



BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS

*The heart of
Berkhamsted*

www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/

November 2020 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Hello Everyone,

What a difficult time we have all been through! We have so missed seeing you all and being able to catch up with all our friends in the Association. We will make up for it when this is all over. I am sure Barbara has some great ideas up her sleeve; in fact I know she has!!

Even though we have not been getting together, as you can see by our Newsletter your team has remained busy, with the well-being of our town remaining at the heart of our concerns.

I have to thank Paul for preparing the article on the Local Plan. You will remember our response to the Plan in 2017. Not only did we spend untold hours preparing our written response, we held a meeting with many of you, to make sure we were reflecting how you all felt. To refresh your minds here is link to our consultation with you, from our site ... <http://www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/2017/11/21/citizens-visioning-2017/>

We were discussing the Local Plan document circulated under 'Regulation 18' three years ago. Dacorum Borough Council, rather than respond to our previous proposals, has simply offered us a further 'Regulation 18' with significantly higher numbers. These higher numbers are a consequence of the Government White Paper. **This is not acceptable.**

Local Plans are in various stages of consultation throughout the country. Local councillors and communities are concerned about many specific land parcels earmarked for development. In many cases they represent a huge loss of green space and have no respect for the lack of essential infrastructure. However, it is the changes in the Government's planning laws and housing requirements which is dictating the Local Plans. The veracity of these requirements, which will lead to concrete deserts, must be questioned in Parliament.

Most of the Government's national target of 300,000 houses per year will undoubtedly overload the South East of the country. The Government's manifesto commitment to "even up the north-south divide" has been ignored. The plans we have been offered will only exacerbate the drift to the South. The South East around the capital already lacks the infrastructure essential to service current development.

There is a large discrepancy between the Government's target figure of 300,000 pa and those of 170,000 to 200,000 as estimated by the Office of National Statistics. Many communities are determined to oppose the numbers and locations of the proposed house building expansion in the White Paper. Already a large number of MPs and local councillors representing the South of England are opposed to the numbers and locations.

A commitment to protect our Green Belt has been stressed in the Government White Paper. However, many Local Plans including our own tell us it is "releasing Green Belt" as if this is a bonus. We need to identify Brownfield sites and take into account the predicted increase in the amount of office and retail space which will inevitably become available for reclassification as residential. We need public scrutiny. Where are our local MPs on this issue? Yes, we have housing need, particularly affordable units. However, this does not have to be at the expense of our valued Green Belt. We cannot allow the coalescence of towns and villages that is being thrust upon us. The balance of our urban and rural communities will be destroyed, and once lost cannot be regained.

We do not accept the overall premise on which the plans are based. We need to look at the bigger picture which is that our local landscapes as we know them will be changed irrevocably. Rather than responding to individual sites we should respond strategically. *We need to answer with ONE voice.* The essence of the proposed new legislation is fundamentally flawed.

We have a limited opportunity to protect our Green Belt and your Committee is committed to putting pressure on elected officials to legislate for sufficient affordable housing where the need for it is greatest and where it causes least damage to our treasured environment.

I hope you have all had a chance to see the refurbished canal bridge at Ravens Lane. Thank goodness it was finished just a week before lockdown. Many of you came along to support the opening – thank you. I am now deeply involved in a similar project for Lower Kings Road bridge. This project has a completion date of early March. Let us hope there will be no lockdown then and we can all enjoy the opening!

As you know, when we asked you all how you would like to see the CIL monies spent, the highest on your list was the refurbishing of the railings opposite the station. They are in a terrible state. The last time they were painted was when CARP did it in 1997. It is now looking as if we may well achieve this. There have been a number of meetings and I am feeling positive, but as you all know ‘there is many a slip twixt cup and lip’. As many of you know we cleared all the ivy from the railings last year, but of course it has grown back and we are looking for volunteers to help us clear the growth again. Please contact either me or Paul Crosland if you would like to help us. We will keep you posted. It is, after all, the first view visitors to our town get when they get off the train so really important for the perception of our town.

