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## October 2021 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

***Hello Everyone,***

It seems so very long since we all got together; I hope we will still recognise each other when we meet!

Well, a lot has been happening, so I will try and be brief.

You will remember from our last Newsletter, and our AGM, that our Townscape Group worked hard in choosing the winners of our Environment Award.

Our winners,

**The Rectory Lane Cemetery** had a delightful evening to celebrate the end of the project. The opportunity was taken to unveil the plaque we awarded them. Do look at their amazing achievements on their website [www.rectorylanecemetery.org.uk](http://www.rectorylanecemetery.org.uk)



The runners up were

**The Station gardeners** (Berkhamsted Gardeners Society/ Friends of Berkhamsted Station)



and **Ravens Lane Bridge**



As I am sure most of you will have noticed, the refurbishment of the railings opposite the station has now been completed. We did not make a financial contribution towards this. However, you will remember that we instigated the idea that this was a great use for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies. I represented us on the Town Council CIL working party and the councillors fully supported us. Paul Crosland and I with the help of a few of our members helped to clear the greenery and ivy on the canal side of the railings to facilitate the work. We both worked with Tony Noakes (our very helpful and enthusiastic Town Clerk). I visited the works each day and am delighted with the quality of the workmanship. We now need to work on getting more of the growth and self-seeded trees on the canal side removed, so that it does not degrade the excellent work that has been achieved.

We have been pressing the Town Council to extend the refurbishment works to the railings at the top of Mill Street and the Castle Street bridge. I have just heard that this work has now been approved and will be carried out in the Spring, with the CIL money. This is not costing BCA anything, however we have been very active in requesting this work to be done to complement the completed railings on Lower Kings Road. There is a delightful cast iron lamp on the southern parapet of Castle Street Bridge and we have been discussing with BTC whether they can find and fund a solar light to bring this charming light back into use.

The snagging on the Lower Kings Road Bridge has now been completed, and we will now arrange for the Citizens' plaque to be manufactured and installed.

The castles on the northern elevation of the Lower Kings Road Bridge were drawn from plans of the Castle as it might have been when built. We are looking into ways of informing passers-by of this. We would be delighted to hear your views.

I attended a meeting with consultants for a DBC 'Survey on the Market Towns - Berkhamsted and Tring' and am now working with them - hopefully to forward our commitment to enhance our town.

We have completed a litter and litter containers' survey, and are now awaiting a meeting with DBC to try and improve the situation with regard to the problem of litter in the town.

I attended a meeting of the Town Council-led Canal and Riverside Partnership. I am afraid there is not much to report (Covid has stalled action) but I will report to you as soon as there are positive actions. A watching eye is being kept on the state of the River Bulbourne.

We are very concerned over the mess created by some residential boats (not all) along our stretch of the towpath, Extreme caution is required in dealing with this matter; a very nasty incident occurred on the Aylesbury Arm when a boater was approached by a representative of the Canal and Rivers Trust (C&RT).

We are discussing what we should do as a celebratory gift to the Town for our Centenary (Yes, the BCA will have been working for your town for 100 years in 2024!) We have had several ideas and here again we would welcome your input – please, let us know if you have ideas to add to ones already in the pot!

We are still very much involved on your behalf in the Local Plan. However things are on hold at the moment as DBC is required to re-think its proposals. DBC is working on the 'Hemel Place Strategy' and other studies that need to be updated. We are unlikely to see the next version of the Local Plan until well into next year. Michael Gove, the new Minister responsible for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities, is expected to pause the government's planning changes and review them before deciding how to proceed. The contentious planning shake-up is to be undertaken in consultation with back benchers and industry stakeholders. It is feared that instead of individual planning applications being decided through a democratic process, councils would be asked to draw up multi-year plans that divides land into zones for development and protection. It is all very worrying, but your Committee is working with local councils and councillors, keeping abreast of what is going on and we will keep you informed when we understand more.

I have no update at the moment regarding the footpath across Chesham Road playing fields, and as yet we have no date for the Public Inquiry.

We do have an update on the Crystal Palace Pub on Station Road. Here I thank both Susan and Simon for their input. The refurbishment of the pub has commenced. Thank goodness it will not be yet another residential development, thanks in part to the hard work of our Townscape Group. We are still sad that the great ideas of the Berkhamsted Castle management team were not accepted – they would have been an amazing asset to our town.

The Contractors for the pub are [Brynwell Southern](#)

And when completed it will be operated by [Big Smoke Brew](#)

New website is [here](#).

Many of us are concerned about the lack of regular gully clearance and I am about to take this up with HCC and will keep you all in the picture.

Barbara has some great ideas for when we feel it is safe to return to large, face-to-face meetings and we will of course keep you in the picture.

