



# BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS

*The heart of  
Berkhamsted*

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

## November 2019 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Hello Everyone,

I hope you all enjoyed our really wonderful summer, if marred by the farcical political shenanigans!

You are obviously all aware that another general election looms. I am busy organizing our hustings. As yet I do not have the names of all those standing, but as soon as I do, I will let you know. Meanwhile put the date and time in your diaries, so that you can be ready with your questions. No doubt there will be many empty promises, so I rely on you all to probe deeply.

**Wednesday November 20<sup>th</sup> 8pm in the Great Hall of Berkhamsted Town Hall. Arrive early to be sure of a seat. There will, as usual, be a bar to relieve the tensions!!**

You will remember that we worked really hard on the Local Plan when it was presented to us. See our web site <https://bit.ly/32eJsIT>. In the Spring we expect to be presented with the next instalment of what DBC want to foist on us. We, of course, need to ensure that this is not a 'fait accompli'. We will keep an eye on the papers that the Borough will be issuing to its committees from February onwards. I will put as much as possible on the website to help you get involved and keep Berkhamsted Town Council on their toes.

Under the current regime we were expecting to build **430** houses annually across the borough – under new central govt expectations we are expected to deliver **1025**. How many of these will be on our doorstep? How will they be distributed across the settlements of Dacorum? How much coalescence with Hemel will it create? How will the infrastructure stand the strain? How much intrusion into the Green Belt will there be? How much will be affordable/social housing – these are just a few of the questions!

As you know, we voted for option B of the Local Plan (see the film on the link); this was fewer new houses than the option C which was **430**. The new requirement of **1025** will need a huge amount of preparatory work on the site locations by the DBC planning team, who are under extreme pressure already. The revised timetable for the New Plan went to cabinet in the Summer when everyone was lying in the sun. They achieved approval, and an extension of time scales, but it is surely not enough!

Our prime concern is how can our already inadequate infrastructure possibly cope with the practical and social needs of our community with all these extra houses?

I will be furnishing you with more information both through the next newsletter and on the website, but meanwhile please stay vigilant to protect the town we all love and the community we serve.

Warmest  
Lindy



### WINE TASTING

It was such an interesting and enjoyable evening! Lou, Majestic Wines Branch Manager, chose eight lovely wines for us from around the world's best wine producing regions. My memory is slightly hazy after the eighth...and I'm so looking forward to seeing you all again next year!

*Barbara Gainsley, Events Organiser*

### **Community 'Round-the-Town' Bus Service**

Berkhamsted Town Council is looking into the viability of running a community 'Round-the-Town' bus service to try to ease congestion in the town centre and to reduce reliance on the car for trips to the station, for example. A survey in the form of a simple questionnaire can be found using the following link (copy and paste the following into your browser) <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScAYUiWhAq9SajiQ1qxL-Q3dnaQ03uJ437W5otmBeO5HuTuTQ/viewform?fbclid=IwAR1St6irHcUtraCrjeOM3bFt2aOqJKbgoO8gxOgDwqvND3UfP-3uPwbZpDk> or look at the Town Council website

Please take a little time to complete it. Alternatively, if you need a paper copy, please contact the Town Clerk at the Council Offices.

*Paul Crosland*

### **London Northwestern Railway train service**

If you are a regular rail commuter or an occasional user, you will be aware of the deterioration of the train service serving Berkhamsted since a major timetable change and re-allocation of rolling stock in May 2019. During the recent half-term holiday, train cancellations brought about by shortages of staff and unreliable rolling stock meant that on one day, during the evening peak period, one-third of services were cancelled and the remainder suffered major delays. For the whole week, services were disrupted on every day to a greater or lesser extent. Social media groups have raised a petition to raise awareness of this incredibly frustrating situation in the wider media. Unfortunately, a dispute concerning the role of guards on trains – which caused major disruption to Southern trains in 2018 – looks likely to affect LNWR in November and December, and Saturday trains in particular look likely to be worst affected. Please check the service before travelling.

*By Paul Crosland*

### **Progress of works at Rectory Lane Cemetery.**

2019 has been a busy year for the volunteers who are maintaining and restoring Berkhamsted's historic Rectory Lane Cemetery under the experience and guidance of Project Manager, Dr. James Moir and Community Engagement Officer, Kate Campbell. The year started with the removal of some trees, mainly self-seeded sycamores and some others which were in poor condition. All works were planned in conjunction with local tree surgeon, Patrick Stileman, the Trees Officer at Dacorum Borough Council and with permission from the Diocese of St. Albans. Views across the town and the valley from the cemetery have been opened-up as a result.

