



BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS

*The heart of
Berkhamsted*

www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/

February 2025 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Annual General Meeting & Environment Award

NOTICE is hereby given that the 100th Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association will be held in the Great Hall of the Town Hall, Berkhamsted on

Thursday 27th March 2025 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 21st March 2024
3. Chairman's Report
4. Hon. Treasurer's Report
5. Election of Officers
6. Election of Committee Members
7. Appointment of Independent Examiner 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 2024

There are 10 contenders for the Environment Award, all completed by the end of 2024.

Guest Speaker
TBA

Chairman's report

Susan Johnson writes

chairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Recent months have flown by, not least because of all the events which have filled town life. The General Election on 4th July had brought us a new (and for the first time LibDem) MP for a new constituency! A new Government has meant a change of policy on Planning and Housing targets – again. Our new MP, Victoria Collins, addressed the Association on 20th February. It was not a political meeting, but a 'getting-to-know-you' evening and a discussion of her priorities; and ours. It went well. The Hustings we hosted on 20th June also certainly did.

Our Centenary Post and shield standing outside the Civic Centre is still looking good. May it continue to do so!

The next event was the Christmas Best Shop Window Competition, which we organised, as usual, with the Town Council for the Festival of Light on Sunday 24th November. The weather was appalling, and the presentation had to be transferred inside the Civic Centre foyer. The Town Mayor, Cllr Sue Jordan, came along, but the assembled accompaniment was deafening. We vowed, at the suggestion of the Town Clerk, to make it a separate event in 2025, to give it more prominence. The results are recorded later in this newsletter.

We next organised a talk on a more general subject – just for entertainment: the *Houses that Sugar Built* was well-attended, and the change of venue to the Court House seemed to go down well, despite the often changing date. We do have local residents with such impressive careers. I was unable to attend because the new date was my birthday. Hope you understood!

And so to the New Year ... when we planned to have our New Year's Day walk. This was, of course, dependent on the weather, and it let us down. More storms and mud put paid to it. There is no alternative date or venue for that, so we'll plan again for 2026!

Please, read carefully the **Townscape Group** report for all the Strategic Planning consultations on various new housing proposals and redevelopments in and around the town. Your voice, and support, is needed. Developers have been released from the shackles of Green Belt (they hope) and need restraining. We need to concentrate on what is important to us. There is the Borough Plan to discuss and watch; and the Neighbourhood Plan formulation. Look out for the upcoming exhibition on that in the Civic Centre over the Easter period. Also the Townscape Group report lists the contenders for the Environment Awards this year – or rather last year, awarded this year. I hope you are coming to the AGM on 27th March to see the results. The amount of work put in by Townscape really is prodigious.

I am bowing out as Chairman after the AGM on 27th March. I have been honoured to hold the post for this year but I made it clear last year that 2024/5 would be my last. I have really enjoyed being Chairman to see through the Centenary Year. I will stay on the Committee to help the new Chairman through the first year. Meanwhile I shall enjoy attending the Mayor's reception in March; and receiving the 2025 Rotary Civic Award, along with our Vice-Chairman Gordon Bluck, at the Annual Town Meeting on Wednesday 7th May at 7pm in the Town Hall. Please join us there in support!

Now – how about joining us on the main Committee? Or Townscape? My special thanks to all current members of our committees; but we need more members to share the load. Think about the importance of encouraging participation in Town and civic life.

Best wishes to you all!

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby
membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Our membership stands at 254 households. We welcome the 11 households who have joined in 2024 and the 3 who have joined this year. We have regrettably removed 13 households who last paid for 2023.

A reminder will be sent to the 121 households who are up for renewal for 2025. This is more than double what it was this time last year. I am grateful to those that paid late last year for 2024 only.

A renewal slip will be sent to those who are up for renewal. We hope you still wish to remain members.

Our preferred method of payment of your subscription is by Bank Credit Transfer (BCT) direct to our bank account: 60-02-21 (NatWest): 51 85 84 87 (Business). Please use your name as the 'Reference'. Cash or cheque is also accepted. Or, if you prefer to pay by credit card, you can pay as a 'new member' through our website at: www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/membership.

As mentioned in an earlier newsletter, we only send newsletters by email to members for whom we have email addresses.

We also fully understand the situation of those who do not have an email address. 25 newsletters are still printed.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Annual Town Meeting

A date for your diary is the Annual Town Meeting which will be held on **Wednesday 7th May** in the Great Hall of Berkhamsted Town Hall, starting at **7 p.m.** All Town and Parish Councils in England are required by the Local Government Act 1972 to hold an annual meeting. This year's meeting features a presentation of the Rotary Civic Award to several-times Chairmen of the BCA, Susan Johnson and Gordon Bluck, to mark their contribution to town life and in honour particularly of the centenary of the BCA in 2024.