I am sure you have all noticed the delightful new flower beds by the station. What a lovely gift to our community by a group of local volunteers – a heartfelt thank you to them all!

We would also like to give a hearty welcome to Civic CENTRAL and look forward to working with them. There is more information later in the Newsletter. We would also like to pay tribute to the excellent work done by BRAG on the Government Planning White Paper and our local plan. It is such a pleasure when more and more of you take pride in helping to make our town a better place to live.

We will be judging the Christmas shop windows as usual, but this year we are also asking you to nominate the local shop that has gone the extra mile to serve our community over this difficult time. Email me with your choice by December 10th 2020 chairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Here is a quick stop press for all our valued members. Your Committee has resolved to invest in a professional version of Zoom to enable us to meet up with you all. We intend to arrange a meeting very soon to discuss the Local Plan with everyone as soon as possible.

Warmest thoughts to you all. Stay safe! We look forward to seeing you either in person or on Zoom very soon. We also hope you can see your loved ones over the festive period.



Chairman



We hope to make this bridge look as good as the Ravens Lane bridge



Paul Crosland
Vice Chairman

It is rumoured that CENSUS DAY (Sunday March 21st 2021) could be the last one....

Draft Local Plan 2020 - 2038

Dacorum Borough Council has prepared a new Draft Local Plan covering the period 2020 to 2038. This went to public consultation on 27th November 2020 and the consultation period runs until Sunday 7th February 2021. Once adopted, the Local Plan will replace the Site Allocations Development Plan (adopted July 2017), the Core Strategy Development Plan (adopted September 2013) & those 'saved' parts of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan (adopted May 2004). The link to the Local Plan consultation on the DBC website follows :

<http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/new-single-local-plan> .

The Core Strategy document from 2013 was intended to cover the period up to 2031; however, the 'weight' that can be given to policies that were adopted more than five years ago is diminishing, and in any case the Core Strategy Inspector did identify that a wholesale review of the Plan would be required after five years or so. There have also been several changes to the planning system nationally since the above documents were adopted and the new Local Plan should reflect these national policies and frameworks.

The new Draft Local Plan follows on from the 'Issues and Options' consultation, to which DBC received 22,000 responses from 2,000 individuals and organisations such as Berkhamsted Citizens. Whilst the Draft Local Plan document does reference the concerns "raised by residents" to, for example, the insufficiency of local infrastructure to support development, it appears that the primary driver behind the Local Plan is the need to comply with requirements imposed by central government in the form of the changes to planning, the need to increase house building and to "build, build, build".

In the 'Issues and Options' document, three years ago, DBC considered three target figures for growth: the draft Government figure of 602 homes a year; the "locally assessed level of need" - of about 756 homes a year - set out within DBC's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). An 'upper range' Government target set a figure of about 1,100 homes a year. In the current Draft Local Plan, DBC's target is now 922 homes per year, yielding 16,596 new homes over the 18 years of the Plan. The majority of this growth is focussed on Hemel Hempstead (10,650 dwellings), with 2,230 in Berkhamsted and 2,730 in Tring. Much lower new homes targets are set for Bovington, Kings Langley, Markyate and elsewhere. The method of determining the numbers of new homes required – also referred to as 'housing need' – is a contentious subject and there have been many challenges, locally and nationally, to the determination of the level of housing need and the ways of satisfying that need. How to ensure that the right numbers of new homes is provided and the right mix of accommodation types and tenures is a complex problem to solve.

In addition to significant releases of Green Belt land to the north and north-east of Hemel Hempstead, the Draft Local Plan includes releases of Green Belt land to the south and west of Berkhamsted, along with sites east and south-east of Tring. An extension of the employment site at Bourne End is also envisaged, and part of the development to the south-east of Tring is earmarked for employment opportunities.

Interestingly, the euphemistic term "Growth Sites" (which number thirteen in Berkhamsted - see annotated map following this article), reflects the nomenclature in the government 'Planning for the Future' White Paper. "Growth Sites" automatically clear the first Planning hurdle by having outline planning permission automatically granted.