In May, local landscaping contractor Will Jackson, and his team, started work on creating the landscape elements designed by landscape architect Ed Snell. During the summer, the earthworks for the Garden of Remembrance were carried out. Following on, a beautiful stone floor has been laid, and the wood and steel wire structure of the Memorial Wall has been erected. Soon, specially designed seats and the new War Memorial will be put in place, and the planting of hedges and trees will soften and enclose the space. Dedication of the Garden of Remembrance is being planned to tie-in with the 75th anniversary of VE Day next May.

Other works carried out by Will and the team during the year have been the installation of power cables and water lines around the site, the construction of retaining walls and steps within the Sexton's Hut enclosure, and of steps up to the wildlife area at the top of the cemetery. Groundworks for the all-weather access paths around the cemetery are currently under way. Still to come in 2020 are the finishing of the all-weather paths and the Rectory Lane and Three Close Lane entrances, more seating, Blue badge parking spaces, handrails for the top steps, Sexton's Hut refurbishment, refurbishment of the Three Close Lane gates and a canopy for the performance area. The Cemetery really will have been transformed by this time next year !

Meanwhile, local stonemason Will Yendell continues to restore memorials and a dedicated band of volunteers has been building the volunteer facility at the top of the cemetery – it will be a welcoming hut for people working in the cemetery in all weathers in years to come! The activity programme has been as productive as the landscaping one, starting in May with the inaugural BerkoFest Book Festival, which was a brilliant, family-friendly event blessed with lovely weather. 350 visitors were welcomed to the cemetery to enjoy a programme featuring children's authors – both local and national. A story-writing competition attracted entrants from local schools and the event confirmed that the Cemetery really is a magical place for storytelling and reading.

Tribute should be paid to the help given to the project by local Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and school groups who have lugged logs and cleared graves. A varied programme of events for the national Heritage Open Days, for the Chiltern Heritage Festival and Chiltern Walking Festival as well as a 'Bonkers about Bees' events featuring honey from RLCs very own bees have helped round-off a successful year for the Rectory Lane Cemetery Project. Help is still needed to fund a new 'Read in Peace' bench - see separate article for more details. Details of how you can help with the project can be obtained from Kate Campbell ([campbellkate01@gmail.com](mailto:campbellkate01@gmail.com))

*Paul Crosland; based on an article by Kate Campbell for the Friends of St. Peter's Newsletter, Autumn 2019*

### **Please, Take a Seat**

Not literally, of course, but a photograph! Berkhamsted Citizens would like to carry out an audit of the seats we have around the town – where are they, and what is their condition? So, we would like you to take a photo of your local seat(s) on your camera or phone, and send it by e-mail to our Vice-Chairman, Paul Crosland, ([vicechairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk](mailto:vicechairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk)) who will build a record of where repairs to seats are needed, or, where seats have been vandalised and removed (for example, in Bridle Way). We can't promise that action will be taken to repair or replace seats but the first step is to know what assets we have. We acknowledge and have given support to local resident Dave Rance, who some of you may know has organised crowd-funding to replace a seat on the towpath by Ravens Lane lock.

*Paul Crosland*

### **Townscape Group**

*Susan Johnson, Chairman*     [scgjohnson@btinternet.com](mailto:scgjohnson@btinternet.com)

**Escape to the Perfect Town: Berkhamsted** The secret is out, on BBC1's afternoon schedule! If you missed it, look it up on iPlayer. No matter that the couple chosen to be convinced turned out to prefer Tring. They haven't tried the commute to London from there yet; or the lack of any banks. Thinking of the delights of our town, the **Environment Award for 2020** is upon us. Well, almost. We need your nominations soon after the turn of the year, so we can add them to the long list for consideration and judging by the AGM on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Our thanks in advance go to our Townscape Group member Christopher T-P for compiling a comprehensive list of completed schemes; and to Simon Heywood, who writes and gives a wonderful presentation at the event.

