



**BERKHAMSTED  
CITIZENS** *The heart of  
Berkhamsted*

[www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/](http://www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/)

February 2019 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

## Annual General Meeting & Environment Award

NOTICE is hereby given that the 94<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association will be held in the Great Hall of the Town Hall, Berkhamsted on

**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019 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 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018
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 2019

There are 8 contenders for the Environment Award, all completed by the end of 2018.

This is a concerned greeting to all our members. We hear so little from you – how can we make sure that we reflect the wishes of you, our community?

We love our town. We have always hoped that we could try to help ensure that developers cannot ultimately insist for private reasons on changes which are against the wider public interest. People affected by proposals for change should have their views and interests considered. Without your views fed to us we cannot represent **you** with honesty and

integrity – CONTACT US WITH YOUR CONCERNS. Check up on the 'material planning reasons' on our web site. Whilst we would accept that individuals have a reasonable degree of freedom to do what they wish with their own property, we would always aim to protect the local character and amenities of Berkhamsted. There are many issues on which the local authority has not acknowledged the community's wishes and there have been a number of inappropriate developments both inside and outside our conservation area. Our loved landscape has been defiled, dumped on, doctored and defoliated. Currently, just look at our beloved Moor, and the loss of many of our urban trees.

We have a long tradition of vernacular building and domestic architecture; now we seem to have settled for a policy of uniformity. Once, not so long ago, our houses spoke, like their owners, with our own local accent, built with local materials, locally made brick and our own traditional form of pointing; our materials echoed our landscape. Now, the buildings offered to the "take away age" follow the boring uniformity of computer generated housing lined up behind concrete curbs with street names which are just a mockery, flowerless "meadows" and treeless "woods".

We should all be concerned about the over-development of our valley. There is no concern for our infrastructure which is already inadequate for our current population. Now we are threatened by new developments, the 'need' for which has not yet been honestly established. Every scrap of land that becomes available is devoured for more housing, benefitting only 'non-dom' huge development companies. They care nothing for health care resources, day centres, elderly care facilities, restricting pollution, and important community resources.

We must all be involved. We need you to participate in preserving our unique local identity, our quality of life, and to create a strong sense of community and civic pride. We **NEED YOU** to bring your vision of our town to life with your ideas and participation. We must be **proactive not reactive**. Contact us – talk to us, we need YOU.

I look forward to hearing from you,  
Your Chairman,

**Townscape Group**  
*Susan Johnson, Chairman*

Townscape has a dual role at this time of year. We go on reporting and commenting on planning applications, the state of the historic built environment and things changing in the infrastructure of Berkhamsted; but we spend quite some time – out in all weathers – judging the worthiness of new developments completed by 31 December 2018 for the **Environment Award 2019**. The most significant, the so-called ‘shortlist’, appear below, in no particular order:

**Woodthorpe, 1b Boxwell Road**

demolition & replace with two semi-detached dwellings



**Former Library, Kings Road**

demolition of library & replace with residential



**Brownlow House & Elgin House, Ravens Lane**

Change of use to residential with extensions & alterations; addition of pergola to Elgin House



**83 Charles Street**

Single story rear ext., loft conversion & rear dormer. Complete restoration of front external Victorian features



**1 South Bank Road**

Demolition of bungalow, replace with two-storey house



**5a Castle Hill**

New dormer & single storey front extension



**Dutch Barn, Castle Hill**

Conversion of outbuilding, small link extension, glass & steel balcony and garage



**South View, South Bank Road**

Demolition of bungalow; construct two-story building with basement



The recipients of any Awards given will be invited to the AGM on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March to be publicly congratulated. But the review that night of all the contenders is what really entertains! Please be aware that a lot of work goes into that presentation, and not just for that evening. Please come along to hear the results!