26th Graham Greene International Festival

25th to 28th September 2025. Details to follow on website www.grahamgreenebt.org Susan Johnson is the BCA –nominated Trustee.

Around the Town

Best Christmas Shop Windows 2024

The ceremony, truncated and indoors because of the dreadful weather, took place at the Festival of Light on Sunday 24th November. The joint winners were *Woods Garden Centre* (otherwise known as *Capital Gardens*) and *The Forge Boutique* just along the High Street. They shared the Cup. Commended were *Cook & Butler* and *Number 20*, both in Lower Kings Road, and *Amelie*, also in the High Street. The presentation ceremony was somewhat compromised by the bad weather and the necessity of holding it indoors. We and joint sponsors the Town Council are planning to hold it in 2025 at an earlier date and at the premises themselves, to give it more prominence. Nevertheless, thanks to the shops for their participation this year.

New Year's Day Walk

Our apologies again for the late cancellation of the 2025 New Year's Day Walk, which was mainly due to the weather forecast of strong winds and heavy rain. The ground was already saturated and muddy, and no one likes *starting* a walk in the rain! Do you have strong feelings as to whether the BCA's New Year's Day walk should continue, and would you support it in the future? We used to do walks throughout the year but gradually the numbers dwindled, the result of many other competing activities. If you enjoy walking in the area whilst supporting a good cause, might I recommend the *Berkhamsted Walk* in support of the Children's Society? It is taking place on Sunday 11th May, with several walk lengths on offer. Further details of the Berkhamsted Walk can be found [here](#).

New Town Councillor for Berkhamsted West
Berkhamsted West Councillor Nicholas Morrish (LibDem) resigned and the Council decided to replace him by interview, to save the cost of a by-election. The Association hopes that a profile of the new councillor will be provided in the next edition of *BTC News*. The next Town Council elections will be in May 2027.

Green Bin Collections 2025

Dacorum's Garden Waste subscriptions opened on **Monday 24th February** via their

[garden waste subscription page](#).

Fortnightly garden waste collections will start from **Monday 10th March 2025**.

You will **not** be sent a sticker to place on your bin this year as DBC will use its digital system to identify properties subscribed to the service.

Please make sure your house number is clearly marked on your bins in a place that is easily visible. This will allow collection crews to easily identify which bin belongs to each property.

This change will avoid delays in collections once subscriptions have been purchased and you will no longer need to replace stickers on your bins each year.

If you decide not to sign up to the paid service, there are many ways you can still recycle your garden waste. You can compost it in a [home composting bin](#) to turn it into valuable and nutrient-rich food for your garden or you can take it to your [local recycling centre](#)

PAST BCA EVENTS

Houses that Sugar Built: 12 Dec 2024

There was an engaging talk in the Court House before Christmas. It was about the making of a book called *Houses that Sugar Built*. The authors of the book, one of whom lives in Berkhamsted, were prompted through questions posed by our member Jeanne Woodcraft to take us through their personal story of conceiving the project and delivering it, grappling with the practicalities of gathering material in the Philippines; producing the book in the UK and promoting it.

Highlights of the talk have now been edited together and there is a short video (produced by local talent) that can be watched here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FB8DKI_51WU.

Meet your MP Victoria Collins: 20 Feb 2025

We are fortunate to have a local MP who is prepared to genuinely engage with citizens.

Victoria gave us a brief account of her experiences as a new MP joining the House of Commons. She then engaged with questions from the floor. These were quite varied and she seemed to enjoy talking about the issues raised, explaining how they might (and might not) be involved in her parliamentary debates

and activities. She did not make undue promises and dwelt on pragmatic matters.

Healthcare provision, preservation of green space, the threat of demagogic autocracy, energy transition, engagement of younger citizens, and protecting privacy were all raised.

Proceedings were captured on video and a link to it will be available on the event listing on the BCA website when it has been processed.

Those who attended will perhaps have noticed an improvement in sound quality. Apologies for the loop system being lacking. For those who use hearing aids we hope that the improved clarity compensated for this lack.

“Castle Fields”

Citizens concerned with the erection of fencing in July 2024 on the open farmland stretching to the north of the castle have unearthed prior cases of enforcement against such fencing and raised a request for enforcement on this occasion too. There has been no visible action though, and important relevant case files appear to be missing from the DBC planning portal without explanation.

Larger planning issues

Areas targeted by development initiatives include land between the line of Shootersway and the line of the A41 dual carriageway; also the High Street from the Town Hall to Tesco and behind. In advance of specific applications coming up for public review we urge citizens to attend public consultations, to think about the standards that should apply to new development, to express views and engage in debate. All past development falls short of standards we might have today in some ways. However, it is worth reflecting on what works well with the development we live with now and what needs to work well with the future we anticipate.

