

THE COCKPIT

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHISLEHURST RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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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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APPRAISAL AREA REPORT FOR CHISLEHURST

Preparation of the Local Plan

In 1976 the Greater London Development Plan (GLDP) was approved, and it set out the future planning of Greater London at the strategic level.

Local plans, prepared by individual boroughs, will complement the GLDP plan, and the LBB now have the responsibility for producing a Local Plan for the areas within its jurisdiction. The Borough has been divided into 17 areas and an Appraisal Report will be published for each; the Report for Chislehurst has now been issued.

Appraisal Reports are the first stage in the production of the Local Plan, and are open to public comment until 15th November 1980.

The next stage in the plan-making process is the production of the 'Report of Survey', and this will be followed by a 'Draft Written Statement' and a 'Proposal Map'. All of these elements will comprise the draft Local Plan, and all will be published for public comment before the final Plan is adopted.

The CRA has had the opportunity to study the Appraisal Area Report for Chislehurst and its views are summarised here. They have been advised to the LBB.

In general the CRA warmly welcomes the very clear declarations that the Council makes in the Report in respect of Chislehurst; concepts which the CRA has been promoting for many years and working with such vigour to maintain.

The following extracts from the Appraisal Report are worthy of note:

'Chislehurst . . . possesses a clearly defined character and identity and provides a pleasant and satisfactory environment for living which the Council will make every effort to preserve'.

' . . . there is little scope for large-scale housing development on virgin land for . . . much is high quality amenity land and Metropolitan Green Belt which the Council is eager to protect'.

'Chislehurst is not regarded as a suitable location for office development other than on a small scale to accommodate local services'.

'As far as practicable, therefore, both the GLC and Bromley Council intend to limit the passage of heavy goods vehicles through the residential areas'.

'Serious surface water flooding occurs in the Kyd Brook Valley, especially around Lower Camden. In response to this, the Council is operating a planning policy which will attempt to restrict new developments of significant size, in order to reduce the risk of further flooding'.

'Chislehurst . . . enjoys a high standard of amenity and environment. The Council will seek to maintain the established high standards of design in new buildings through the exercise of its normal planning control powers'.

CRA Comments

(The numbers and quotations refer to sections of the Appraisal Report)

Housing:

3.5 'But, given the environmental quality of the Area, there will be pressure from developers for speculative building'.

Comment: We urge that blocks of flats be avoided, if possible, and, in any case, that they should never be above three storeys.

Comment: Reference has been made to drainage difficulties in the Kyd Brook Valley, but no mention has been made of the instability of the Caves area and other mined areas.

Employment:

4.6 'Chislehurst is not regarded as a suitable location for office development other than on a small scale to accommodate local services'.

Comment: We agree with this view and trust that the mistake of granting 20,000 square feet of office space above the Sainsbury supermarket will not be repeated. In any event, this should obviate the need for any new office development in the area.

Transport:

6.3 Elmstead Woods Station

Comment: No mention is made of the present unsatisfactory situation with regard to parking in the immediate vicinity of this station. With cars parked all day on both sides of a road, which is now a LTB Bus Route, approaching the railway bridge, the situation is positively dangerous and involves a considerable loss of amenity to residents. It has been stated that many drivers who park their cars in Elmstead Lane come from much further afield. We should be grateful to be given up-to-date figures for parking and traffic movements at Elmstead Woods Station.

6.9 'It has been found necessary for the Borough to provide "bussing" services for some school children . . .'

Comment: If 'bussing' school children is to become a permanent feature, proper provision should be made for handling of vehicles at their destinations; facilities should be made available to enable pupils to leave and to enter the coaches inside the school premises. Furthermore, we suggest that the Council insists that heavy coaches follow prescribed routes in order to avoid minor roads such as Bull Lane.

6.11 ' . . . the A222 and A208 . . . are shown as secondary roads in the GLDP. . . .'

Comment: We will support the Council to keep the A222 as a secondary road notwithstanding the very heavy volume of peak hour traffic along this road. We will also support any schemes which will divert traffic away from this route and from the A208. The current load in Perry Street is above the designed level for this type of road. We would strongly resist any encroachment on the common.

Education:

7.4 Chislehurst Church of England Primary School.
' . . . this Borough's EDP advocates its retention and eventual replacement by new buildings, probably on the Bull Lane Allotments site'.

Comment: We would deplore the loss of this school and equally the loss of the allotments.

7.5 Mead Road Infants School.

'It is proposed that this school should be closed and its pupils diverted to Edgebury Junior Mixed Infants when that school is reorganised'.