I have discussed the dangerous condition of the lime trees in front of the Crystal Palace Pub on Station Road with the Town Clerk and we are going to make sure there is a safety check made. They were regularly pollarded by DBC, but it has not been done for over twenty years.

Meanwhile stay safe and healthy - I don't think we are 'out of the woods' yet. Warmest and best wishes to all of you.

**Lindy** Your Chairman

Anne Foster, Townscape Group member writes

### **Greene Field Garden**

Many of you will have enjoyed the new wildlife garden created at the end of Greene Field Road (opposite Cook) which at the time of writing is still a mass of colour and buzzing with bees. This was an initiative from Cllr Wendy Conian, who spent a year getting permission from HCC to attack and clear the piece of scrubby land at the end of 2020, with help from her friends and volunteers from the BTC Habitat Group; aiming to create a bee/bug/ and butterfly friendly space, to be enjoyed by the community. I would say it's been a great success.

BTC provided some initial funding to buy compost, small shrubs and bulbs, and volunteers have enhanced it during the year with seeds and plants from their own gardens. It's now a mixture of wild flowers and bee-friendly perennials, which should produce an even better show next year. Some rare wildflower Deptford Pinks ( dianthus armeria) have recently been planted. They are on the endangered plant list and there are currently only 15 known sites in the UK. Maybe another one could be added to the list – so far they are surviving. They should flower next year and then self- seed if they are happy.

How amazing could it be, if you could band together to do something similar with 'rough areas' on your own streets?..... but first find out who owns the land and get permission .



**Townscape** – after ‘Freedom Day’ 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 *Susan Johnson, Townscape Group Chairman, writes:*

This is a brief account of what the Townscape Group has been doing since I last reported in March 2021. Progress has been made – mostly – on the planning front in Berkhamsted’s and Northchurch’s built environment; and the Group continues to campaign on the following; giving constructive criticism which is supported, on the whole, by the Town Council.

**36 Kitsbury Road** refused twice on Appeal. Neighbours were very pleased and grateful for support.

**13 Shrublands Road** Both applications (6 flats + 3 houses and 6 flats + 1 house) turned down on Appeal. [I did not comment except personally as I am a neighbour.] A new application for 7 flats has been granted.

**Berkhamsted School 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre** Permission given for an amended scheme. Work has started.

**Crystal Palace PH** The application for replacement housing was turned down at DMC after a robust lobbying campaign mostly conducted by the BCA, the BLH&MS and the Berkhamsted Castle Trust. I spent hours on it as I represent us, and am our representative on the BCT, and I’m a member of the History Society. Instead of Appealing, as we expected, Punch Taverns changed tack completely and put in an application to refurbish it as a working public house! They have since had discussions with the Trust, us, and the Town Council on design; but then everything went quiet. We hoped they had not changed their minds. *Planning application 21/01460/21 approved on 30 July 2021! They have applied for their various Licences. Refurbishment is underway!*

**Mabuhay, Brownlow Road** After a last minute intervention by the BCT, the original application to rebuild was turned down at DMC. Since then a new application has been submitted, and again been opposed by us, the BCT and the Town Council. However, it gained permission at DMC.

**Land adjacent Heron Place** This housing development was eventually turned down; a vindication for our opposition and the campaigning of neighbours. We await an Appeal.

**Rosemary Cottage, Northchurch** New housing turned down. An Appeal has been launched.

**291 High Street** The scourge of zinc! After two applications and lots of amendments, it was still turned down. A vindication of our stance.

**Newlyn, George Street** Overdevelopment. Refused, again.

**Old Dairy, Castle Street** has permission for development but the applicant (the School) and the neighbours continue to argue about details. We have long retired from the fray.

**Rose & Crown House, Gossoms End** We lost the battle for a more sympathetic scheme. Shame. With a little tweaking it could have been so much better.

**Land at 28 Hall park (infill)** Ugly plans and overdevelopment. We and the TC objected; and it was refused.

**26 Boxwell Road-loft conversion** Our constructive suggestions resulted in an amended scheme.

**28 Victoria Road** Ditto

**Unit 1, Canalside, Northbridge Road** We asked some hard questions, and the application was withdrawn.

**63 Kitsbury Road** New front roof light – another theme of the year! Lost battle, but we will continue to campaign.

**28 Boxwell Road** This rumbles on. DBC are still hanging in there to Enforce. Not sure about current status.

**1A Shrublands Road** Won the battle of the front roof light.

**55 High Street** Highlighted concerns over this very visible plot. Seems to have been resolved via discussions with the planning officer. Our involvement was beneficial.

**Red Telephone Box opposite St. Peter’s** Grade II listed. BTC wants to adopt it, disconnect the line and install a defibrillator. DBC has opposed the application as it leaves too great a distance between emergency landlines, the nearest being the Station.

**Cosy Cottage, George Street** We supported (quietly) the neighbours in their objection. They joined the BCA as a result. A second application was being considered, but has been withdrawn. A third application has been made.

