest at least one family - what about your neighbour? If anyone shows even a faint glimmer just let the Secretary or any Committee Member know and we shall take it from there. As a suggestion, so that your potential member can see what the rest of the Citizens are like, why not bring him or her or both along to the annual Wine and Cheese Party to be held at the Court House on 15 June. Your invitation is being mailed with this Newsletter.

Town Hall - Members will have read in the Gazette that the Town Hall has been handed over by the Berkhamsted Town Council to a group of interim trustees. We have arranged a meeting on Tuesday, 10th July at 8 p.m. at the Civic Centre in order to introduce the new trustees to the people of Berkhamsted to hear what the present situation is and to discuss ideas for future action. Members are urged to give this meeting the widest publicity amongst their friends. If the new scheme is to succeed, it must give Berkhamsted what it needs and what it will support. One need was underlined at the meeting for the local candidates of the three main political parties which we held for the General Election. In the absence of any large central hall in Berkhamsted we held the meeting at the Northchurch Social Centre (itself the result of a far-sighted venture by public-spirited citizens). Three hundred and fifty people turned up, a hundred of whom had to stand.

Hertfordshire Villages: What is their Future?

The Hertfordshire County Planning Department is now circulating its CONSULTATION REPORT, arising from the Hertfordshire Countywide Rural Settlements Study. The study itself was undertaken because it was recognised that although the present planning policies have been relatively successful in controlling the location of residential and industrial development in villages, they have been less so in rural areas generally. There is also concern that the policies are insufficiently responsive to the various needs and characteristics of rural communities and lack provision for rural employment and facilities. It was against that background that the County Planning Department undertook studies of roughly two Hundred Hertfordshire villages in an attempt to improve rural planning.

The results of all these endeavours are published in the CONSULTATION REPORT, the stated purpose of which is to 'test and examine the Structure Plan 'villages policy' with a view to its amplification or amendment. The first part covers rural settlement policy; the second the detailed findings of the study. In the first part the planners present two main ways for tackling the problem: (a) a 'countywide policy option' (b) a 'village type policy option'. (a) The 'Countywide option' - This treats villages as merely detached residential areas of nearby towns, and as such this option would be an extension of urban planning policy - every village considered alike. The rate of development could be controlled in each area by limiting planning permissions in a given period. Supporting policies could specify

the exceptions to overall development limits where rural community needs would be met. The District Councils would have wide discretion as to whether to adopt this approach throughout their areas or to select particular villages for development.

(b) The 'village type option'- if this policy were adopted rural needs would be met according to the local characteristics of different types of village (such as agricultural or residential). Development could be controlled on a selective basis, but progress would, need to be checked to ensure that low growth levels were maintained. The County Council would classify villages into particular types; the District Councils would have the scope to vary the amount of development within these defined types.

The REPORT adds that other policies - lying between the two options and taking the best points from each - are feasible. And it stresses that 'future' alteration to Structure Plan rural settlement policy must carefully distinguish and integrate the County Council's strategic interests and the District Council's local interests in village planning.

The CONSULTATION REPORT OF THE HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTYWIDE RURAL SETTLEMENTS STUDY is an important document and deserves to be studied; what is more the County Planning Officer wants your comments by the end of May 1979. Copies are on view in the public library and on sale from the Hertfordshire County Planning Department, County Hall, Hertford,, SG13 GDN (telephone Hertford 54242), good value at £1.50; over 100 pages, illustrated.

We shall of course be commenting, so if it is easier let us have your views.

Dacorum District Council's Canal Policy - The Facts

In last October's Newsletter¹ we told you about the three study teams (on each of which we are represented) set up by the Council to advise them how their policy for the canal might be implemented on the stretch from Cow Roast to Winkwell. In their budget for this financial year, the Council have provided £3,600 for canal work. We can therefore hope to see some concrete results before next April. The advice given by the three teams is summarised below.

The Towpath - An agreement of 1943 between the British Waterways Board and Berkhamsted Urban District Council gave the public right of access to the towpath but the Board have no duty to maintain it except for their own purposes. A new agreement by which the towpath would become a public footpath would impose on the District Council, as a highway authority, the responsibility for maintaining it as such; this they would be reluctant to take. The Board, for their part, would oppose such a change on the ground that a public footpath would interfere with their operation of the canal. So it is not surprising that the team saw no point in recommending the Council to enter into a new agreement. They did, however, recommend that the towpath's present surface is appropriate and should not be "urbanised"; that if the Board are agreeable, the Council should supply materials for volunteers organised by amenity societies (such as ourselves) to make good the surface where there is flooding or erosion; and that the possibility should be investigated of linking the towpath with Park Street footbridge, to reduce the undesirable use of lock gates for crossing the canal.

