



BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS

*The heart of
Berkhamsted*

www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/

July 2023 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Chairman's Report

Since the AGM there has been a lot going on behind the scenes in our town. As an example, my wife Jean and I, as the Association's Chairman, were invited to attend the outgoing Mayor's reception in the Town Hall. The format was somewhat different to the usual with a buffet and no formal seating plan. It worked well, though, and gave us the opportunity to raise the profile of the BCA. The outgoing Mayor, Cllr Wendy Conian, gave an excellent speech regarding her mayoral year.

Following the May local elections, the new Town Council met on the 15th May and included eleven new Councillors and elected the new and deputy Mayors. This is known as "mayor making" and Cllrs Taylor and Jordan were duly elected. Susan Johnson, our Vice Chairman and Chairman of Townscape, and I attended and congratulated them both. We then presented a summary of the history and role of the BCA as the civic body of Berkhamsted as we come up to our centenary next year. New Councillors were presented with a copy of our Footpath Map. I was somewhat disappointed that there were new Councillors who were unaware of the BCA and our role, and of our BCA map which has sold over 14,000 copies over a period of twenty years. We must spread the word!

At the first Town Planning meeting a week later, I attended to address the meeting regarding four applications; three to object and one to praise – the latter being a detailed application regarding work to a tree. Historically, the detail given to this type of application is poor which makes our job more difficult. As you will know, we look at all planning applications concerning the town. If members want to keep up with town planning matters the minutes of the meetings are on the Town Council website (www.berkhamstedtowncouncil.gov.uk).

I believe we have a good working relationship with the Town Council and now that we have been appointed as an official consultee by Dacorum Borough Council for Planning matters this is even more important as a means of representing our members' views.

As well as the Centenary projects outlined elsewhere in this newsletter we are now in the process of having our existing website relaunched in order to make the BCA more attractive to existing and

potential members. For our website upgrade, we have chosen Design House Studio who have an office at 86 High Street Berkhamsted and are therefore a local company. We have already re-designed the Home page and will retain a lot of the existing and archive material. When finished sometime in the summer it will be much easier to access. We will keep you informed by e-mail of developments. Finally, may I thank the main committee for all their hard work and support.

Gordon Bluck

chairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Townscape Group Susan Johnson, *Chairman, writes*

It seems an age since the AGM and the previous newsletter. The local elections have brought about a consolidation of a LibDem dominated Town Council and, rather more significantly, a LibDem controlled Dacorum Borough Council. We thank all those who served for the previous four years, whichever political party (or none) they supported, and wish them well. We continue, as usual, to offer help to those citizens who want to make sense of the planning system. Here are some updates on the representations the Group has been making on the most significant sites since the last newsletter:

- **Aitcheson Rafferty, 154-158 High Street (now Ashtons)** Ashtons has amended its side window to indicate two panes; a near enough version to that sought by the planning application. But there is now an application to reverse that!
- **New development at 57 South Park Gardens** 6 houses rather than the 5 were given permission; and it has been built.
- **The Tooth Club** at Black Prince Yard has been prevented, for now, from erecting internally-lit signage in the conservation area and next door to a listed building
- **85-87 High Street** The extensive, inappropriate work to this heritage (locally listed) asset, which we had highlighted to Enforcement in 2019 and continued to object to, has been refused permission. The applicant applied to regularise the existing work, but that was refused. DBC are enforcing, but the applicant is appealing the enforcement. So it goes on till the end of the process.
- **Milton Cottage, 287 High Street** The dispute over the design and colour of the replacement coach

door was settled, and permission given. The work is installed.

- **42 Charles Street** Another shop being converted into a house – no objection. But its frontage, we think, should match its neighbours. No decision yet.

That's the updates; now for the significant *new* ones:

- **Redevelopment at Elm Court, Elm Grove** We objected to the design and materials, redolent of suburban development in the London boroughs. However we highlighted the positives: development of a Brownfield site and an increase in the number of units provided. We urge redesign rather than rejection.
- **Several applications for front garden walls and gates** from residents who want to protect their front gardens and cars. Car theft and theft from cars is an increasing problem.
- **Detached house on plot adjacent to 23 Station Road** We expected this after no. 23 was allowed on Appeal. We continue to object, along with Herts Highways and the DBC conservation officer.
- **Advertisement and building without permission at the Mad Squirrel shop, 104 High Street** We do not like the squirrel's head in such a prominent place, nor building without permission, especially in the CA. But granted anyway.
- **Advertisement for the new tenant in the Town Hall** Too intrusive and disfiguring.
- **Approval** We approve of several small applications which improve the CA; and we have said so to DBC.

Come along to the Town Council Town Planning Committee to listen, and to make your voice heard on these and other matters. If you need any help to make representations on a planning matter, whether in person or written, please get in touch. We might not agree, but we will help you put your point of view across. townscape@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

On a general note, M&Co's conversion is coming along. Have you tried *Vinegar Hill*? Several other empty shops are being brought back in new guises. Look out for them!

