



**Berkhamsted
Citizens
Association**

NEWSLETTER

November 1985

Vision

is having the image of the cathedral as we mix the cement. So someone has neatly put it, and maybe we all need a little forward vision during these turbulent times. It is, of course, more difficult to translate vision into practice as we concentrate on the maintenance and survival aspects of civic life and the strains of personal problems. But we lose vision and hope and plans at our peril. Eyes down by all means to ensure we have our feet firmly down, but heads up as well to plan where our feet are pointing. Difficult isn't it? Vision operates on varying timescales and practicabilities, from Martin Luther King's to our decorating a home, and there are some interesting examples of vision around us in Berkhamsted. The people who saved the Town Hall from destruction have a different vision than those who saw it as a development site. The Town and Borough Councillors dealing with planning applications need to apply vision at every meeting - not only on specifics but on the total impact which months and years of small changes are having on our town centre and environment. Most people have a vision of Berkhamsted and Northchurch with a High Street unmolested by 42 ton lorries and nose to tail traffic. The vision of Canal Fields as a leisure area has been around for 15 years and has only recently been brought to reality. We now need a practical and useful vision of the area behind the High Street which can bring extra car parking, and buildings sympathetic to the scale of the area. Someone has had a vision of the High Street buildings opposite Castle Street, by refurbishing the pavement area and flood-lighting the façades. What a splendid sight that now is at night. Congratulations to the people involved, and thanks to the visionary who saw the possibility of such improvements. Berkhamsted has some very interesting fronts along the High Street which would respond to similar treatment. Can you imagine the Parish Church, the Town Hall, and some of the Victorian/Edwardian buildings illuminated above "shop" level? Some of the buildings occupied by the building societies and banks would reflect well such treatment. With a few well chosen examples it could really transform the High Street.

Vision of Christmas lights

With a few notable exceptions, Berkhamsted Town centre is dark and dull at nights. The Town Council has taken some positive steps to encourage a better lit High Street for the Christmas period. Some groups of shops are getting together, and Woods have offered a prize for the most imaginative lighting of a shop front. Well done! But a comprehensive continuous light up seems still far off. Chesham, Hemel and Tring seem to be going through a period of self doubt and hard words about cost, just as we are making an effort to get our own act together - not for the first time! But we still need to hang on to that vision - so it would be a great pity if people gave up on their efforts. We all have a vision of Berkhamsted as a comfortable and pleasant place to live, and this is made up of lots of different impressions, eg. pattern of homes, shops, parking, walks, leisure facilities. All these need to be supported well

by local people or efforts to improve standards will indeed fail. So far as Christmas lights are concerned, it may be that improvements come slowly by small increments each year. So to the councillors and shopkeepers we say "Don't give up - stick at it". There will inevitably be some doubters and knockers but each year can and should improve on the one before.

That By-Pass

Some would describe this as a vision, some a mirage. Those of you who attend the BCA arranged Talk by Department of Transport Speakers in October would have had mixed feelings. A full report was given in the Gazette but possibly all BCA members don't take that local paper so we give a synopsis here. The target date for completion is now 1983-1990 depending on money availability. There is to be a further public enquiry during early 1986 to sort out details of slip roads, junctions, etc. Assuming no major problems, the by-pass would be in the Roads Construction Programme during 1987/1988, being completed over a 2-year period. The by-pass would be linked into the Tring by-pass at that end and built together with the by-pass for Apsley and Kings Langley through to Hunton Bridge. There are two points of hope for an earlier rather than later construction, and that is the logic of speedily creating a link feeder/dispersion road for the M25, and the recent Government increase of £56 million for road construction. All we can do is hope that the efforts of County, Dacorum Borough, Town Council and local MP's. will voice enough pressure for the Minister of Transport to put this by-pass on to the first commitments list and commit money to it. This issue is now almost the most critical issue to assist improvements in our town and area. Members of the BCA and other should write, to our MP at Westminster to confirm the crucial importance of the by-pass.

60 Year History

The original print run has now been sold and we are producing an extra 100 copies. These will be available at Potters Pride, The Bookstack, and at Percy Birtchnell's. Price is £1.95 (or £1.50 for members of BCA on production of current Membership card). The booklet gives an interesting record of BCA activities and of local issues from 1924 to 1984. It refers to the fact that some issues recur in the town over this period. Certainly the by-pass has been a repetitive issue since 1948! Before World War II the BCA produced reports on housing and leisure facilities. Sounds familiar - but no less important now than then.

Danger Spot at Dudswell

Several members of the Association have made the suggestion that the 30 mph speed limit be extended nearer to Tring to reduce the risk of serious accidents along this stretch of the A41 near Dudswell. This suggestion has been put through the Road & Home Safety Committee of Berkhamsted Town Council, and there as cautious good news to report, on follow up action.

Following the recent tragedies, road Safety experts have made a number of recommendations for improvement of the road markings, re-consideration of the speed limit, and better visibility. Herts C.C. is now examining these as a matter of urgency. This does not mean something will happen next week, but we should see improvements at this accident spot long before we see the by-pass!

