

THE COCKPIT

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHISLEHURST RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
FOUNDED 1934 Membership 3,400 REGISTERED WITH THE CIVIC TRUST

The Cockpit, on Chislehurst Common, has been the traditional meeting place for Chislehurst people on all great occasions from time immemorial.

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TREASURER W. A. PAGE
EDITOR P. A. TURNER
10 Penn Gardens, Chislehurst

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ALEX DRAGE RETIRES

It was a matter of profound regret that Alex Drage, who had been the CRA Secretary since 1975, informed us that he had to retire from the post in November. Hospital treatment requiring a period of convalescence meant that he would not continue in a job when he could not give it his full-time active attention. As Committee Member, Treasurer, and the Secretary, Alex has made an exceptional contribution to the work of the Association. By unanimous resolution of the Committee there will be a testimonial and the presentation will be made at the April AGM. All contributions to The Treasurer, 4 Melbury Close, Chislehurst.

BOROUGH PLANNING PROCEDURES

In recent months there have been occasions when CRA representations to the Council on planning applications have been acknowledged, but have not been put before the Committee deciding the issues at stake. Because these irregularities did not occur in one isolated instance, we wrote to the Council's Chief Executive giving details, but these have been refuted.

Despite the Council's refutation we believe that the CRA allegations, based on evidence of our members in the Public Gallery, are correct and a cause for concern.

The following report commenting on current matters was submitted by a member of the CRA's Planning Sub-Committee.

Of the 203 applications for planning permission within Chislehurst so far this year the CRA has made representations to the Council with regards to less than 10 per cent. That we were justified in these instances has been largely borne out by the decisions of the Council's Planning Committees. As a large part of Chislehurst has been designated a Conservation Area in which no development, other than that which 'shall either Preserve or Enhance', is supposed to be allowed, the CRA would be failing in its duty if it did not take a keen interest in planning matters.

It is indeed a pity that we sometimes feel the Council needs to be reminded of its duties regarding the Conservation Area. It should also be pointed out that from time to time planning applications are made retrospectively for un-authorized development. (In these instances objections from the CRA are frequently in accord with the views of the Borough Planning Officer.

Those who show the CRA in a bad light by making disparaging remarks regarding its role as a defender against undesirable developments in Chislehurst do so safe in the knowledge that there is no news value, and therefore no publicity, for the applications which are un-opposed. Those applications which are opposed may therefore be referred to in an exaggerated way.

In recent months there have been two separate applications for permission to build private hospitals in Chislehurst. Solely from a planning point of view, and not concerning itself with the arguments for and against private medical care, the CRA opposed both applications. The first was planned to be sited in Green Belt land west of the A20 and north of Perry Street at Beaverwood. The Borough Planning Officer's report to the committee dealing with this application all but recommended that approval be given and brushed aside the importance of preventing development in the Green Belt. A caveat in the report regarding the possibility of aggravating flooding risks in the area might not in itself have seemed sufficient reason on which to base a refusal and a less determined committee might have granted permission. As it happened the committee refused the application for a variety of reasons along the lines of our objections, not the least of which was the need to preserve the Green Belt.

The other application was for a private hospital in the grounds of The Cedars which stands at the junction of Old Hill and Camden Park Road. The Borough Development Plan shows the land in this area as being zoned for Housing. It is also within the Conservation Area. It was therefore surprising to discover that this application was included in the 'recommended for approval' section of the Borough Planning Officer's report. Notwithstanding this the committee firmly rejected the application following a well reasoned case for refusal by Councillor Reeves.

It should be recognised that, whilst amenity groups are sometimes regarded as vociferous minorities, those who seek to exploit the 'potential' which they see in areas such as Chislehurst, often represent no one other than themselves and their financial backers. There are of course, no objections to anyone making money, provided it is legitimate and that it is not at the expense of the local amenities or in sacrifice of good planning standards.

Vigilance has always been the watchword of the CRA. No-one can afford to be complacent when Planning Officials are not seen to uphold the prin-

ciples of good planning. Then there is a greater than ever need to ensure that the Elected Representatives, whose function is to make the decisions, are fully aware of the facts, the opinions and the issues at stake; particularly when written undertakings by Town Hall Administrations to convey the details of objections to committee members are not carried out.