In the previous four months the following topics, among others, have been the subject of our vigilance:

- Multi-storey car park – the build has started, and the replacement temporary car park on the Moor is in use without its entrance having destroyed old trees
- Borough Plan Review – keeping a watchful eye on its progress
- Commenting on the proliferation of proposed housing developments along Shootersway and in Northchurch
- Reviewing and commenting on several applications in the conservation area, most notably those for Wenzel's Bakery, the Vet's at St John's Well Lane, The Lamb PH, and 'Greyfold' in Cross Oak Road
- Keeping track of Enforcement breaches, especially internal illumination of advertisements in the conservation area, development without prior permission (so-called 'retrospectives') and development contrary to planning consent

There has never been a more pertinent time for the activities of the Townscape Group. It seems that there is lot of activity regarding properties both retail and domestic, and most worryingly retrospectively, to change the appearance of the conservation area. Respect for the area appears to have waned, as some residents undertake works without permission and businesses change the frontages of shops in an inappropriate way. Others ignore the terms of permissions already granted. Not all these works are deliberate; they often result from lack of knowledge of the planning system and laziness in research, but all have a detrimental effect which we try to counter by reporting breaches of planning to DBC Enforcement, which itself has never been so busy. We see our role as educating as much as spotting the breach. With the help of the Town Council, which shares many of our concerns, we are encouraging DBC Planning to issue reminders to those - in the CA, with Article 4 Directions, locally listed and listed - to abide by the terms of these restrictions. It is, after all, to their advantage. A building properly altered, and appropriately adorned, makes a positive addition (both financial and aesthetic) to their property and thus the town.

Please get in touch if you would like to discuss any topics that have been raised by this article; or any other matters relating to the town's historic fabric, or planning. If I can't help you, I'm sure I can find someone who can.

**Not a Council Meeting** The odd phenomenon which is the **Annual Town Meeting** - odd in that it is only the parish/town tier of local government which must hold one - is the meeting for electors when town councillors report on what they've done during the year and can be cross-questioned without the moderation of Standing Orders (i.e. you can interrupt – but you really should be civil!). Anyway, Berkhamsted's is due to take place this year on **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30pm in the Town**

**Hall.** Please come along if you can, as the town councillors make various presentations and there is normally an open forum at the end when electors can make their points on anything which impacts the town. Your BCA Committee members go along and normally make a point or two; and listen to what is troubling residents. See you there!

Northchurch electors, please go to the Northchurch Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May at the Northchurch Social Centre at 6.45 pm.

**Berkhamsted Castle Trust** The Trust is new. It is primarily an educational charity (research and interpretation) whose practical side will be, eventually, to manage the Castle site with help and guidance from English Heritage, and hopefully promote and open up the castle to more activities and events. The BCA nomination to the Trust is Susan Johnson. Another Townscape member, Sarah Caradec, is also a trustee in her own right due to her experience in the historic buildings' field. It is early days, but the Trust held its first meeting as a wide group (wider than its original three trustees, one of whom is also a BCA member) on 10<sup>th</sup> February. Susan and Sarah look forward to working with their colleagues on several projects, initially developing links with the local community, and those further afield, through a newsletter, website and social media. Come and hear about the Trust at the Annual Town Meeting on 14 March.

**Graham Greene Birthplace Trust and Nottingham Civic Society** It's not often the BCA has cause to make reference to a fellow civic & amenity society, but Graham Greene gets everywhere. He worked on the *Nottingham Post* as a journalist, and appeared to dislike Nottingham just as much as he did Berkhamsted! But the current Nottingham Civic Society wants to mark his sojourn there with a plaque where he used to live while working on the newspaper. As the current BCA representative on the Trust, I thought I might get in touch to let them know how we mark this town's perhaps most famous son – the GG Trail around the town. Maybe they would like to make a visit, especially at Festival time? The next Festival is from 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2019. Look at the GGBT website [www.grahamgreenebt.org](http://www.grahamgreenebt.org) for more information.

### **Membership Counts**

*Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby*  
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Our loyal core membership currently stands at 309. Last year at this time the number stood at 399. The reason for this drop is twofold. Firstly we had a large increase of those joining when coming to our successful events in 2017, but they mostly chose not to renew last year. Secondly there were also a few who have yet to sign up to the GDPR regulations. This means we are not legally allowed to keep in touch. There are 55 subscriptions outstanding. Thank you to those for renewing promptly. A renewal slip will be enclosed for those still to renew.