Environment Awards

In 2023 on Thursday 30th March we had our AGM in the Great Hall of the Town Hall. After the business of the evening we wanted to consider all the contenders for the Environment Award 2022 in a presentation, but Simon Heywood's laptop failed. He managed to recover the file afterwards and put it out by email later that week. The only 'winner' we felt we could make was a Commendation to the newly refurbished DBC playground at Canal Fields. Maybe next year will offer more quality contenders and the award of a Plaque? The AGM on 21st March 2024 will be our 99th!

Centenary Projects

Our Information Board at the bottom of Swing Gate Lane has been refurbished. That originally celebrated our 90th anniversary. Another (and main) Centenary project is the refurbishment of the Town Shield on its oak post outside the Civic Centre. It has been removed for the work to be done. It belongs to the BCA and was installed originally to mark the coronation of the late Queen. So now it is timely for

our Centenary in 2024/25 and to mark King Charles III's coronation.

Now, what would you say to a celebration lunch next year? A bit like the one for our 90th? Probably less formal, as times have changed. Let us know!

Neighbourhood Plan *Susan Johnson writes:*

The Town Council is intent on developing a Neighbourhood Plan, which will help to govern the land use development of the town over the next 10-15 years. Everyone is invited to participate in its formulation and, as it is a Planning document, the BCA Townscape Group is joining in. Please, participate in any invitations/surveys you receive, as your opinion is important. The whole process will take two to four years, so we are in it for the long haul.

How Berkhamsted celebrated the Coronation of HM King Charles III

Until September of last year, the vast majority - roughly eighty percent - of United Kingdom nationals had known only one monarch, Queen Elizabeth the Second, or simply 'The Queen'. It follows that a similar percentage had never witnessed a Coronation first hand, though most had seen a grainy, black-and-white TV coverage of the Queen's Coronation at Westminster Abbey in June 1953. Fast forward seventy years to 2023 and the Coronation of King Charles the Third took place on Saturday 6th May. The procession to Westminster Abbey took place under similar grey skies and rain to those for the late Queen's Coronation in 1953. The British weather is nothing if not consistent!

Here in Berkhamsted, the Town Council decided at a Full Council meeting in mid-January that a celebration should be held in the town to mark this august occasion – involving as much of the community as possible. It was agreed that a traditional street party should be arranged, free to all attending. The question was, where? After some discussion, it was decided that the High Street would be the best venue, as a focal point for the whole town. Whilst much of the country celebrated the King's Coronation on Sunday 7th May with street parties, in Berkhamsted town centre this was not possible as the High Street was already booked for the monthly Antiques Market, so the Bank Holiday Monday, 8th May was chosen for the 'big event'.

The was, of course, much work to be done to go from a 'standing start' in January to a full programme of events for early May – naturally with contingencies in place for if the heavens opened – as is not unknown on a Bank Holiday Monday! The format was to be a large number of seats and tables in the 'market' area, with stalls selling food and drinks stretching towards St. Peter's Church. The Church itself had a separate 'garden party' event, open to all-comers, hence there was much to attract local residents and visitors alike.

Much of the 'admin' work behind the scenes was undertaken by the Town Clerk, Sue Severn, ably assisted by Sue's 'back-office' staff – in addition to

their normal obligations. There were permissions to be obtained, stall-holders required certification of compliance with health and safety, rubbish clear up to be arranged, tables and chairs, temporary toilets and security to be booked – not forgetting entertainment, to suit all tastes and ages, to be sought and booked. Next there was publicity, with banners and leaflets to be prepared and a booking system through Eventbrite put in place – to control numbers attending.

‘What would go where’ was charged to (now former) Councillor (and BCA Committee member) Anne Foster, who task it was to make sure everything would fit between the trees, lamp posts and other street furniture.

‘Mr and Mrs. Berkhamsted Events’, Paul and Jackie Chambers were drafted in to provide the sound and light systems, as well as gazebos once that all-important weather forecast predicted a high chance of rain.

Anne Foster foot-slogged the High Street seeking sponsorship for the event. All her persuasion and sweet-talking yielded results and over £11,000 was raised in sponsorship as well as prizes for a raffle. This will fund children’s activities in the summer holidays.

But would the punters come? Anne Foster matched her ‘steps’ with social media posts and other publicity, encouraging everyone to book tables and come along for Berkhamsted’s Big Street Party! Anne and other Councillors sold raffle tickets from a market stall, as did the town’s pubs, the Town Hall and St. Peter’s Church. £4,000 was raised from the sale of tickets and this money will help fund free children’s events over the Summer and Christmas school holidays. A weekly workshop was set up in the Council Chamber during March to make bunting, and 800 metres was produced from recycled materials. Union flags were produced and circulated to all of the town’s primary schools. Life-sized cardboard models of King Charles and Queen Camilla were sited on the steps of the Civic Centre and these proved particularly popular with photographers!