The 'Growth sites' include a number of discrete areas between the fringe of the existing built-up area south of the town and the A41. The area between Darrs Lane and Bell Lane in Northchurch is earmarked for development, and several 'infill' sites e.g. the Jewsons site in Billet Lane, the 'Lidl' site in Gossoms End, and land at the rear of the Civic Centre are scheduled for housing (see separate item in connection with the Civic Centre site). These 'Growth Sites' would yield about 2,000 new homes in total.

Civic CENTRAL

If you cast your minds back to 2013, you may recall that the 'B-Hive' group was set up as an 'umbrella organisation' to campaign for the Berkhamsted community to have more say in how the Police Station and (old)

library sites were developed, and the whole area at the rear of the south side of the High Street, between Prince Edward Street and Kings Road was brought into the discussion. The 'B-Hive' gained a lot of interest from the local community at the time but was ultimately unsuccessful in securing funding for any community use, and as we know, sheltered accommodation was built on the police station and library sites. The B-Hive is resurrecting itself at present to register an interest in partnering with Dacorum Borough Council to develop the current Civic Centre site for community use.

The current Draft Local Plan 2020-2038, prepared by DBC, identifies the Civic Centre in a list of potential sites ("growth areas") in and around the town for potential redevelopment, to provide additional housing and other uses. The Civic Centre site includes a number of outbuildings at the rear which are used by various tenants, mainly for community-based uses, such as Sunnyside Rural Trust and the Dacorum Heritage Trust. The Draft Local Plan refers to the provision of a "replacement civic centre" including providing "social and community uses" and implies re-construction behind a retained facade onto the High Street. Sixteen housing units would also be provided on the site.

A small steering committee of B-Hive is developing a theme around the name 'Civic CENTRAL', using the initial letters of the second word to emphasise the benefits that such a development might bring to the town.

Along with several other groups, societies and other community organisations, Berkhamsted Citizens Association has agreed to be a signatory to a letter which has been sent to DBC, registering interest, on behalf of the Berkhamsted community, for the Civic Centre to once again be a hub for diverse aspects of civic and community life – which will be essential as the country recovers from the COVID pandemic.

CIVIC CENTRAL

CIVIC CENTRAL is our vision to transform Berkhamsted's Civic Centre into the prominent landmark and powerful asset our town needs for the 21st century.

CIVIC CENTRAL is supported by a wide range of partners representing Berkhamsted's community organisations.

CIVIC CENTRAL will promote health and wellbeing, support business and social enterprise, foster cultural life, and provide a living heritage hub in Berkhamsted town centre.

CIVIC CENTRAL will be a source of pride and the focus for community life in our town.