Berkhamsted Castle Trust

Susan Johnson has been the BCA - nominated Trustee for the last eight years; and has been a volunteer steward at the Castle all that time. Susan had to give up the Trusteeship due to time limits on holding such a post; and her place has been taken over by Paul Crosland. During recent years the Trust has been successful in taking on extra land, and conducting a survey on the medieval Deer Park. It is now planning an expansion of its activities; and as a result the recruitment of volunteers to meet and greet at the Castle during the summer period has become a priority. Peter Morgan (peter.morgan@berkhamstedcastle.org.uk) and Jez Rudkins have taken on the task of organising the rota (in place of Andrew Holder, the BCA member who has done it so well up to now) and they would be very grateful to hear from anyone willing to join up. A knowledge of medieval history is not required, just an interest in 1066 & all that! Full training will be given.

Solar panels in our conservation area

Over the past few months we have been approached over our stance on solar panels. Dacorum's website

is quite clear that solar panels fall as 'permitted development' but certain conditions apply. See link:

<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-applications/sustainable-energy-projects>

If neighbours believe the applicable conditions are being broken, they should contact Planning Enforcement asap and ask them for their view.

Contactless Travel on London Northwestern Railway

In our October 2024 Newsletter, we advised that the roll-out of travel on London Northwestern Railway had been delayed due to a suspected cyber attack on Transport for London. The system has now gone live and, if you wish, you can use a contactless bank card to travel between Berkhamsted (and all stations between Bletchley and Kings Langley) and stations between Bletchley and London, and onward to stations on the TfL network, and other National Rail stations that accept contactless tickets (see [map](#)), without the need to purchase a ticket. Just 'tap in' at the readers around the station and tap out at your destination (including intermediate ticket barriers). Your travel cost is capped and the feedback from users is that return fares are cheaper than previously. Further details can be found [here](#). Details of fare capping can be found [here](#).

As noted in our previous article, discounted travel using Railcards is not possible with contactless and you will still need to purchase a discounted ticket from the ticket office or the ticket machines.

Rectory Lane Cemetery Project News

The Rectory Lane Cemetery Project has been the proud recipient of the Green Flag Award for the past few years, and was even more proud to be voted, by visitors, as one of the top ten parks and open spaces in Britain in 2024 by 'Keep Britain Tidy – People's Choice Award'. You can read about the award, and the other recipients [here](#). This was a phenomenal achievement given the Cemetery's limited size and the fact that its maintenance and enhancement is largely dependent upon the effort and enthusiasm of volunteers. The team are really chuffed to be in the same bracket as LB Tower Hamlets' Victoria Park, with its 200 acres and approximately 9 million visitors every year!

The project always needs more volunteers to deliver its programme of maintenance, improvement and provision of community events. Do get in touch with the Ranger via e-mail if you are interested in joining this award-winning community project:

team@rectorylanecemetery.org.uk There are weekly work parties (from 2pm – 4pm every Wednesday) and monthly ones (same time) on the first Sunday.

Their programme of events for the first half of this year includes:

Celebrate Spring: Discover how to **Adopt a Grave:** drop in between 2pm and 4pm on Wednesday 19th March or Sunday 23rd March. Meet

other gardeners and see what's involved – it's very satisfying!

Family Easter Discovery Trail on Saturday 19th April 10am – 1pm. Return of this delightful event for all the family. Children follow the trail using a specially designed clue card and on completion are rewarded with a chocolate Easter egg. All proceeds go towards the upkeep of the Rectory Lane Cemetery, as a place for nature, community and heritage in Berkhamsted. Early Chick tickets cost £3.50 (+booking fee) per child (aged 3 and over) via: <https://tinyurl.com/2p9bktw> or QR code, with tickets on the day at £6.50. Why not get yours now?!

VE Day Celebration on Thursday 8th May (part of Berkhamsted Town Council's event – more information to come!)



Family Great Big Nature Hunt on Sunday 15th June from 10am – 1pm (part of Berkhamsted's Great Big Green Week). Return of this engaging free family event where everybody learns about the wildlife in the cemetery.

Live music fundraising event (for St Peter's Church and Rectory Lane Cemetery) on Saturday 28th June. Much more exciting information to come!

Local Authority Reform & County Council Elections in 2025

One of the Labour Government's election manifesto pledges was to streamline local government as part of the drive to improve efficiency in the sector and to increase the devolution of powers from national to local government. The Government plans to do this by combining local authorities so that where there are currently two bodies providing local services there will in future be one. This arrangement was already being introduced under the previous government where, for example, Buckinghamshire became a "unitary authority" in April 2020, when the District Councils (Chiltern, Aylesbury Vale, South Bucks and Wycombe), ceased to exist. In Hertfordshire, two-tier local government continues with the county council providing services relating to highways, most public transport, education, strategic planning, fire, social services and libraries. The Borough or District Councils provide housing, planning, leisure services, waste collection (but not disposal), environmental health and revenue collection. Hertfordshire is not in the first tranche of counties for conversion to single tier local government. Seven counties – Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Surrey, Hampshire and East and West Sussex – have put themselves forward for conversion to single tier authorities. In these areas, and in two unitary authorities, elections which were due in

2025 are being postponed until 2027. This will allow the process of conversion to single tier authorities to continue.