Over 80% of our members now choose to receive **electronic notification** of things that affect our town and giving notice of our meetings. Over a third of our members also choose to receive our newsletter electronically. If you would like to be added to either of these lists, please let me know.

*Paul Crosland, Vice Chairman*

### **Berkhamsted Multi-Storey Car Park and Temporary Car Park on The Moor**

Since our last newsletter in the autumn, the temporary car park on The Moor has been built and opened and the Lower Kings Road car park has been closed, immediately after New Year. The new multi-storey car park is therefore due to be opened in September of this year.

The opening of the temporary car park has not been without incident. The original plans, which were passed by Dacorum Borough Council, would have had an ancient horse chestnut tree chopped down in order to create the entrance to the car park. There was vociferous opposition to this and much activity on social media led to a petition against the removal of three trees being signed more than a thousand times. Representations were made by Berkhamsted Town Council's chairman of Transport & Environment Committee (and DBC councillor) Tom Ritchie, and a revised planning application, which retained the trees, was made and the revision was approved in September. There is still much scepticism amongst townspeople that the temporary car park on The Moor will be removed when the new multi-storey opens. The planning permission that has been granted states conditions for the length of time it can remain operational and for its removal when the multi-storey opens. Berkhamsted Citizens will remain vigilant, however, to ensure that The Moor is returned to its function as a public open space in the heart of our town. As I write this, following the recent snow and ice, then rain, the surface of the temporary car park resembles the Somme and parts of it are closed off for repair. This has led to fresh accusations that those responsible for delivering the new car park – ultimately Dacorum Borough Council – are not up to the job.



Photo credit : Jules Hollowes (from Facebook 'Everything Berko 2')

I represent Berkhamsted Citizens on the town's **Parking Forum**. The Forum is a Working Group of the Town Council and representatives of local businesses and neighbourhood groups sit on it. The Forum endeavours to liaise with DBC and the Design and Build Contractors to ensure that the car park provides what the town needs, within the available

budget constraints. It is therefore disappointing that the Forum has not been convened since last summer. The next meeting has been postponed twice and has not yet been re-scheduled.

### **Various Parking and 20 mph Consultations**

Herts County Councillor for the Berkhamsted Division, Cllr. Ian Reay, has provided an update on the speed and parking consultations around the town.

As a result of objections from residents in roads off Bridgewater Road, who are concerned about displacement parking in those roads, it is likely that parking restrictions in Bridgewater Road will extend only as far as the junction with Delahay Rise. The resultant parking displacement will then be monitored before any more restrictions are put in place.

20mph zones on the east side of the town centre look likely to be implemented in the financial year 2019-20.

A formal consultation is currently open on parking restrictions on Hilltop Road at the junction with Beech Drive. Apparently, no objections have been received and it is likely that parking restrictions will be implemented.

### **New Rail Fare arrangements to London**

For several years now, Off-Peak Tickets on the train to London, bought after 0930 on Monday to Friday, have not permitted the return journey to be started from London between 1645 and 1900. This restriction on Off-Peak Tickets has now been removed. An additional day return ticket, called 'Super Off-Peak Return' has been introduced, at a lower fare than the Off-Peak Return. Super Off-peak Returns are available on Monday to Thursday and Saturday only, for trains arriving into Euston after 1300, BUT they do retain the evening peak return restriction (even on Saturdays!). Current fares are Full Fare Day Return (departing before 0930 Monday - Friday): £23.30, Off Peak Day Return £19.50, Super Off-Peak Day Return £14.60.

If you are not returning the same day, remember that Off-Peak Return fares are available for £22.10. If you are connecting with Eurostar in London, tell the booking clerk or buy a 'London International' ticket. It is the same price as a return ticket but if there is a delay on your train into London and you miss your connecting Eurostar journey, you will automatically be put on the next available Eurostar train.

### **Bank Branch Closure: Berkhamsted High St**

Non-customers of Santander may not know that the branch at 230 High Street, Berkhamsted will close permanently at 4 p.m. on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

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