



BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS

*The heart of
Berkhamsted*

www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/

March 2022 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Annual General Meeting & Environment Award

NOTICE is hereby given that the 97th Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association will be held in the Great Hall of the Town Hall, Berkhamsted on

Wednesday 30th March 2022 at 8 p.m.

Nominations for the posts of:

- Chairman
- Vice-Chairman
- Hon. Treasurer
- Hon. Secretary
- Hon. Membership Secretary
- Committee Members

should be submitted to the Hon. Secretary (Miranda Cummins, 27 North Road, Berkhamsted HP4 3DU) in writing not later than 24 hours before the AGM. Consent of the person nominated must be obtained previously.

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 31st March 2021
3. Chairman's Report
4. Hon. Treasurer's Report
5. Election of Officers
6. Election of Committee Members
7. Appointment of Independent Examiners of Accounts

Reminder: only paid up members present at the AGM are allowed to vote

Following the formal business of the night there will be a short break for a visit to the bar. This will be followed by:

Environment Awards for 2022

There are 12 contenders for the Environment Award, all completed by the end of 2021.

Chairman's Report

Hello Everyone,

At last, spring is in the air and the snowdrops are smiling at us! I so look forward to us all feeling safe enough to meet in one large room again for the AGM

on 30th March. It is over two years since we were all together 'in real life', not on Zoom!

Now that, hopefully, COVID-19 is on the wane, we hope to recommence our popular group activities and meetings. Whether you would like to come along to a talk about current local issues, or express your concerns about developments in the town – we want to provide a way for you to get involved and have your voice heard. The 'fun' activities that so many of you enjoyed can also start again. Let us know if you would like us to repeat any activities, such as the local food or art events.

In recent months, we have been concerned about a number of issues on your behalf.

I have contacted Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) and the County Council about lack of street cleaning. This leads to drain blockages which, in turn, cause flooding of electrical pits in the street – resulting in power cuts. Those of you who have suffered power cuts because of this will know all about it; please, let us know if you have been affected.

The Townscape Group continues to work hard on monitoring planning applications. They have had a number of really important achievements which Susan will enlarge upon in her report. However, a number of us are deeply worried about strategic planning policies which are no longer protecting the visual ambience of the Chilterns. We want to honour our commitment to the Green Belt not only as an area essential to the way of life of future generations but also as an area important to mitigating the negative impact of climate change on our doorstep.

We are threatened from many directions by inappropriate development on our Green Belt, which in some cases DBC intends to remove from protection. This is not just in Berkhamsted itself but all around us, which will obviously have an impact on all of us. It will increase traffic, pollution and the 'feel' of our area.

I have spent some time going through the new Planning White Paper. There is very little in the over 300 pages specifically about planning – most of

what is written is on 'levelling up'. The main elements are:

1. Making home ownership a reality
2. Improving the quality of the housing stock, and
3. **Reforming the planning system.**

There is no detail on no. 3, which really concerns us. The little information I gleaned falls into the following sub headings, but there is no detail:

- simplification of local plans – *which is our prime concern*
- a new infrastructure levy – *obviously great if this gives more local funding!*
- enhanced compulsory purchase powers
- more support for re-use of brownfield land
- more support for employment
- engagement with infrastructure providers in plan-making
- supporting environmental protection; and
- support for the transition to Net Zero.

There is scant mention of planning legislation. The White Paper circumvents debate on the appropriate use of the Green Belt and whether there is housing 'need' or housing 'want'. So now we have to find out just what is meant by "simplifying local plans".

DBC has published their new timetable for the new Local Plan.

Action Milestone	Date
Consultation (Regulation 18)	Jun 2023
Publication of the Plan (Regulation 19)	Jun 2024
Submission of Plan to Planning Inspectorate (PINS)	Oct 2024
Public Examination	Jan 2025
Plan Adopted	Oct 2025

After acquiring a better understanding of the changes in the legislation we will, of course, be working hard on our response on your behalf, as we did before. We will welcome warmly any members who would like to work with us. On this subject, as every year, we are asking members if they would like to join the Committee and share their enthusiasm and expertise with us all.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with you all over the last six years as your Chairman. Subject to the approval of the membership, the time has now come to welcome a new Chairman at the AGM. Gordon Bluck, who has worked tirelessly for the BCA for many years and in many roles, will again take the reins. I know he will work diligently on your behalf and look forward to his tenure. A warm welcome back, Gordon!