Environment of the Canal - Members of the Study Team walked the towpath from Cow Roast to Winkwell noting eyesores and features whose appearance might be improved; opportunities for landscaping and tree planting; buildings which might be 'listed'; places which offered scope for developments, whether public or private, which would improve the canals-side scene, and others where pollution of the canal was possible and should be investigated. Where improvement seems practicable, the District Council and the British Waterways Board will urge the owners and occupiers to act, or to permit amenity societies to do so; the Council and the Board will themselves

ensure, either directly or indirectly through planning control, that future canal-side works are in keeping with their surroundings. In particular the Council have in mind a landscaping scheme for the north side of the canal at Northbridge Road (where we have already done some planting); the future use of Canal Field; the possibility of developing the disused watercress beds between St. John's Well Lane and the canal as a water garden (more than once put forward by ourselves); and what can be done about the Bulbeggan tip (though this is a County Council responsibility).

Provision of Facilities - The Team discussed what facilities were lacking for boating, angling and tourism. For boating the need was felt for overnight moorings, especially in Berkhamsted where there were none; more frequent facilities for drinking water, disposal of rubbish, fuel supply and Elsan emptying. A public slipway for launching boats was also needed. Anglers asked little except to be left in peace; but the District Council, from whom day-tickets may be obtained by visiting anglers, undertook to investigate the possibility of making tickets available outside normal office hours. For tourists the Thames and Chilterns Tourist Board is asked to consider more publicity for the facilities available; to investigate the scope for setting up camping and caravanning sites near the canal; and a scheme of signing to interpret for users of the canal and towpath the significance of what they see, e.g. historic buildings, features of canal engineering etc. In relation to our own suggestion that a centre for boating, canoeing and other canal activities might be formed in Berkhamsted we were asked to investigate the likely demand, the probable cost, the availability of finance and the possibility of forming a body capable of owning and managing such a centre. Despite discreet enquiries, including the appeal in our October Newsletter, we have failed so far to locate anyone able and willing to shoulder such a burden, either alone or with others, so the other questions seem unlikely to arise.

Further action - Council officials will keep us informed. In due course they will probably ask for voluntary help, particularly with tree planting. For such purposes we may be called upon at short notice to muster a working party and we are compiling a list of people willing to bear a hand with such work. Will members of the Association, their relations and friends, who are interested please get in touch with Robert Allen, The Grey House, Kitsbury Road. Berkhamsted 5212.

The Bridgewater Road / Springfield Road Traffic Problem

In the Chairman's Report for 1978 mention was made of the representations that had been made by the Association to the Dacorum District Council concerning the existing and the proposed traffic arrangements at the junction of Springfield Road and Billet Lane and the junction of Bridgewater Road and Springfield Road.

The order recently made is the first phase of measures to rearrange traffic circulation in this area in an attempt to reduce the volume of through traffic using Bridgewater Road. The Council contend that it will permit the removal of the bottle-neck near the railway bridge and will take the junction of Bridgewater Road with Springfield Road to a point where visibility is better and where it is further removed from the point at which children cross when going to Bridgewater School.

The Association were unhappy about the proposal because, as the Council admit, the first phase will not reduce the flow of traffic in Bridgewater Road. It will also mean that the through traffic will proceed along part of Springfield Road and the volume of traffic will constitute a threat to children attending the Bridgewater School.

The second phase of the traffic scheme is likely to prove even more unsatisfactory. This contemplates that as soon as the northern part of the estate is completed a further order will be made which will result in the closure of the link between Bridgewater Road and Springfield Road with the

possible exception of use by buses. This will mean that motorists who are undeterred by the diversion will enter Bridgewater Road via the estate and Bridleway.

The suggestion that a roundabout be placed at the link between Bridgewater Road and Springfield Road and that Bridleway be closed will obviate the need for through traffic to use the northern part of the estate but it will not reduce the volume of traffic.

The really busy time is in the morning and although it may cause some inconvenience to those living in the immediate vicinity, the only solution which would be effective would be to make that part of the road from the railway bridge to the junction with the A41 one-way and so prevent the traffic from Tring from entering Springfield Road. On the last occasion on which it was discussed the Council proposed to allow the existing order to operate for a few months in order to see to what extent it gave rise to serious trouble.

Ramble-Easter Monday

Seventy people enjoyed a superb day walking the countryside between Berkhamsted and Great Gaddesden. Members' dogs enjoyed it although perhaps not so being lifted over the stiles. Thank you to the owners for keeping their dogs on leads where our route passes through fields with other animals. Thank you also to our photographer who took some half dozen splendid photographs at various stages of our route. These will be on view at the Wine and Cheese Party and copies may be ordered then.

If any of our regular walkers wish consideration to be given to a particular route for our next walk(s) please contact Norman Binks (Berk. 6300). We are seriously considering not asking a pub on route to provide food as the demand is unpredictable for a given day. Some members clearly prefer to bring their own. The date and route of the next walk will be announced in the next Newsletter.

Church Lane

Some of our members will still think of Church Lane by its old title - Back Lane but whatever one calls it, as the last cobbled street in Berkhamsted its condition is deplorable. None of us would wish to see this road fall into such disrepair as to become irreparable and we urge the District Council to see if something can be done about it. What about one of our new District Councillors taking an interest?