In these circumstances amenity groups may be regarded by some as being rather tiresome. Of course it is recognised that being a Councillor is not an easy task—any more than should have been the decision to stand for election.

Shortly before going to press, notice of yet another planning application for further development at Beaverwood has been issued. Perhaps one could be forgiven for wondering just how much longer it will be before it becomes impossible to see the wood for the buildings!

A20/A222

In response to our representation, a delegation from the CRA was invited to meet the Department of Transport in August.

At this meeting we expressed our fears relating to the secondary affects that would result from the proposed A20/A222 junction improvements.

Among the points discussed were:

The new scheme would mean the closure of foot-paths and accesses in the area, which we believe to be unacceptable and avoidable. A spokesman for the Department agreed this would happen but there was no provision for alternatives.

Traffic to the Beaverwood Club will be diverted via the A222 and Beaverwood Road. This will create a greater volume of traffic through an already hazardous road junction, and the GLC had previously written to tell us that no widening or 'improvement' of the A222 is envisaged as a result of upgrading the A20 or for any other reason.

Before there was any certainty that the scheme would proceed, compulsory purchase negotiations had started. The Department said this was normal practice and did not commit either party. The affect of this action has been to 'blight' the properties of local residents.

We believe the new junction is designed to create or will encourage a greater traffic flow from the A20 through the A222, which can only be to the long term detriment of Chislehurst and the Commons.

At this meeting with the Department of Transport, the CRA pressed for a Public Inquiry. This has subsequently been agreed by the Minister in view of the volume of objections which the whole A20 project has caused, in addition to those which the CRA represent. We shall keep in close contact with Mid-Green Residents Association in this matter because they, too, share many of our fears for the future of the whole area, from the A20 to Bromley and Orpington.

It is expected that the Inquiry will be held in April 1980.

SALE OF THE RECREATION GROUND

We have not had the assurances we requested from the Council that they were legally free to sell some of the recreation ground. Accordingly we asked for details from the original documents of land

acquisition to be made available for our inspection by the District Auditor. The Auditor's reply makes it clear, however, that the Council should not have sold the land without the agreement of the Secretary of State, although they cannot now revoke the sale. Additionally we were informed that the public have no right to re-open the matter after the sale nor seek to reverse the transaction.

In the eleven months of our enquiries with the Council we have received only evasive and unsatisfactory replies. We are therefore asking the Council's Chief Executive to ensure that future transactions are properly managed.

ASHFIELD LANE/LOOP ROAD

We were pleased to note that the Development Control Committee rejected the £10,000 plan for this junction, and that a new initiative would be made to the Ministry of Transport for 'STOP' signs to replace 'GIVE WAY' at this junction.

The CRA has advocated this solution for many years. We still think it is worth trying.

CHISLEHURST COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Chislehurst Rotary Club have suggested that Chislehurst residents should have their own Leisure and Recreation Centre. After an initial discussion meeting to obtain local views, the Rotary Club are making available £500 for a feasibility study. The CRA view the proposal with interest but cannot comment on the desirability of the Centre, until the feasibility study is completed and more details are known.

BUS TERMINAL—ADELAIDE ROAD

Residents of the Adelaide Road area have thanked the CRA for supporting them over the years in seeking to have the bus terminus re-sited. The new lay-by in Belmont Parade will bring considerable relief to those householders who have suffered house damage and pollution. It is not a solution favoured by all, but nevertheless welcomed by many.

THE VILLAGE SIGN

We understand that the Fund formed to raise £1400 to renovate the sign has reached £600, and that Mrs Newport-Gwilt, the retiring Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, has separately raised over £500. It would seem, therefore, that the Conservators are now in a position to arrange for the main renovation work to be undertaken.

We do urge our members to donate to the Fund so that the sign can soon be back.

CHISLEHURST WAR MEMORIAL

Chislehurst people have shown great interest in the renovation of the Village Sign, but the War Memorial, at the junction of the A222 and Centre Common Road, is also in urgent need of restoration work. It commemorates those who made the ultimate sacrifice for us in two wars, and it appears that renovation work will have to be the responsibility of the people of Chislehurst. We hope that there will be enough public spirited people to see that the Memorial is properly restored—and as quickly as possible.

There are rumours in Chislehurst that the War Memorial will be re-sited. The LBB have told us that the rumour is without foundation.