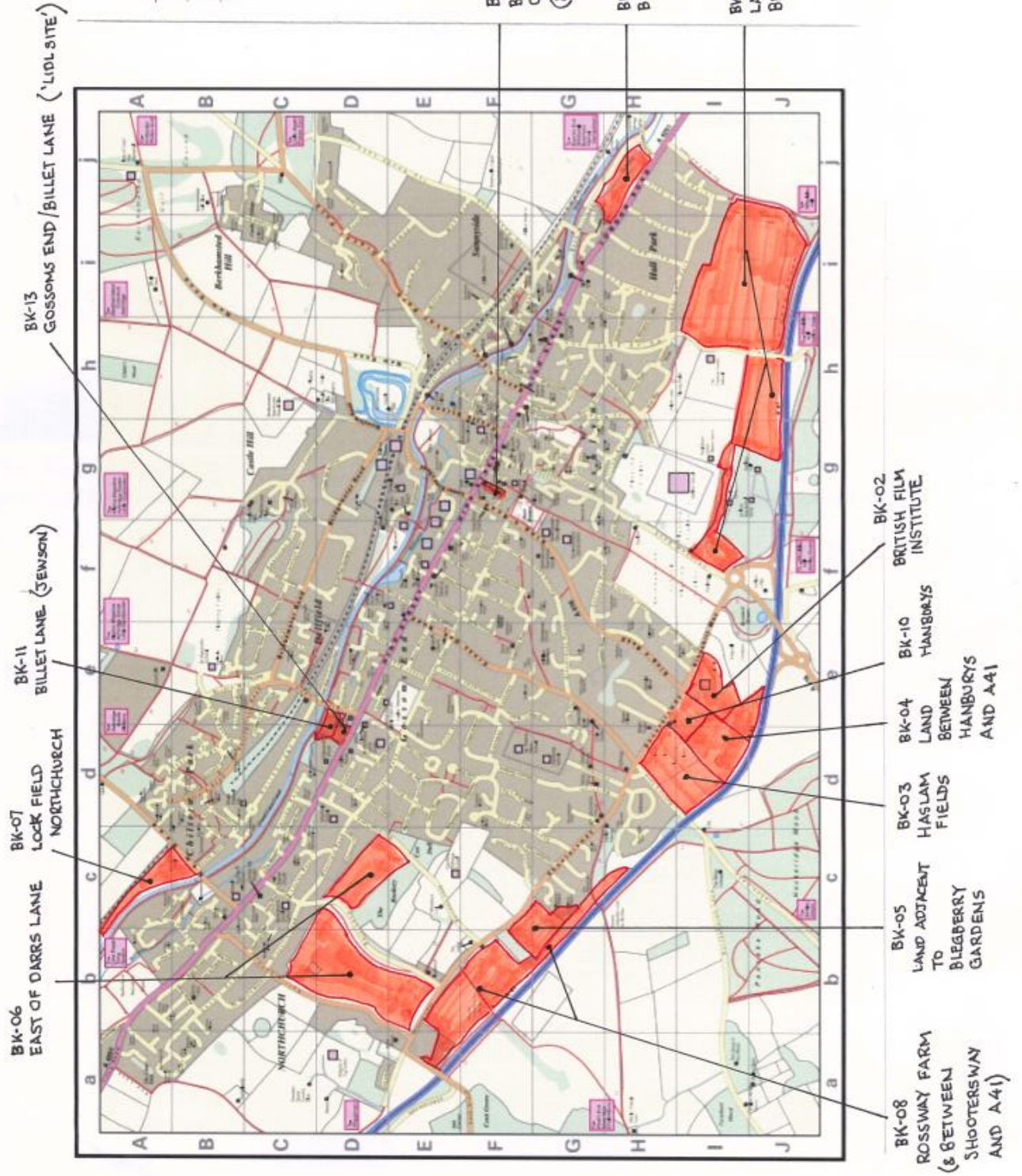
Chesham Road Footpath link (Berkhamsted Footpath 61)

In the July 2020 Newsletter, we reported some positive news which was that the Planning Inspector had allowed an appeal by the residents against a previous decision by Hertfordshire County Council not to make an order to add this footpath to the Definitive Map of rights-of-way. The Planning Inspector has instructed that this footpath should be added to the Definitive Map by Herts CC.

Berkhamsted School has appealed against the decision made by the Inspector and this is likely to result in a Public Inquiry. The School contends that, by granting a right-of-way across its playing fields, it could place it in breach of its charitable objects, part of which are to promote education (including social and physical training). The School has argued that the presence of a footpath may lead to the closure of two sports pitches, affect the maintenance compound and lead to the School being required to fence in the path. The local individuals who brought the appeal in the first place are taking advice from experts on the next steps in how to proceed with this matter. We hope for some more positive news soon on the formalisation of an important east-west walking link to Ashlyns School and various parts of the town.



DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL
 LOCAL PLAN 2020-2038
 BERKHAMSTED
 GROWTH SITES



BK-12
 BERKHAMSTED
 CIVIC CENTRE
 (& LAND TO REAR
 OF HIGH STREET)

BK-09
 BANK MILL LANE

BK-01
 LAND SOUTH OF
 BERKHAMSTED

Townscape Group

Susan Johnson, Chairman

It's been five months since the previous newsletter, and so much has happened since then – except we appear to have come full circle; we are back in lockdown as I write this article. But planning and development goes on apace, and your **Townscape Group** has been working together as usual through the medium of the internet to make the voice of Berkhamsted heard. We have increasingly helped residents, whether members or prospective members, with their planning problems and encouraged them to make the most effective representations to Town and Borough councils. People often only encounter the planning system when it impacts directly on their homes and it is a worrying time for them. Our regular representations to councils' committees mean we are known and find it a more straightforward, less stressful process. However, sometimes an application impacts on us personally, and then we get as worked up as the next person!

Specific matters to have engaged Townscape Group's attention recently include: in the Conservation Area, the replacement of a wooden front door in Charles Street with a composite one on a house with an Article 4 Direction; and the demolition of 58-60 High Street (Victorian shops) to enable replacement by a bland block of flats; the former was allowed, but the latter remains under consideration. The successful outcome of the 'concept' by Elysian Developments for the Old Orchard site on Shootersway, near the traffic lights, was a disappointment. Since a development of mansion flats on an adjacent site was turned down earlier this year (but is being Appealed) it did, however, get a rocky ride at Development Management Committee. An Appeal has finally been successful for 26 Station Road (just one pair of semis); and 57 South Park Gardens (originally 6 detached houses) has its application granted last month for five houses. Long-term applications also (mainly) resolved include: Kitchener's Field car park access lighting (allowed, amended, after *2 years* of consideration); 36 Kitsbury Road (Appeal lost by applicant); 13 Shrublands Road (refused, but the original application refusal out to Appeal); 3 Boxwell Road (smaller rear dormer achieved); Gossoms Lodge roof (slate allowed); the new 6th Form Centre at the School in Castle Street (withdrawn, but back again) and the housing development at the Crystal Palace PH (also withdrawn, but now back as 20/03492/FUL – please write to object as the pub would be much more use to the town as a **Community Asset**, as envisaged by the Berkhamsted Castle Trust); and the refusal of the Golf Club car park refurbishment, now being enforced against. Under consideration, still, are: a replacement dwelling for Mabuhay, Brownlow Road; development of land adjacent Heron Place; and Rosemary Cottage, Northchurch, infill development. As you can see, applications are refused, go to Appeal months later, and sometimes re-emerge in a different guise. There is rarely a finite decision on contentious sites until perhaps years (literally) after the original application. Our perseverance brings its own rewards, and disappointments.

When developments are complete, for good or ill, they end up on the 'long list' for the **Environment Award**. Townscape already has 17 possible projects for consideration completed before the end of 2020 for next year's Award. If you have a nomination, please send it to Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby by 31st December. We will sift them in January and probably end up with about 12 to present at the (possibly virtual) AGM on 31st March. We would like to think it will be a real AGM!

Next we move on to strategic planning matters. We now have the date for consultation on the next **Borough Plan 2018 – 2036**. The timetable has settled on 27th November 2020 for its start, ending on 6th February 2021. As it is obvious that the BCA will be unable to hold an information and consultation evening, like the one we held last time we went through this exercise, you will find elsewhere in this newsletter the bones of the contentious issues set out. Use the DBC website or write an email, or even a letter. All comment is valid, provided it is polite.

We try our best to cover anything significant on the planning front in Berkhamsted and Northchurch, especially in their conservation areas; and report any unauthorised development to DBC. Let us know if you feel we are falling short!

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Our membership stands at 310 households. A warm welcome to the 8 new households who have joined over the year. Although 21 have yet to pay we will not be deleting you.

Your committee has decided that, given the difficulties that we are all facing in dealing with the effects of the pandemic – with the potential of reduced incomes, additional expenses, unemployment – we should declare a ‘subscriptions holiday’ for 2021. Members who still feel able to pay their subscription, which is £10 p.a. (£30 for three) per household, are, of course, welcome to do so. The BCA does have on-going expenses, so we would still appreciate receiving your payment, if you feel able to give it.