General policy on speed limits is that they are more likely to be relaxed rather than extended or made more restrictive. But it is recognised by the County Council that at this spot there has been a marked extension of the built up area for quite a significant distance beyond the present speed limit sign. As residents of an area, we probably tend to think of a speed limit as marking a real contribution to road safety. Before we pooh pooh the experts who take a more pragmatic view, we should examine our practice as motorists, and reflect on how punctiliously do we observe limits, even within our town boundaries? The residents of Northchurch and Hall Park recognise how fast and in excess of posted speed limits do motorists drive into each end of the town.

Take Notice

The Charles Clark Notice Board (alongside the bus stop outside the National Westminster Bank) is a very useful point in the town where local organisations can advertise their activities. That is why its removal over several months of the summer caused some concern. Our enquiries revealed that it was originally removed to repair the posts and left in the Dacorum Maintenance Yard. The Supervisor who knew what had to be done left and the new Supervisor thought it was something to be thrown out! So it was rescued from destruction just in time, repaired and reset in the pavement at too low a level. So an important information point was lost to us by accident. We have long been suggesting to the Town Council and Borough Council that more notice boards are required. There are some around the town but rather too small. Can you remember where the notice boards are near to you? They get full very quickly as most notices are bigger than A4 size. The only boards of a useful size are the Charles Clark Board, the one at the Charles Street/Kings Road junction, and the one opposite the station. More of this size should be positioned in the two main car parks, outside the library and the Post Office. Another place where many people pass is the bus stop outside Waitrose, so a board could be fixed along the back of the bus shelter. There are probably many good sites but all our local groups and clubs need a few more places to advertise rather than railings and lamp posts.

County Plans

The Association has always been keenly interested in the County and Dacorum development plans, as they are the nearest thing to a general policy. They are often described in general vague principles and sometimes ignored. The impact of the M25, the pressure of developers, and the advantage of rates income to financially hard pressed councils, are producing forces hard to resist. It is, therefore, important that decisions are made as sensibly as possible. The new County Plan provides for further erosion of the Green Belt reference boundaries, by calling for another 2,000 housing units - compared with the previous plan. 1,200 dwellings are due to be added in Dacorum but the Berkhamsted "share" could be less than 500. If these targets are held there would be no cause for major concern, but each small movement adds to the pressure on traffic and parking on top of the existing very unacceptable situation. Traffic counts by the Department of Transport south of the town show no great increase in through traffic, but people in the Hall Park area may have strong views on the current levels! The area (Berkhamsted and Northchurch) may well have to expand slowly to about 25,000 from the current level of 20,000. The arguments for this may be economic, but there is no clear forum to discuss this. Maybe we could seek to create one so that the views of local people may be given to the planners. This was done in the early 70's and now is the time to repeat it.

Forthcoming Events

- Wednesday 27th November "How the National Trust cares for our Heritage" Life post and present at Cliveden and Hughenden. Dr. and Mrs. Sturley of the National Trust.
Civic Centre 8.00 p.m.
- Friday 13th December Christmas Gathering of Members. Of the two social events bringing members together the Christmas Gathering has a quality of its own with carol singing and choir. This year we are to have in addition some special readings mixed between the singing. Tickets are attached to this newsletter to provide a reminder easily put on your home notice board, or where ever you keep this sort of thing. We hope you will be able to come along and enjoy yourself with wine and mince pies, as well as the atmosphere of the occasion.
Sessions Hall. 8.00 p.m. Friday 13th December Don't worry about that date - unfortunately we have to have a Friday and the 20th is too near Christmas.
- Wednesday 1st January Traditional New Year's Day Ramble to the Bridgewater Arms, starting at 10.30 a.m. at the Station. Short walk as well as long return section depending on your mood and fitness.
- Wednesday 22nd January Observations of a Head Teacher by Roger Warren, Head of Ashlyns School. 8.00 p.m. Sessions Hall
- Tuesday 18th March Annual General Meeting. There will be the presentation of the BCA Annual Environment Award. Mr. Bernard Warden, Director of Leisure Services, will be our guest speaker following the formal meeting. Sessions Hall. 8.00 p.m.
- Monday 31st March Easter Ramble. Start 10.00 a.m. Route to be announced.

The final details of our Spring Programme have not been fixed before going to press but you will have a chance to meet the Ombudsman in mid-February and join a forum on education in mid-April.

Membership Subscriptions 1985

Message from our Membership Secretary, Hazel Ward.

Please look at the box alongside:-



If there is an X marked inside it, that means my records show that you have not yet renewed your membership for this year. I should be pleased to receive your subscription either direct to me, Hazel Ward, Red Lodge, Graemesdyke Road, Berkhamsted, or through Lloyds Bank, High Street, Berkhamsted. (Subscriptions still stand at a minimum of £1.50 for family membership and £1 for single membership). Do phone me on B. 5604 if you have a query. Thank you.