Notes for your diary

15 June - Wine and Cheese Party at the Court House from 6.45 pm. To 8.30 pm.
5 July - Subject to permission from the Department of the Environment it is planned that Mr Percy Birtchnell will lead us on a tour of Berkhamsted Castle. Meet at the gates at 8 pm. Watch the posters for confirmation.

This and That

The Local Committee of Management for the Ashridge estate have agreed to restore the opportunity for Associates to make suggestions and ask questions at the Annual Tour of the estate, which this year will be on Saturday afternoon of 14th July.

The draft of a revised Definitive Map of public rights of way is unlikely to appear for some time. Problems have arisen as a result of which the County Council wrote to us in March extending to 30th April the opportunity to submit claims, but we had none to add to those which we submitted last summer.

We understand that in the Dacorum District Council's budget for 1979-80 £1500 has been provided for a 'possible feasibility study of the town's requirements in the broadest terms'.

All of us who care deeply for our Hertfordshire countryside must be concerned for its future. None the less we cannot be exclusively preservationist. Given the underlying geological structure, the landscape is man-made and man can and will alter it. The country is the work-place of the farmer, who is not in business for his health and to make a living he must respond to economic pressures. Hertfordshire County Council face the problem in their leaflet 'Landscape' prepared by their Planning Department and obtainable from County and District Council offices. Our views on this are being sought by the County Council.

A planning application to turn Monks Cottage (next to the Post Office) into a restaurant was supported by a letter to the Dacorum District Council. It seems a good idea as a means of preserving this listed building and providing a useful service for that part of the town. Plenty of parking space too!

A branch of the British Rheumatism and Arthritis Association is shortly to be opened in Berkhamsted with monthly meetings to be held at the St. John's Hall in Northchurch. This is a welfare organisation looking after the needs of arthritic sufferers and is not a fund raising body. More information can be obtained from Mrs R. Waller, 13 Montague Road. (Berk. 6697)

News of Old Members

From time to time we learn news from or about members who have left the town and should like to make this a regular feature in our Newsletters. If anyone has nay news please let the Editor (Alan Havelock) or any committee member know.

Mr Arthur Mayling, Life Member and former Chairman (1964-1965) who emigrated to Australia, is returning to England, from 8th June to 29th July. We hope that he will be able to accept the Chairman's invitation to the Wine and Cheese Party on 15th June.

Mr and Mrs Donald Ward (ex-headmaster of Greenway School) write from their home in Sudbury, Suffolk (6 Tudor Green). "May we say how much we admire the hard work and efforts by the Berkhamsted Citizens' Association. Good luck for the future."

Subscriptions

In spite of the very small attendance at the A.G.M., we have more subscriptions paid in this year than is usual by the end of May, and this is thanks to a great effort by our Newsletter deliverers. However in some cases they have not been able to collect subscriptions, because of the time involved or other reasons, but they have an up to date list of those who have not yet paid and are willing to receive subscriptions if this is more convenient for you than paying it in to Lloyds Bank. Whichever way you pay matters not to us, we just want the subscription please!

List of Committee Members

Chairman:	Mr. R. N. Williams - Brecon, Castle Hill Ave	5291
Vice-Chairman:	Mr Max Struthers, 51 Cedar Road	4345
Hon. Treasurer:	Roy Doe - c/o Lloyds Bank Ltd. High Street	71271
Hon. Secretary:	Mrs Sheila Walton - 11 Murray Road	5988
Hon. Membership Secretary:	Mrs H. Talbot-Ponsonby - 38 Kitsbury Road	5882
Mr Robert Allen,	The Grey House, Kitsbury Road	5212
Mr N. Binks,	123 High Street, Northchurch	6300
Mr G. Clark,	The Bothy, Berkhamsted Place	2981
Miss V. Clark,	329 Bridgewater Road, Northchurch	01 240 2771
Dr M. Crawford,	14 Gilpins Ride	6209
Mrs M. Cummins,	27 North Road	6075
Mr H. Fisher,	Fairlight, Meadway	4527
Mr D. Hart,	15 Whitewood Road	2110
Mr A. Havelock,	7 Barncroft Road,	2140
Mr A. Hutchinson,	5 Trevelyan Way	4440
Dr R. C. Parker,	Pear Tree Cottage, Berkhamsted Place	5933
Mr H.S.E. Snelson	49 Cedar Road	3857

Sub-Committees

Environment

Chairman R. Allen.
G. Clark
V. Clark
N. Binks
A. Hutchinson
R.C. Parker

Planning

Chairman -
H. Fisher
H. Talbot-Ponsonby
H. Snelson
G. Clark

Press and Publicity (Newsletter)

Chairman - A. Havelock
G. Clark
R. Allen
H. Snelson

Activities

Chairman - A. Havelock
M. Struthers
R. C. Cummins
R. Allen
S. Walton

Amenities

Chairman - D. Hart
V. Clark
M. Crawford