A renewal slip will be sent to the 134 members who are up for renewal and the 21 who have yet to pay for this year.

Please contact me if you wish to take advantage of the subscriptions holiday. Those of you on three-year subscriptions will automatically have one year added. You can pay your subscription/ donation direct to our bank account: 60-02-21 (NatWest): 51 85 84 87. Don't forget to use your name as the ‘Reference’

With continued Covid restrictions we have again decided to send newsletters by email to all members for whom we have email addresses. This is to ensure this newsletter arrives promptly, as deliverers may find it difficult to get out. We will revert to normal delivery as soon as restrictions are lifted.

Thank you very much to those who have indicated that they are happy to continue to receive them electronically. We also fully understand those that cannot.

For those that have not contacted me and are prepared to receive our newsletter electronically, please let me know.

Buried Treasure?

At the beginning of October I was approached by a member of the public who said he had some BCA papers of his parents which he would like to pass back to us. I was puzzled as to what they might be. Three weeks later, the handover was made. What a treasure trove! They were the missing 5 sets of minute books from 1924 to 1979. We intend to transcribe the early years on to our website in time for our centenary in 2024; but here is a foretaste.

‘Public Meeting. Y.M.C.A. hut 29 April 1924

Fr O'Neill took the chair and explained the desire of the promoters of this meeting to found and establish a Citizens' Association on the widest basis of sound and popular opinion and support. It was proposed that this meeting of persons interested in the welfare and development of Berkhamsted resolves that a Society be formed with those objects in view: and it should endeavour to co-operate with the local Public Authorities in all matters affecting in the Town and District.

This was proposed and seconded. An open discussion followed which was strongly in support of the resolution and was carried unanimously.

A committee meeting was held 10 days later on the **8th May** in the Town Hall Committee Room. The hall hire was likely to be 6/- or 7/-.

A public meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens' (sic) Association was held four weeks later (**6th June**) in the Sessions Hall. A collection at the door amounted to 10/9½.

Following consent from the Duchy of Cornwall, the First General meeting was held in the Castle Grounds on the **4th July** when there were already between 60 – 70 members.

At this meeting Mr Whybrow gave a brief history of the Housing & Town Planning Act, and then explained the local town planning scheme shortly to be set up by the Ministry of Health. He commented some of its drawbacks, notably the insufficient provision of recreation & playgrounds.'

We are still focused on the original aims and problems, which have not changed.

The early Committee meetings were held at Mrs Grimley's Tea Room. Further minutes indicate this was in Lower Kings Road. Do any of our members know which building?

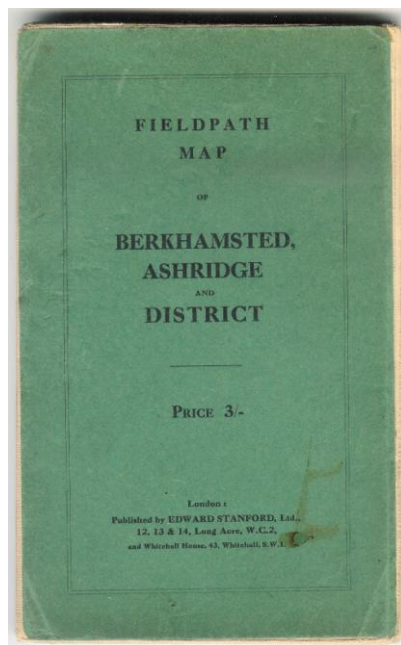
Berkhamsted Audio Trail No 5 reminds us where the YMCA hut was. Broadwater. This was formerly the site of Berkhamsted Cricket Club's ground, and the club allowed this part to be used to erect a large purpose built YMCA wooden hut, complete with a stage. The opening of the YMCA hut made the national press. The Manchester Guardian of 2 February 1915, under the headline “The men of the New Army – General Hutton's high praise” began: ‘In opening a new YMCA recreation hut for the use of soldiers in training at Berkhamsted yesterday, Lieutenant General Sir Edward Hutton said that the progress made by the men was due to the stuff they were made of...akin to the material which composed Cromwell's Ironsides.’