Comment: We feel that this school should not be closed. The building and surroundings are conducive to a very happy atmosphere for pupils of this young age-group.

Comments for both 7.4 and 7.5 Sub-standard buildings do not necessarily mean sub-standard education. Both schools have particularly happy atmospheres and are successful.

Public Utilities:

Comment: In view of the warnings regarding the state of foul sewers in the Borough—a warning given by Councillor David some two years ago—we find it remarkable that no mention has been made of this problem.

9.9 'The transport depot at Beaverwood Road . . . is scheduled to close.'

Comment: We support wholeheartedly the statement that the Council will resist applications for redevelopment of the transport depot at Beaverwood Road as the site falls within the Green Belt.

Open Spaces, Etc.

Comment: It was felt that Coed Bel, the Ministry of Defence site at Perry Street should be shown as open space. It was understood that the site was to be returned to open space at the cessation of its (previous) war-time use.

Comment: The report states (10.2) that there is very little open space to the north west of Chislehurst Station and that the large gardens fulfil some of the functions of a local park. In view of this we stress the need to ensure that no back-land development takes place in the area and that any redevelopment at a higher density should also be resisted.

Reinstatement of Land

Comment: The area known as White Horse Hill allotments even in its present state is used and appreciated by a large number of local residents, and 'reinstatement', (10.3), may not be necessary.

Tree Preservation Orders

Comment: There should be a greater number of TPOs and we suggest that the Council conducts a survey with a view to increasing the number in the appraisal area.

Conservation and Environment

Buildings

11.6 'In addition to the foregoing listed buildings, there are others which, because of their architectural style

or historic interest, make a valuable contribution to the character of the area and, for that reason, have been included on a "local list".'

Comment: It is not felt that 'Deanwood' and 'Tapiola' in Beechcroft (Item 4) merit inclusion in this list and that to retain them would tend to debase the concept of such a list.

Maps

Comment: It is accepted that the small scale of the maps accompanying the Appraisal Report necessarily limits the extent to which they may be accurate and that they therefore can only give a broad guideline.

It is felt, however, that for the purposes of administration and adjudication on Planning Applications that maps of a much larger scale should be available lest damaging and irreversible mistakes occur.

By way of illustration, we draw attention to the Western Motor Works at Perry Street. The map shows the whole site zoned as INDUSTRIAL when in fact only part is such, the rest being COMMERCIAL. Part of the problem here and elsewhere is also due to the 'overprinting' of various symbols which, in places, go beyond the bounds of the intended area so noted.

Comment: Footpaths. Whilst these are noted as being for guidance, it is understood that the much larger scale maps showing public rights of way would be referred to when necessary by the Planning Department.

Borough Zoning

The CRA recommends the following changes:

St. Michael's: shown as Generally Residential Use—should be re-designated Green Belt.

Suggested that present open space between 24 and 26 Crown Lane be re-designated Private Open Space to safeguard the vista from this part of Crown Lane. It adjoins Green Belt/National Trust land. Also suggested that the allotments on north side of Crown Lane with junction of Hawkwood Lane be re-zoned Non-statutory Allotments thus confirming their present use.

Chislehurst Conservation Area

The CRA recommends the following enlargement to our Conservation Area:

The present boundary from Willow Grove to include Oakwood Close, the SIRA, to the railway line and following it to include Gosshill.

From Mead Road north to A20, along A20 past Perry Street to link up with existing boundary near Old Perry Street.

Include the middle section of Holbrook Lane.

Tree Preservation

Charles Weniger, a member of the CRA Executive, has recently formed a sub-committee which will work for the conservation of trees in Chislehurst. He reports here on the aims of this sub-committee, and on the legal protection that trees should enjoy—details obviously not widely known or observed.

'In Saxon times Chislehurst began as a clearing in a wood. It was a stony place'.

T. A. Bushell's Imperial Chislehurst

In Chislehurst we have inherited a beautiful and varied landscape and collectively we must ensure that there will be an acceptable living and working environment for the twenty-first century. Future generations will thank us if we do and rightly condemn us if we do not.

It is a fact that comparatively little amenity

planting of trees has been carried out this century in England and Wales and over fifty million trees have been lost in the past twenty-five years. The landowners and planters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created today's mature tree cover—we are neglecting it.

We have been fortunate in obtaining the voluntary help of a member of the legal profession who has a great interest in trees and with his assistance we hope to be able to advise you from time to time as to what can be done to ensure tree conservation.

Nevertheless the future of our landscape could depend on your interest and support. If you have any fears over conservation of trees in your immediate area, would you please advise us, so that we may take the matter up with the Borough Tree Officer, or through legal channels.

