



BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS

*The heart of
Berkhamsted*

www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/

October 2024 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Chairman's Report

Susan Johnson writes

chairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

It's only been four months since the last newsletter, but it seems a long time since June. We had the Hustings on 20th June (well attended, and live-streamed for the first time) and our Centenary on 4th July marked by the Town Post and shield unveiling. Oh, and the General Election. Fancy forgetting electing 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. We hope to invite our new MP, Victoria Collins, to address the Association as soon as she has organised her back office to make a date. It is not meant to be a political meeting, but a 'getting-to-know-you' evening and a discussion of her priorities; and ours. Please, no vision statements!



Please, read carefully the 'Townscape' report for all the upcoming public consultations on various new housing proposals and redevelopments in and around the town. Your voice 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 participate in; and the Neighbourhood Plan formulation. Look out for the upcoming exhibition on that in the Civic Centre over the half term period.

Our Centenary Pole & Shield unveiling was quite well-attended, and the Bridgewater School Choir

sang beautifully. They are well worth inviting if you want a pleasant addition to your event. Only chocolate and fruit juice are required as encouragement.

We are now trying to organise a talk or two on more general subjects – just for entertainment. But the next definite event is the Christmas (yes, Christmas) Best Shop Window Competition, which we organise with the Town Council for the **Festival of Light** on **Sunday 24th November**. It seems early, but it's the way the dates fall this year. The organising meetings have already started.

And so to the New Year ... when we plan to have our **New Year's Day walk** on –yes, you guessed it – Wednesday 1st January 2025; starting from the station forecourt at 10.30 a.m. This will, of course, be dependent on the weather and the health of the leader's legs! Look out for notices on our website and by email.

Now – how about joining us on the main Committee? Or Townscape?



We need more members – to share the load. Think about the importance of encouraging participation in Town life. It only requires a willingness to attend an occasional evening meeting in local houses; and, of course, an enthusiasm for local issues. Come along to observe – try before you buy!
Best wishes to you all!

Townscape Group

Gordon Bluck, Chairman, writes

vicechairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

We continue meeting monthly as a group to consider all the planning applications in Berkhamsted and Northchurch. We review between 30 and 40 new planning applications each month. I would like to thank the entire group, but particularly Paul Crosland who completes the minutes and Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby who collates the planning lists. The current list of applications we have responded to are as follows:

Hedgerow Place, Bullbeggars Lane: Conversion of barn to residential dwelling. (pending)

1 Cambridge Terrace: Extensions. (granted)

Castle Hill: SANG. (granted)

Dutch Barn, Castle Hill: Separate dwelling. (pending)

36 Charles Street : Replacement front door. (granted)

Berkhamsted Pre-Prep and Prep School, Chesham Road: Parking. (pending)

5 Eleanor Close: Extensions. (pending)

Bungalow, Greene Field Road: Demolition and construction of 8 flats. (pending)

125A High Street : Advertising signage. (pending)

Tabure, 157-159 High Street: Projecting illuminated sign. (pending)

230A High Street: Restore walkway. (granted)

271-273 High Street: Tree works. (granted)

George and Dragon, 87 High Street, Northchurch: signs. (granted)

Rosemary Cottage, 126 High Street, Northchurch: Three houses. (granted)

Evangelical Church, Kings Road: New church. (pending)

23 Kings Road : Replacement of (most) windows and replacement of conservatory roof. (granted)

71 Kings Road.: New Dwelling. (withdrawn)

5-7 Lower Kings Road: Internally illuminated fascia sign. (pending)

3-5 Prince Edward Street: -Development of mixed retail and residential dwellings. (refused)

Rossway Estate: Retrospective Planning dog recreation area. (pending)

Rossway Estate: Retrospective permission for installation of 135 storage containers. (removed)

8 St Margaret's Close: Development. (granted)

Berkhamsted Hockey Club, Tring Road: Installation of 2 Padel courts and floodlighting. (pending)

Two Ponds Lane: New mast. (pending)

22 Verney Close: New dwelling. (pending)

Haresfoot Farm, White Hill: -Development of 59 residential units. (granted)

Haresfoot Farm, White Hill: SANG. (granted)

As Chairman Susan has said in her report, we welcome new members to the Townscape Group. Phone me on 07856 665813.

Can I remind all our members of our annual Environment Award which closes as at 31 December 2024 and to let me know any developments finished

this year. This may be a new or renovated building or improvement to an open space or amenity. Please let me have your nominations to me at vicechairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk.

THE BCA : 100 YEARS AND OUT ??

This year has been an important one for the history of the BCA; on the fourth of July, it was one hundred years to the day since the inaugural meeting of 'interested citizens' took place at Berkhamsted Castle, having obtained the consent of the Duchy of Cornwall.