On the day itself, the logistics of setting up the event were impressive. Volunteers from Waitrose, from Berkhamsted Rotary Club and the Scouts checked people in, sold raffle tickets, directed visitors to their seats and litter picked. The whole programme needed to be accessible to people with disabilities. An ‘International Food Court’ was set up between Tesco and St. Peter’s offering cuisine from countries such as Austria, Belgium, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and India. At-table entertainment was provided by a ‘bubbleologist’, face painters, balloon modellers and table magicians. Vice-Principal of Berkhamsted School, Richard Thompson, acted as Master of Ceremonies for the various events, and music was provided by local bands ‘Lost Vox’ and ‘After Eve’, as well as the Bridgewater School Choir. The event was brought to a close with a sing-along of traditional and well-known numbers fronted by local

husband-and-wife classical singers, Kathryn Jenkin and Phillip Conway-Brown.



An estimated five thousand residents and visitors turned out for the Berkhamsted Coronation Street Party. The rain kept off for most of the day – and the verdict on the event from most was “it was the best Town event they had ever been to” ! For the organisers, once it was all over, there was finally an opportunity to look back on a busy, but well-planned and well-delivered event..... and a chance to put their feet up !

Dacorum Borough Council also granted licences for street closures in Berkhamsted to enable their own parties. One such closure was Shrublands Avenue. It even attracted the attention of the May edition of *HELLO!* (but not this photograph)



AROUND THE TOWN

The Graham Greene International Festival

It will take place in 2023 from Thursday 28th September to Sunday 1st October. Time to book tickets!

The latest edition of Berkhamsted Town Council's 'occasional' newsletters, entitled "BTC News - Summer edition" has just been printed and distributed to all households in the HP4 postcode. If you did not receive yours yet, please contact the Town Clerk by e-mail to townclerk@berkhamstedtowncouncil.gov.uk

Rectory Lane Cemetery

The Rectory Lane Cemetery Project is now well into its 'maintenance phase'. Works are in progress to introduce a wildflower meadow to the upper part of the cemetery, but first the dominant grasses which have thrived on the nutrient-rich soils over the years have got to be removed. If you would like to be kept informed on the latest developments on the Project, please contact Kate Campbell, Ranger, via e-mail: team@rectorylanecemetery.org.uk

The UK government subsidy that caps single bus fares at £2 has been extended until 31st October 2023. After this date, the capped single fare will become £2.50, and this arrangement will continue until 30th November 2024. Since the introduction of the fare cap earlier this year, the number of bus passengers appears to have increased. Remember that we do have evening buses on the 500 Mondays to Saturdays to/ from Hemel Hempstead, Tring and Aylesbury.

A new coach service is being introduced between Watford Junction Station and Heathrow Airport from 23rd July 2023. Numbered RA3 (RailAir 3), the service will run hourly in both directions, first bus from Watford at 0355 to the last at 2300. Fares are currently unknown. Green Line 724 continues to run hourly between Watford Junction and Heathrow.

BCA Events

New Year's Day walk

This was cancelled in 2023 because of lack of a leader. Next year, hopefully!

Annual General Meeting & Environment Awards 2024

To be held in the Great Hall, Berkhamsted Town Hall on Thursday 21st March 2024 starting at 8 pm. The earlier date is to avoid Easter Week. We might also have a speaker.

Report on Alzheimer's/Dementia meeting

24th May 2023 at Berkhamsted Civic Centre

A good number of local representatives from Berkhamsted attended, including from Berkhamsted School, members of the Citizens Association and the local council.

Representatives of the Alzheimer's Society spoke and revealed some surprising numbers re Alzheimer's generally, e.g. there are 944,000 known cases in the country, a number that apparently can be multiplied by 4 easily to get an estimate of overall cases. Diagnosis is hard to get and can take up to three years.

There are approximately 205,909 known cases in Hertfordshire

There are seven main types of dementia and approximately 400 variations.

Deidre Hawkins, who runs the Memory Café at the Open Door Café, is willing to give a talk at one of our Citizens meetings.

deirdreahawkins@aol.com

Representatives of the Alzheimer's Society Herts are also willing to give a talk.

Contact number: 01707 378365

Herts Dementia Services ditto: Contact number: 0300 123 4044

B&M Care Home representatives Diane Delicate and Caroline Inch spoke about their current experience of helping people with dementia in the residential homes they run. They are willing to give a talk.

Making Berkhamsted a more architecturally friendly (tolerant?) environment for people was spoken about. Signage, noise, even colours can be distressing. As an example, (public?) toilets were mentioned regarding all white walls, floors & loos which can be visually confusing. It is possibly the starkness that alters the perception of space that leads to panic.

Dementia, of any type, is not a result of aging. It was pointed out that young people can also suffer and for them it is especially difficult as it is not recognised generally. Therefore a 'safe space' is essential for them where they can interact with peers and enjoy activities. And not be locked away! Taking the message into schools was mentioned.

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby

membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Our membership stands at 297 households. A warm welcome to the households who have joined this year.

A reminder will be sent to the 33 members who are up for renewal for 2023 and the 12 still to pay for 2022. We hope you still wish to remain members.

You can pay your subscription direct to our bank account: 60-02-21 (NatWest): 51 85 84 87 (Business). Please use your name as the 'Reference'.

Life has changed, and we will in future send newsletters only by email to all members for whom we have email addresses.

We also fully understand the situation of those that cannot or will not let us have an email address. Over 30 newsletters are still printed.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

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