Tree Preservation Orders

The LBB has powers to make Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) to protect trees in the interest of the whole community. Anyone may invite the Council to use its powers, which include the power to make provisional orders to take effect at once if need be.

A number of orders have been made, some when planning permission has been granted for new development. They are registered as local land charges so that anyone buying property in the area will become aware of orders affecting trees on the land in question when their solicitor makes the usual searches before contract. But anyone may consult the Register and obtain a copy of any order upon application to the Council offices.

A tree which is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order may not, without the Council's consent or lawful excuse, be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor may it be topped or lopped. The penalties for contravening an order can be very severe: a fine of up to £1,000 or twice the value of the tree, whichever is the greater, may be imposed by magistrates if the effect of what has been done has been to destroy the tree completely or to damage it so severely that it no longer has any use as an amenity, or as something worth preserving. On conviction upon indictment the fine can be even higher and the Crown Court is directed to have in mind any financial benefit which has accrued or is likely to accrue to the offender because of the destruction of the tree. Magistrates may fine an offender up to £200 for lesser offences.

Conservation Area protection of trees

Additional protection is given to trees within a Conservation Area. A large part of Chislehurst is so designated and within this area owners are not free to deal with trees as they please. Trees of 3 inches (7.5 cm) or more in trunk diameter may not be lopped or felled even if there is not specific TPO on them. Six weeks' notice of intended works must be given to the Council in order that the making of a TPO may be considered or consent granted. Anything done to a tree which would have been an offence had the tree been subject to such an order attracts the same penalties.

In a few instances, local authorities have obtained injunctions in the High Court to restrain a landowner who threatened to fell trees in defiance of a Tree Preservation Order. Non-compliance with an injunction may result in imprisonment.

ROYAL PARADE

Development proposals rejected—our action vindicated

A report by CRA's Planning Sub-committee

The actions of the CRA, which is sometimes criticised when taking a firm stand against certain planning applications, have been endorsed by the DOE's Planning Inspector in his reports dealing with the appeals against the Council's decisions to refuse permission for changes of use at No. 5 Royal Parade. It will be recalled that it was proposed that the premises formerly occupied by Oakshotts should be (a) a Car Showroom, (b) an Office Suite and (c) a Restaurant.

That none of these has been allowed is good news for they would not have been in the interest of the majority of local residents and would have harmed the character of the locality. That this was not recognised by the Borough Planning officials, who apparently saw little wrong with the proposals and recommended permission for all three, is, however, a cause for concern. If such recommendations are to be made for proposals within the zone for which planning applications are supposed to be specially considered under the provisions of a designated Conservation Area, then what sort of fate awaits the areas at present outside?

It is to the credit of the Councillors who, with the benefit of representations from the CRA, and many individual residents, took the decisions to refuse permission. The appeal results have clearly vindicated all who stood against these inappropriate ideas and it is hoped will have given food for thought to the planners at the Town Hall as well as to the applicants and their advisers.

Future Vigilance

For the people of Chislehurst the lessons are clear. A constant guard must be maintained to protect everything worthy of retention, as it cannot be taken for granted that intrinsic values are in themselves sufficient to ensure that things remain unspoiled and that something totally undesirable will not take their place. When unacceptable proposals are put forward, objections to them must be made not only to the Town Hall, but to the Councillors who will make the decisions.

Complacency could have disastrous results, for where there is a will there is a way and where there is a will and money there could be a motor-way.

The CRA will continue to monitor all planning applications and take appropriate action when necessary.

KYD BROOK FLOOD LIAISON COMMITTEE

It is now three years since the last major flooding event and the formation of the Kyd Brook Liaison Committee which covers Farnborough through to Petts Wood, Bickley, Chislehurst and Sundridge. This geographical responsibility is necessary as flooding at any point is often caused or worsened by events up or down stream in a neighbouring area. Therefore, no area can be dealt with in isolation.

The Committee comprises individual committees from each area which are supported and funded by their respective Residents' Associations.

Council Policy from 1977

As continued building development and coverage of land increases the flooding risk, the LBB agreed that following the August 1977 floods all planning applications which could affect the areas of the

Kyd Brook would be vetted by the GLC, the authority responsible for the Kyd Brook.

Council Policy—1980

However, in a report issued by the LBB (August 1980) entitled 'Constraints on Development Due to the Inadequacy of the River System', it was disclosed that in future the GLC approval would only be required if:

- (a) development is in, over or under a water-course or within 20 feet of the side
- (b) flood risk areas qualified as 'defined'
- (c) development is either a substantial development or a medium size development with exceptional risk.