Reaching a century in any field is a milestone: in age, with the bat in a cricket match, even 100 days in office for a new government! The BCA is justifiably proud of having given 100 years of service to the town of Berkhamsted (and Northchurch) and has made, and supported, some significant contributions to the civic life of the town during those 100 years. Over the years we have sent representatives to many local organisations including the Berkhamsted Castle Trust, and the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust. The Annual Environment Award Scheme was introduced in 1980. The awards include the refurbishment of Berkhamsted Town Hall in 2000, and Rectory Lane Cemetery in 2021. The first award went to Monks Cottage, 296 High Street, which has since gone through several transformations. Through years of involvement in the civic life of the town, the views of our organisation's Committee have become well-respected, and our reputation as a 'force for good' in Berkhamsted is something of which we are very proud.

The world is ever-changing, however, and if we look forward another hundred years, will the BCA still be in existence in 2124?! If it didn't already exist, would the BCA be 'invented' today? The advent of the internet has made increasingly significant changes to all our lives in the past quarter-century or so, and in particular e-mail, social media, messaging services and tele-conferencing have radically changed the way that we communicate with each other. For the recent Hustings for the General Election, we live-streamed the event so that people who were unable to attend could see it – either in real time or as a recording. It wasn't perfect, but we learned from our mistakes and it will be better next time around! The COVID-19 pandemic served to highlight the benefits – and some downsides – of modern technology. Had the pandemic happened fifty years earlier, the BCA may well have played a much greater role in providing a community bond in the town – keeping residents informed of local developments by personal networks, by the telephone, or by regular newsletters delivered by hand, helping to identify the most vulnerable and arranging shopping deliveries for those who were shielding of otherwise unable to get to the shops. As it was, in the 2020s all of this communication was made electronically : local news was delivered quickly and efficiently by e-mail while WhatsApp groups in streets and neighbourhoods enabled

people to stay in touch with friends and neighbours and communicate their needs to others.

What role is there, then, for the BCA in the coming decade, twenty-five, fifty years? As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, the Townscape group is still active – meeting monthly and reviewing between 30 and 40 new planning applications that come in every month, affecting Berkhamsted and Northchurch. We still present the annual Environment Award at our AGM for buildings and other developments that contribute positively to our street scene. Our ‘Best Dressed Shop Window’ award is a regular fixture as part of the pre-Christmas Festival of Light. Then there is the New Year’s Day walk. Is there still a place for evening meetings – with speakers from a range of backgrounds, giving 45 minute talks on a wide variety of subjects, or do people – members in particular – get all the information they need through multifarious TV and radio channels, podcasts, streaming services and more? There are probably as many if not more clubs and societies in Berkhamsted than there ever were, though the memberships of most are declining. In short – what do YOU, the membership, want from the BCA? The committee members of the BCA are, to put it bluntly, ‘getting on a bit’. We desperately need ‘new blood’ on our committee in order that the BCA can continue ‘being there’ for Berkhamsted and Northchurch. Otherwise, your Committee may just have to ‘draw stumps’ on a fine century innings..... When asked ‘what does the BCA do?’, your Committee often struggles to define this succinctly. We are the Civic Voice for Berkhamsted and Northchurch – to find out more, we invite anyone who has time and enthusiasm on their hands to join us for a Committee meeting and see what we do.

SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces)

During the past month or so Dacorum Borough Council has approved two SANGs. The first of these is the land behind and to the east of Castle Hill; the second is a site at Haresfoot Farm, White Hill – the lane which leads from the bridge over the by-pass near to Ashlyns Hall and Ashlyns School towards Whelpley Hill. Another proposed SANG is situated at Nettleden Road, Potten End (near Water End) and yet another at Gaddesden Row.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (more commonly known by their acronym, SANGs) were brought about as part of a mitigation strategy to protect the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) from damage through the sheer volume of visitors – many of whom arrive by car.

Are SANGs ‘good’ or ‘bad’? Though apparently well-intentioned, with the aim of reducing visitor pressure on Ashridge, with their associated car parks, fencing and signage, they provide a ‘managed and manicured’ view of the countryside. 24-hour access to the sites also brings the risk of anti-social behaviour being focussed at their locations.

A longer version of this news item will appear shortly on the BCA’s website:

<https://www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/news-events/>

CONTACTLESS TRAVEL ON LONDON NORTHWESTERN RAILWAY

On 24th September, the roll-out of contactless travel, using bankcards or mobile devices, should have been introduced at fourteen stations between Kings Langley and Bletchley (inclusive) and on the St. Albans Abbey branch from Watford Junction, for travel towards London. However, this was delayed at the last minute due to suspicious cyber activity affecting Transport for London. LNW Railway and Transport for London are working together to re-schedule the launch date.

