



**Berkhamsted
Citizens
Association**

NEWSLETTER

February 1994

Editor's Musings

As I write, it is dull, dark and pouring with rain. It seeps into my shoes, my garage and my soul. It has done so for the past six months. The council ought to do something about it. Nowhere do I remember seeing planning permission for wall to wall water. As those of you with mature memories will remember, a more famous Mr. Grouser used to say: "It's disgraceful, it ought not to be allowed". My sentiments entirely.

While on the subject of the council, I had a hurt little letter from the mayor, John Cook, about an item in the December Newsletter where I said that the York stone steps on the almshouses were being replaced by concrete. It ought not to be allowed was the import of my comments. Well, apparently the council was replacing concrete steps by York stone. I suppose by the standard of the tabloid press, 100% wrong is not too bad but we ought to do better. Sorry, John! In this case it definitely ought to be allowed.

While still on the subject of council, Dacorum this time, the Association had its annual meeting with them in December. A number of burning issues were raised. Firstly, the feeling that Berkhamsted is the lesser of the equals in Dacorum. Not true, says the council. Appropriate consideration is given to relevant representation in the various committees where Berkhamsted's interests are involved. This led to a discussion on the current central government Commission on Local Government Reforms now under way for Hertfordshire. The Chief Executive (Keith Hunt) outlined the guidelines under which the commission is operating. The aim, in general, is to replace the two-tier county and borough system by unitary authorities in the region of 200,000 population. (Dacorum is currently 130,000.) Submissions by local authorities are required by the end of May to be followed by the consultation stage and the Commissioners are due to report by the end of 1994.

The problem is that none of the adjacent Hertfordshire authorities is of the right size so amalgamations are on the cards. St. Albans, Watford and Three Rivers are all involved and which bit should go where and why and whether any of it makes sense is the subject of considerable current activity. I expect the result will be a massive reduction in community charge bills, don't you? Or, perhaps this is something else we have got 100% wrong.

Incidentally, the proposals are unlikely to affect parish and town councils like Berkhamsted which are likely to continue much as at present, although we were told it is just possible they will have slight extensions to their powers. Do not, however, expect a return to an all powerful independent Berkhamsted town council. It will not happen.

(Editor's note: the above report was as we were given it. Since writing it I have seen a newspaper item which reports that a court has ruled that excluding consideration of the present county councils was unlawful. What that will do to the present review I do not know.)

As you would expect, Kingsgate was raised for discussion. The Association voiced its disquiet about the present scheme, in particular its isolation from the High Street. There was a fair amount of discussion and while the council could see the advantages of an entry from the cross roads, there were legal problems in the way. At present the best alternative was to make an attractive pedestrian access. The council, however, agreed to look at alternative possibilities. The matter is still very much in the melting pot.

The siting of the household waste site was also raised. The council manage the disposal on behalf of the county and there is a possibility that it may be relocated to the limits of the site. Whether or not the present proposals go ahead, it was pointed out that the location is an industrial site and some development will come even if the present one does not. One possibility is that of a small workshop development where people just starting up in business can obtain premises.

There was also considerable discussion on the Berkhamsted town centre and By-Pass Action Group. Some of it concerned finance which is by no means so straightforward as it seemed. It is not at all clear that all the funds believed to have been allocated will be forthcoming and while some needs to be spent within the present time scale or it will be lost, the total including council funding (£1.75m) may not all be spent, at least in the short term. If there is a shortfall, then priorities for the various calls on the fund may have to be set. The present allocation for the High Street traffic calming and environmental improvement is just over £1.1m, with the remainder allocated for other areas.

Since the meeting with Dacorum council there has been a further meeting of the Action Group and the proposed traffic calming measures were discussed. Although not part of the discussions with the council, it would be relevant to mention it now. Basically a six metre carriageway is proposed with more pedestrian crossings. The extra space provided will be used for parking (which could be time limited) and making footpath improvements. The Association thought the proposals were basically acceptable but were somewhat concerned that emergency vehicles might find the narrowing a problem. I am given to understand that where such restrictions have been imposed elsewhere they have been effective and have not impaired a reasonable flow of traffic for all road users. When you come to think of it, six metres is de facto what you have at present with uncontrolled parking all over the place.

Reverting back to the discussions with the council, a number of other items were discussed. The water tower, Rex cinema and leisure and amenities I will leave for another day. One item, however, deserved a brief mention: there is to be a Dacorum Residual Character Study. (What a splendid name. I am glad I was at the meeting; I would not have had the foggiest idea what it was otherwise.) This will look at various areas to determine suitable building densities to decide appropriate infilling activities. Apparently this is along way off.

I can only suggest you watch this space and keep your powder dry.

We are now approaching the Environment Award. The panel will consider the following submissions:

Swing Gate Lane Bridge, incorporating by-pass
Bell Yard, 6A Doctors Commons Road
Main Post Office
Graemesdyke Road infill (3 houses)
Park View Court, Park View Road
Binghams Wine Bar, Lower Kings Road
Northchurch St. Mary's Parish Room extension
Mange Tout Café, High Street

The panel considers the following: design standard (quality, aesthetics, innovations, function); blending with neighbourhood; quality (materials, workmanship, durability) and finally, benefit to the community.

This should make for an interesting presentation at the AGM in March.

Other news in brief

Bridgewater Road: residents will be offered three options for traffic calming. Some concern has been expressed that traffic calming in the High Street might result in more traffic diverting along Bridgewater Road and Charles Street.

Priorities at Boxwell Road/Charles Street: proposals for changes have been dropped.

Mini roundabouts at Kings Road/Shootersway and Kingshill Way. Considered impracticable because of underground cabling and gradient.

Future events

24th March	8.00 pm	A.G.M.	Town Hall.	8.00 p.m.
4th April		Easter	Ramble.	
2nd May		Town	Centre Walk.	
17th June		Summer	Wine	

Chairman : Nicholas Nisbet, 51 South Park Gardens.
Tel: 871806
Newsletter Ed. : Eric Hoey, Fleetwings, London Road, Bourne End.
Tel: 866270
Membership Sec.: Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, 38 Kitsbury Road.
Tel: 865882