The development of single houses, small groups of houses and the majority of medium-size developments would be dealt with entirely by the LBB.

The Flood Liaison Committee reacted very quickly, objecting that the new arrangements were a departure from the Council press statement and promises made at the Public Meeting held in the Bromley Town Hall in October 1977. (At that meeting it was unanimously agreed that continued development is a major factor in the causes of flooding, therefore, restriction on all developments would be applied until full flood alleviation works were carried out).

Return to pre-1977 conditions

The Liaison Committee pointed out that permission given for a number of small developments in or near the Kyd Brook valley would constitute a substantial total area of surface water discharge and a return to the pre-1977 conditions. The question was also asked where now is the line to be drawn between small, medium and large developments?

Revised Report

As a result of the representations made to both Councils and publicly through the local press, this Report was withdrawn from the full Bromley Council meeting of 29th September 1980. On the 8th October 1980 a further Report was issued by the Council to clarify its intentions in order to avoid public criticism that there was a major change in policy. However, the content and tone of this Report would confirm our view that the removal of the 'constraints' will mean an increased flooding risk. A case in point is when the Flood Liaison Committee makes observations to the Council regarding proposed developments its main concern is that drainage systems should not increase the flow-level of the Kyd Brook but be retained until after high flows have passed. To this end we stress a preference for on-site storage.

Unsuitable Alternatives

We noted in the Council's Report of August 1980 that: 'The provision of storage for surface water on development sites to avoid aggravating flooding problems would continue to be regarded as a satisfactory means of restricting the flow to rivers'. However, on the 'clarifying' Report of October 1980, it is stated: 'The Council as a declared policy has never insisted upon on-site storage being provided for small developments in all cases where suitable alternatives exist.' This appears to be a complete reversal of policy.

Problem Areas

The latest Report also states that: 'developers will be encouraged to dispose of surface water by standard and deep-bore soakaways when ground and geological conditions permit'. This is presumably a

reference to developments intended on the land above the old chalk mine workings such as Chislehurst 'Caves' and the old 'Coed-Bel' site in Lubbock Road—(This site is now to be sold by the Council for development). But what if geological conditions do not permit? Then, undoubtedly, site drainage will be by 'alternative means', that is through existing drains direct to the Kyd Brook.

Increased Flood Risk

The claim in the 'Appraisal Area Report' that: 'the Council is operating a planning policy which will attempt to restrict new developments of significant size, in order to reduce the risk of further flooding'

is viewed somewhat sceptically in the light of the foregoing. The easing or removal of constraints on developments and the inadequacy of the Kyd Brook watercourse will increase the flooding risk.

MEMBERS' SOCIAL

Having moved this function back to September for various reasons, we were unable to enjoy the delights of the Graham Chiesman gardens as we did last year. Nevertheless, the evening proved to be a very enjoyable one judging by the animated conversations being carried on by members. It was very pleasing to see such a representative cross-section of the membership present, with a particularly good number coming from the Norlands Estate. I gather from their Road Steward that members in that area are very lively and responsive. Can we look forward to some of their number playing an increasingly active role in the Association's affairs in the near future?

We are grateful to Mr. Roger Sims, our M.P., and to Mrs. Sims for their acceptance of our invitation to attend, as we are to Councillor Mrs. Joan Bryant and Mr. Bryant and to Councillor Edward Myatt and Mrs. Myatt. Unfortunately Councillor Christopher Reeves and Mrs. Reeves, Councillor Mrs. Joan Wykes and Mr. Wykes were unable to attend because of holiday commitments. At the last moment, Mrs. Joan Newport Gwilt and Mr. Newport Gwilt had, regrettably, to make their apologies.

Our thanks must go to the Social Sub-Committee who worked so hard before and during the evening to make the function a success. We thank, too, those guests who so readily assisted with the chores of clearing up and washing up.

IMPORTANT REMINDER AND APPEAL

From 1st January 1981 members are reminded that subscriptions will increase as follows:

Individual members from 30p to 60p

Household membership from 50p to £1.00

O.A.P. membership from 20p to 40p per member or household.

We have tried, over the years of inflation, to keep down the costs of subscriptions, but, owing to increased expenses in hiring meeting rooms, in stationery, in postage and telephone calls and in producing 'The Cockpit', present income is not sufficient. Unless subscriptions are stepped up, we shall not be able to function in an efficient manner.

Will members please ease the load of Road Stewards by putting their subscriptions in an envelope and popping it through the Road Steward's door. The early months of the year when subscriptions are due, are unpleasant for collecting duties; especially if members are not in and the Road Stewards have to call repeatedly.

Thank you, Chairman