My warmest wishes to you all. Let us hope we can now begin to enjoy a more normal life than the last two years have offered. See you at the AGM!



Chairman

Congratulations to Anne Foster who has recently won the recent by-elections in Berkhamsted West to the Town and Borough Councils. She has been an asset on the Townscape Group which she must now relinquish due to a potential conflict of planning interest. The councils' gain is our loss. She does however remain on the main Committee.

Have your say on the new leisure centre plans

A consultation was launched by DBC on 16th February to give you the chance to have your say on plans for a new leisure centre in Berkhamsted.

The consultation will run until Wednesday 30th March.

The council says the proposed new leisure centre could deliver a range of new and improved facilities.

A range of options is also being put forward for improving nearby Lagley/East Meadow, to both protect and enhance this popular green space.

You can complete the survey online at www.dacorum.gov.uk/berkhamstedleisurecentre or request a paper copy by emailing customer.services@dacorum.gov.uk or by calling 01442 228000.

There will also be drop-in sessions to find out more, including at the Berkhamsted Leisure Centre on Saturday 5th March from 09:00 – 14:00.



BCA Centenary

2024 is our centenary and particularly in view of our falling membership (25% in 10 years) this seemed like a good opportunity to review all aspects of the Association to try to ensure that we can continue towards our next centenary. We have appointed a steering group from your Committee (Paul, Barbara and Anne) to take this forward, but we would like to hear the views of our members, so we are looking for 3 additional members to join them. If you think you would like to help please contact Anne Foster fosanne@sky.com for more information, or come and have a chat at the AGM.

The Berkhamsted Castle Trust

Susan Johnson represents the BCA on this body. The castle attracts visitors from around the country, and indeed the world. Volunteers (mostly from the Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society (BLH&MS), but not exclusively) man the castle every weekend from Easter through the summer months and interpret the site for the public. Susan is on the rota. *But they need more volunteers. Please, get in touch if you feel you can help! Full training given!* Contact Andrew Holder at Andrew.holder@berkhamstedcastle.org.uk

The Chiltern Society is looking for help. I am sure you, like us, are members and appreciate all their work. But their numbers on the planning scrutiny front need boosting. We already share some of their voluntary officers, but I am sure there are other BCA members who could help them - or us! If you are interested, please contact Chiltern Society and BCA member Geoff Wiggett on 01442 875906. If you would like to explore joining the Townscape Group, contact Susan Johnson on 07712 526461.

Chesham Fields Path update

We are pleased to report that significant progress has been made in the last few months resulting in the reopening of the Chesham Fields Path in early January 2022. Berkhamsted School, local residents and Hertfordshire County Council are currently working together to find an acceptable solution for all parties to add an east/west footpath to the Definitive Map. Hopefully a workable solution will be implemented giving access to all between Upper Ashlyns Road and Chesham Road. Currently a permissive path is open between Upper Ashlyns Road and a pedestrian gate on Chesham Road next to the School's maintenance yard, opposite the entrance to Ashlyns School.

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby
membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Our membership currently stands at 306 households. Since we have been unable to offer our normal service to our members, despite working hard behind the scenes for the good of the town and neighbourhood, it has been decided not to remove any unpaid members who have not renewed their 2019 or subsequent subscriptions. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and will renew.

11 have not renewed for 2019/2020; 27 for 2021 and 126 are due for this year. Renewal slips will be sent out as appropriate.

The subscription remains at £10 for 1 year; £30 for 3. The subscription was last increased in 2018.

For the last two years we have had to resort to electronic newsletters with minimal hard copies. From now on only the 38 members for whom I do not hold an e-mail address will continue to be provided with a hard copy. However I would encourage those members to let me convert them to this method of delivery.

I would like to reassure you that all personal details including emails are confidential and will never be passed on.