In our area, the process of conversion to a single tier authority would mean the demise of Dacorum Borough Council. The current Leader of Dacorum, Councillor Adrian England has argued that Hertfordshire is “simply too big and ‘many centred’ to be run by a single council”. Cllr. England continues: “With a population of 1.2 million and rising, it would be much larger than any local authority in the UK, leading to distant decision-making and making services less responsive to the needs of our different communities, urban and rural, including those near to London and those far away from it. One giant council would remove any connection between residents and the services they so much rely on”.

You can read the Dacorum Borough Council’s statement on local government reform [here](#).

The Elections for Hertfordshire County Council will take place on **Thursday 1st May 2025**. The deadline for registering to vote is Friday 11th March. As in all local and national elections, you will need to show ID at the polling station to allow you to vote. Look out for your Poll card!

Townscape Group *Gordon Bluck, Chairman*

vicechairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Since my last report in October there has been a huge number of planning issues which have meant I and my Group have been busier than at any time in the 30 years I have been in the BCA. You might not be aware that we have a place on the Berkhamsted Town Council Working Group producing the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan together with three Councillors, an ex Town Councillor, two BRAG representatives and ourselves; all expertly chaired by Cllr Garrick Stevens. This document will be the Borough Plan which takes us through to 2042. The final draft was submitted before Christmas and is now with the Planning Inspector. Under this Plan the most controversial proposed development at the moment is the South Berkhamsted Taylor Wimpey site, with an outline planning application for 700+ dwellings.

There is an additional Town Council Working Group formulating a Neighbourhood Plan for the town. We hope you are participating through the surveys, questionnaires and exhibitions so that the document reflects a wide demographic. Our representative on the Working Group is Susan Johnson.

As you will know we are a Consultee in the planning process where I input the BCA views onto the Dacorum planning portal. This is done without vetting by planners, unlike an individual submission by a member of the public. The Townscape Group meets monthly to look at all new applications and works very hard to submit the BCA recommendations.

The Planners are under a lot of pressure with up to 280 applications a year just for Berkhamsted and Northchurch; and this has meant some delays in decisions such as the plan for a new Church in Kings Road. Additionally the Rossway dog recreation area still does not have approval. We have also objected to the plethora of internally illuminated signs in the conservation area. We are not always successful in keeping them under control.

We are organising meetings with developers to discuss their projects, and the first was in November with Sorbon Estates when we discussed plans to develop 168 to 192 High Street. The detailed plans will be submitted later this year. The four members of Townscape gave them an idea of what we are looking for. We will see if these suggestions will be incorporated. Earlier this month we met with representatives of Croudace Homes who are a family firm that have bought a parcel of land south of Shootersway up to the A41 on which they want to build 200 houses. There is also a plot of land being developed south of Shootersway by Crest Nicholson, which was announced in September.

We have objected to a Dementia Nursing Home in Northchurch on the grounds of encroachment on Green Belt.

There was a plan submitted for construction of a self-build house on a plot next to 22 Castle Hill Avenue to which we objected in the strongest terms. Our main objection was to the encroachment on to the highway verge, part of a historic path between the Castle and Berkhamsted Place, and which also entailed the removal of one of the lime trees that the Citizens Association donated in 2010. The neighbours formed a ‘Lime Walk Preservation Group’. Over 50 formal complaints were put on the Planning Portal. Just as I was prepared to speak at Town Council the application was withdrawn. It shows that local, well-organised and justified pressure can dissuade inappropriate development proposals.

Below I list the contenders for this year’s Environment Awards.

Environment Awards

We have got to the final stages of the announcement of winners, if any, of the Environment Award for 2024. Simon Heywood will present a review of the short list of contenders after the business of the evening at the AGM. They are:

Eleanor Close, South Park Gardens	New development
Castle View, Brownlow Road	Rebuild, formerly Mabuhay
Land Adjacent to 26 Station Road	New development
18 Murray Road	Front/rear/side extensions
Station underpass	Murals
16 Shrublands Avenue	Refurbishment
4 Shrublands Road	Refurbishment
Gossoms End Surgery	Solar panels, facing East Meadow
Knightswood Mansions, Shootersway	New development, formerly The Orchard
The Denton, Shootersway	New development adj. Knightswood Mansions

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association
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