For the cadets' assessment of the place of the YMCA in their lives while training we turn once again to the pages of “The Devil's Own Time”: ‘...the YMCA that priceless boon without which the fellows would have been lost indeed. As witness that black spell when, owing to the Measles, the Hut was closed for three weeks. It was our place of recreation, reading, writing, refreshment, the indispensable and loved abode of our leisure moments.’

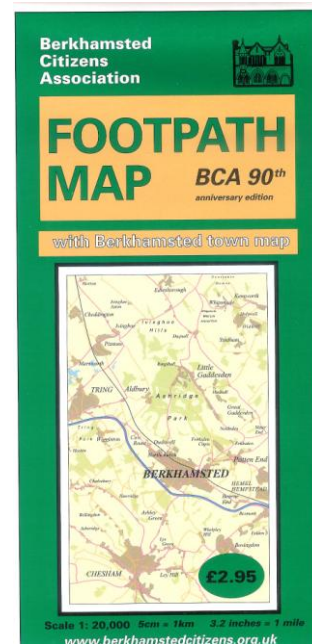
Bill Willett

On The Footpath Map

Gordon Bluck wrote about the map in the last Newsletter and it got me thinking about those far-off days! In around 1998 I retired early from my map-making firm, George Philip and Son, and within almost the same week I received a letter from them saying that the Berkhamsted Citizens had approached them to make a new edition of their footpath map. They felt that to create a new map would prove to be too expensive and so it would be better if I took it on; which I did. I should add that Edward Stanford had made the original map in the 1930s and George Philip had bought that company in 1947. So, a group met at Gordon's house and off we went. Gordon, Colin Garratt, John Cook and myself set forth. Money matters: I had a nominal amount at the outset and then a royalty per copy. We pitched the price at the same amount as now, £2.95; this was the secret of its success. I have made footpath maps for other areas and the price was aimed at much higher than this and the sales were only in double figures per year! Which rather defeats the object of making a footpath map! I think there have been three printings in the last 20 years and they were made at the ex-George Philip printers in Hayes; *Victoria Litho* (old Philip factory in *Victoria Road*, Willesden), at *Stanford House* (from Edward Stanford). I had joined Philip in the 1950s and the factory was highly-unionised and I was only an editor and could only direct the production of maps and atlases and not be any part of the physical making of such. The original Stanford map had been hand-engraved on a copper-plate. By the time I retired everything was in the computer and so I could make the map. The five-year apprenticeships for cartographic draughtsmen had long gone! Philip had made millions of Petrol Company road maps, all based on Ordnance Survey mapping for which they paid them £millions in royalty. In my arrogance I thought I could avoid this by basing the new map on the old (out-of-copyright) Stanford map and then up-date it by hand, on foot and bike (and boy, the blackthorn-punctures I had!). And that is how it was. It was a bit ridiculous for when I have paid the OS royalty on other footpath maps their royalty was pence! On the other hand it was nice to say that our 21st century map had its origins in the copper-engraved 1930s map and all in the Citizens, Stanford, (Philip (Bill Willett)) family.



Our first Map April 1938



and our latest edition January 2015

Events

Thursday 10th December – Best Dressed Shop Window Competition

The traditional Best Dressed Shop Window Competition will take place this year, despite COVID-19, and marking will be done on Thursday 10th December. Presentation of the Cup and certificates will be made by the Chairman at 2 pm on Friday 11th December at the Christmas tree in the High Street. The competition winner, plus commendations, will be posted on the Citizens' Facebook page. Search for the page if you have never visited!

Friday 1st January 2021 Traditional New Year Day's Walk

The walk, led by Paul Crosland, may not take place this year, depending on what COVID restrictions are applicable on 1st January. Please contact Paul nearer the time to establish if the walk is going ahead (vicechairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk or 01442 873813).

Wednesday 31st March 2021 Annual General Meeting, with the Environment Award – via ZOOM?