Other topics covered by **Townscape** in the previous three months, in no particular order:

- Multi-storey car park – still due to open in March 2020. The Moor temporary car park seems to be more often closed (under water) than open, but it will be maintained until the MSCP is open. It is a condition of its planning permission.
- Reviewing and commenting on many applications in the conservation area, especially those concerning houses covered by Article 4 Directions, or locally listed, or retrospective, or all three. Notable examples are 36 Kitsbury Road, 31 Bridge Street, 26 Station Road, 13 Shrublands Road, the Old Dairy at 25-26 Castle Street, and Incents House replacement windows. Some we have more success with than others. Have a look at these addresses on the new DBC Planning Applications search site to see the latest.
- Alerting the DBC conservation officer to listed buildings we feel are 'At Risk'. *The Lamb* PH in the High Street is a notable success, with the agreed refurbishment underway. We just hope the developers keep the Boxwell Road street name plate – we have lobbied enough, and Simon has drunk several pints in *The Bull* PH (same landlords) in a good cause!
- Keeping track of Enforcement breaches, especially unwelcome internal illumination of advertisements. The list is ever-growing.
- Lobbying for protection of the AONB and Green Belt near the castle from light pollution, most notably from the application for Kitchener's Field. We have teamed up with the Castle Hill Association to fight off the application which will potentially blight the site. This has been dragging on for over a year, and shows no sign of going away any time soon.
- Looking to have the George Street recreation ground made more amenity-friendly.
- Keeping track of the issue of the new draft Local Plan, which now looks to be released for consultation in May 2020
- Canal & Riverside Project (CARP) – getting a meeting with the participation of the C&RT, British Waterways' successor
- Lobbying in support of the designation of the path from Upper Ashlyns Road to Ashlyns School as a public footpath. We submitted evidence, and are supporting the Appeal following its rejection by HCC. Still no outcome yet.
- Encouraging the sale of the BCA Footpath Map for the walking season - available in local and National Trust shops, and selling well again (Ashridge has just taken a substantial delivery) after a bit of a downturn.

The **Townscape Group** covers these and other topics, and makes representations, both written and in person, to the Town, Borough and County Councils, as appropriate. 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, planning or infrastructure. If I can't help you, I'll try to find someone who can.

### **Public Spaces Protection Order (Dog Control) 2019**

This Dacorum-wide restriction came into force in June and applies to all play areas, fenced and unfenced, in the Borough. It has the benevolent intention to restrict all dog access to play areas but, perhaps unintentionally, means dogs cannot be walked, even on a lead, on the path adjacent to the unfenced play area on the Moor, and on Canal Fields close to the skateboard park. Signage alerting people to the new law is being put up. Information leaflets will be made available by DBC.



## Read In Peace!

Please help the Rectory Lane Cemetery Project install a beautiful **R.I.P. ('Read In Peace') seat** in our Victorian cemetery by contributing to their **Big Give Christmas Challenge**. Kate Campbell, the Project's Community Engagement Officer, says, *'The seat will complement the ongoing conservation and landscape work and provide a wonderful spot for both children and adults to take time out and read in the peace of the cemetery. It's very special, encircling a Liquidambar tree and with a library shelf of books built into the design.'*

The Project has secured pledges from key supporters and a matching offer from one of the Big Give champions, the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Now they need as many people as possible to donate online during the Christmas Challenge week - **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December to Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December (midday – midday)**. Donations will be matched, £ for £, from the money already promised, **doubling the value of the donation** – so one donation, twice the impact! It will be a real community asset and all contributors' names will be included in a Donation Book, to be kept in the library.

To donate, on 3<sup>rd</sup> December go to [www.thebiggive.org.uk](http://www.thebiggive.org.uk) and choose **The Friends of St Peter's Great Berkhamsted**.

Come and find our stall at the Festival of Light – or, for more information, contact Kate Campbell [campbellkate01@gmail.com](mailto:campbellkate01@gmail.com)

## Membership Counts

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

Our membership stands at 328 households. A warm welcome to the 7 new households who have joined since our July newsletter. Several have joined in support of our comments on an application near them! As this will be the last newsletter of the year, a renewal slip is enclosed for the 144 members who are up for renewal and the 21 (six in 2018) who have yet to pay for this year. The subscription remains the same: £10 for one year (£30 for three).

Nearly 84% of our members choose to receive **electronic notification** of things that affect our town and giving notice of our meetings, including those which are arranged at short notice and without any other means of notification. Nearly 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.

## Events

Barbara Gainsley, Events Organiser  
[berkhamstedcitizensevents@gmail.com](mailto:berkhamstedcitizensevents@gmail.com)

### Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November

**Hustings;** 8pm in the Great Hall of Berkhamsted Town Hall.

### Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November

**Festival of Light** & Christmas Shop Window Competition. Organised in conjunction with the Town Council  
Look out for the posters in the participating shop windows

### Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020

#### Traditional New Year Day's Walk

Once again, we hope Paul Crosland will be forego a long lie-in on New Year's Day in order to lead the traditional New Year's Day walk. Departure time: the front of Berkhamsted Station at 10.30 a.m.

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March** Our Annual General Meeting, with the Environment Award and a special speaker to be announced.