**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. However, in this case, the planning officer could not find a legitimate reason to refuse.

**79 Shrublands Avenue** We pointed out the chaotic plans, and the TC agreed. No decision yet.

**Kitchener's Field fencing** The School wishes to install heavy fencing in the AONB. We object, as does the TC and environmental groups. Application withdrawn.

**22 Shrublands Road – retention of tree house in front garden** We objected. TC did not. We'll see.

**Barclays Bank 189-191 High Street** Very technical submission on bricks, bonding and mortar; and replacement 'door'. We are the only ones who do this sort of thing, and we help the TC in its submission. The work has now been completed, almost to our satisfaction.

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

**320A High Street (former Vet's)** It was approved on Appeal, but never entirely goes away. Amendments being discussed. Work is now under way.

**2 North Road – dormers** re-emerge. The applicant is trying to have this signed off. We are in discussion with neighbours as to whether it is worth pursuing. *Initially just asked for specification of relevant plans; subsequently objected to painted sash windows. The application was refused. What now?*

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

That's the list! It seems long, but it does represent over a year of activity. The decisions to comment/object came as a result of email exchange and a simple majority decision. Members of the Group contributed as they could. I wrote up any contributions worth making; and Gordon attended (formerly virtually and now in person) to deliver our views. Soon I too will be attending. *Now the Group is meeting face-to-face again!*

### **Environment Award**

The presentations to the winner and runners up have been made. They have the plaque for the Cemetery refurbishment and a small 'plaque on a stick' for the garden at the rear of the station. We have not decided how, or even if, we mark the Ravens Lane bridge. It already has a Citizens plaque planned.

### **The Berkhamsted Castle Trust**

I represent the BCA on this body. The Trust makes great strides. We continue to have good attendance figures on site, and events take place. Recent ones were the Civic Open Days in September. The castle attracts visitors from around the country, and indeed the world. Volunteers (mostly from the BLH&MS) people the castle every weekend through the summer months and interpret the site for the public. I'm on the rota. *But we need more volunteers! Please get in touch if you feel you can help! Full training given, and fluorescent tops (the famous gilets jaunes) provided.*

### **Graham Greene Birthplace Trust**

I represent the BCA on this body. For the first time we have the Berkhamsted Mayor as a Trustee! The Festival *did* take place this year and ran from 30<sup>th</sup> September until 3<sup>rd</sup> October. It was attended by participants from all over the world, particularly the USA.

### **Membership Counts**

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby [membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk](mailto:membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk)

Our membership stands at 310 households. A warm welcome to the 7 new households who have joined this year. There are 11 still to pay for 2020. As I have not heard from you, I have taken this to mean that you wished to take 2021 as a 'subscription holiday' – instigated by the Committee due to the difficulties you might be facing due to the pandemic. But unless I hear from you by the end of the year, I will assume you do not wish to remain a member. 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 36 members who are up for renewal for 2021, and the 11 who have yet to pay for 2020.

Please contact me if you wish to take advantage of the subscriptions holiday. Those of you on existing three-year subscriptions will be offered an extension when the time comes. 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'.

Although Covid restrictions are easing, we have again decided to send newsletters by email to all members for whom we have email addresses.

Thank you very much to those who have indicated that they are happy to continue to receive them electronically. We also fully understand the situation of those that cannot. Over 50 newsletters are still printed.

### **RIBA East Award winners 2021**

**Byre and Garrett “a delightful urban surprise”. [123 George St, Berkhamsted](#)**

#### **Commended in the BCA Environment Awards 2020**

Derived from agricultural architecture - this new studio for artist Jeanne Woodcraft ARCA was originally built around 1870 (long before the house on the street) as an open bank barn with timber upper storey for storage of goods.

In the early Twentieth Century it was used as a place for making ashwood tennis racquet hoops, contributing to the tradition of trades in George Street. It was part of a line of trade premises on George Street. One of these was the brush factory which featured in the March 2021 edition of The Chronicle published by Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society.

The reinstated timber upper storey is designed by locally based architect Hugo Hardy and built by local craftsmen. Simon Heywood, BSc Eng Sci, and BCA Townscape Group member, adopted the role of contractor. Architectural photographer Siobhán Doran has created the image(s) of the finished build herewith.

The then extant two-storey barn at 107 George St was set as a guide for bulk and height by the local planning office. Although these barn buildings were not recognised as heritage assets when the area was assessed for conservation status, this one was treated as though it had been. The fabric preserved at No 123 is probably the only remaining original material from that era of barn development in George Street.

The approach to this development project followed the principles set out by Historic England covering the adaptive reuse of traditional farm buildings.



Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association  
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Published by the Berkhamsted Citizens Association © & Printed by Gemini Print Services tel: 01442 871017

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