Townscape Group

Susan Johnson, Chairman, writes

When I wrote a report in December 2021, for a newsletter which unfortunately did/could not materialise, we had no idea this epidemic would last so long; or that it would have such a long-lasting effect on our lives. Where did 2021 go? Well, we on Townscape spent our time making representations on planning and development in Berkhamsted and

Northchurch; and the Group continues to campaign widely, giving constructive criticism which is supported, on the whole, by the Town Council (TC). Here are some of the most significant sites covered:

The Crystal Palace PH re-opened on 25th October 2021. To me, it looks a splendid transformation; but some have questioned the suitability of the canopy over the outside seating. I sincerely hope the business venture is successful. They deserve to do well in the light of their investment.

Mabuhay, Brownlow Road Its screening and materials are up for scrutiny. The developer has renamed it 'Castle View'. We hope not.

Moorings, 13 Anglefield Road We and the TC objected. Generally we do not favour the trend towards large fencing and gates where no safety reasons are given or apparent. Eventually, when we thought all was lost, the planning officer refused the application on the grounds we had cited. It is out to Appeal.

22 Shrublands Road – retention of tree house in front garden We objected on the grounds of public safety and privacy for neighbours, as well as aesthetics. The Town Council did not comment. The application took 5 months to be validated, and was refused. A re-submission has been made and we are objecting again. We await a decision.

Lidl in Gossoms End Discussion is taking place on details. We watch with interest.

58-60 High Street – replacement housing Refused. Out to Appeal.

Aitchison Rafferty, 154-158 High Street (now Ashtons) We objected to the proposed loss of the traditional indented shop front and the divided window facing Water Lane. The applications were withdrawn and redesigned to our liking. Wow!

Claridge House, 200 High Street Otherwise known as 'formerly Clinton's Cards' and now Starbucks. We dislike the internal internally-lit 'offers' board in the Conservation Area (CA) and almost next to the Town Hall. But there are lots like it in other High Street locations, so we were probably on a hiding to nothing, despite support from the TC. We were; although, interestingly, the internal illuminated board was removed from the description and permission.

Lock Cottage, Ravens Lane The new owners are trying to reinstate many original features and we *supported* their efforts. We quite surprised ourselves! Actually we have been campaigning for just this for over 2 years, and welcome the extensive and sensitive work.

13 Shrublands Road in its umpteenth iteration gained permission for 7 flats, converted from the house. We had objected to the paucity of parking, to no avail.

80 Greenway We objected on the grounds that a car port taking up virtually all the front garden was an inappropriate addition to the street scene and overdevelopment. And not least because the gates opened outwards on to, and would block, the pavement.

Naming of the new development at 57 South Park Gardens Our opinion parted company from the BLH&MS and the Town Council on this. We

wanted to name it *Casserley Close* after the renowned H. C. Casserley who photographed and documented the Age of Steam on a national level and whose house stands in Castle Hill Close next door to South Park Gardens. Since it did not find favour with the TC (they wanted to name it *Eleanor Close* after Eleanor of Aquitaine), we put the suggestion in to

DBC Address Management direct. Quite rightly, I didn't hold out much hope. *Eleanor Close* it is!

That's the list to date. Now the Group is meeting face-to-face again! Even I have been to the TC Town Planning Committee in person. It all seems very familiar.

Environment Award

This year, as we have *slightly* drier weather and a face-to-face AGM, we are back to considering all the contenders, not just the 'public benefit' ones. All the developments listed below were completed by 31st December 2021. We have whittled the numbers down to 12, and they are, in no particular order, as follows:

Replanted flower bed in Lower Kings Road/Station Road



32 Bridgewater Road - new house



Lomond, Graemesdyke Road (formerly Nonsuch) - new house



1 Castle Hill - new house



The Hide, Castle Hill (formerly Castle Hill Farmhouse)



Restored & repainted railings, Lower Kings Rd



Bridge over the canal at Park St and onward path across Canal Fields to the play area



Replanted flower beds on the corner of Greene Field Road and Lower Kings Road



Lower Kings Road bridge over the canal, restored & redecorated



The Crystal Palace PH restoration and reopening as a traditional pub



Milton House, Doctors Commons Road re-creation of dwelling house from doctor's surgery



145 & 145A High Street South, Northchurch - creation of two semis from one 5-bed house



We hope you will come along to the AGM and Environment Awards on 30th March to see where the accolades go. Our plaque winner in 2021, the Rectory Lane Cemetery, has gone on to gather many more awards. We do choose well, it seems. Or maybe you disagree?

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association
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