When contactless travel is introduced, passengers travelling with Railcards will still need to purchase tickets before travel as your bankcard or device cannot prove that you are entitled to reduced-rate travel.

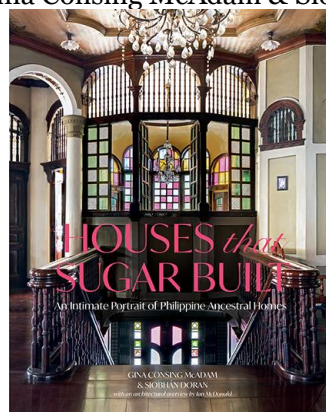
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Talk: “Houses that Sugar Built”

Date: Thursday 14th November 2024

Location: The Court House

Authors: Gina Consing McAdam & Siobhan Doran



Gina and Siobhan will be discussing the making of their fascinating and beautiful book *Houses that Sugar Built*, an Intimate Portrait of Philippines Ancestral Homes’. Anyone with an interest in photography and/or architecture, history, travel and conservation will find this an exceedingly engaging session.

In 2024 Siobhan won the prestigious Sony World Photography Award in the Architectural Design category for her series ‘Sala Mayor’ which is a set of images edited from the book. This series is currently being exhibited in Milan and opens in Berlin on October 10th at the Willy-Brandt-Haus and thereafter will be shown in major European city galleries and across the world.

Siobhan studied photography at the University of Westminster. Prior to her degree in photography Siobhan studied Architectural Technology in Ireland and worked in building design for 15 years. She founded her independent photography practice in 2006 and lives in Berkhamsted. *Houses that Sugar Built* is her 3rd book.

Gina is a communications professional and holds an MA in 20th C English and American Literature. She is the author of three books on company and organisational history including a history of the Lanesborough Hotel, Hyde Park Corner.

Gina began her career in communications and marketing at Ace-Compton Advertising and J Walter Thompson in Manila. Today she is a member of the Institute of Directors, a Fellow of the Institute of Hospitality and a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Marketers in the UK.

Best Dressed Shop Window Competition

The Berkhamsted Festival of Light will be held this year on Sunday 24th November. Every year Berkhamsted Citizens present a silver cup and certificates for the winner(s) and runners up of the Best Dressed Christmas Shop Window competition. This is the twenty-fifth year that we have been sponsoring the competition. It is open to all shops, and other premises with windows that are suitable for decoration, along the High Street (from Highfield Road to Cross Oak Road and including Lower Kings Road, Castle Street, etc.). There is no stipulated theme but, particularly in recent years when many shopkeepers are going through challenging times, in judging the windows we have taken into consideration originality and recycling rather than simply the amount of money spent. This means that smaller shops and charity shops are not at a disadvantage. We are looking for eye-catching displays which will attract passers-by. Judging takes place on Thursday 21st November and prizes will be presented at 5pm at the Festival of Light.

The Hospice of St Francis Christmas Tree Collection service has been going for 7 years, and in that time it has raised a whopping £146,000.

Their next Christmas Tree Collection will be taking place **on the weekend of 4th and 5th January 2025.**

They also expect it to run into the following week, with the support of some of their corporate partners.

This is in addition to the excellent service the **1st Berkhamsted Scout Group** has been providing for 15 years in conjunction with Dacorum Borough Council.

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby
membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Our membership stands at 263 households (419 individuals). A warm welcome to the 9 households who have joined this year.

A reminder will be sent to the 26 households who are still up for renewal for 2024. 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 that do not have an email address. 25 newsletters are still printed.

Strawberry Close (aka Castle Fields)
email: castlefieldsberko@gmail.com writes

Many of you will have seen the extensive fencing and gates that have recently been erected on land to the east of New Road in Berkhamsted. The existing and limited public Right of Way has been fenced in denying access to most of the routes used for decades, if not centuries, by the local community right on the edge of town.



Castle Fields Interest Group needs your help! The Group now numbers over 100 people on its WhatsApp group, and is still increasing. As one stream of action, the Group is gathering the evidence required to support an application for those pathways that have been used for many years to be established as official public Rights of Way. If you have walked, sledged or picnicked in those fields over the 20 years before 2024 and would be willing to complete the required evidence form, the Group would love to hear from you. *Please email: castlefieldsberko@gmail.com, or you can also get in touch via the campaign's Facebook page, Castle Fields Open Spaces.*

However long you have used this beautiful space, if you would like to be included on the WhatsApp Group to show your support and be kept up to date with progress on the actions being taken, then please send your mobile phone number to the email address above.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

Contributions to the Editor: Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, 15 Shrublands Avenue, HP4 3JH

or via email to: membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

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