

BVRA newsheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

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Introduction

Summer, so called, is quickly drawing to a close - I hope you were able to find some sunshine and you enjoyed the break. Slugs and snails have certainly had a field day in our gardens!

I was sorry to have missed the Annual General Meeting. I was literally struck down with the mysterious summer virus. The attendance this year was somewhat disappointing, so I believe, and the evening was marred by the failure of the Civic Centre to provide the essential services for which we contracted in the booking fee. A letter from the Civic Centre management offering an apology for its omissions explained that there was an "internal breakdown in communication", and we have now received a credit note (£10) against future bookings!

Committee News

At its meeting on May 28th the committee elected Peter McLaren and David Rudd as Chairman and Vice-chairman respectively.

We are delighted to report that a fourth lady member has joined the Committee, Mrs Edna Brooks of Garrard Road, bringing our number up to 18 members. Welcome.

You will see from the list of Executive Committee members that a second Vice-chairman has been appointed, Mike Sawyer. The committee decided this was necessary in view of our work load and to provide cover against holidays and sickness - none of us is getting any younger!

Royal Golden Jubilee Celebrations

Those of you who attended the AGM or one of the events in the Village may have seen BVRA's display featuring our contribution to the celebrations. Dennis Woolmer reports on progress with the

project in this issue. I particularly wish to pay tribute to Dennis for his efforts on behalf of the community and to Sally Hull who was responsible for the fund-raising game she designed for the Banstead Fair on July 13th.

May I thank members and the community at large for their generosity in supporting our fund-raising which currently stands at £233.01p.

Chairman 357463

Planning Matters

Planning applications.

As we mentioned at our AGM, we looked at 120 planning applications in the last year. The flood has since increased with 25 on our agenda in July. Fortunately most of them are small and not contentious but three are large enough to be worth reporting individually. They will set precedents affecting Banstead's future development.

The Linden Homes estate

in the High Street is forging ahead with 56 of the 75 dwellings already sold. The Council granted permission for the front elevation to be converted to a single shop, as requested by Marks and Spencer for their food store. The question on everyone's lips is: When will M & S open their doors for business? but Linden have not yet given us a date.

6-12 Bolters Lane.

When McCarthy & Stone's appeal was dismissed last November, nobody thought that was the end of the matter and sure enough Pegasus Retirement Homes, who operate from Cheltenham, applied in June for a block of 32 'sheltered' apartments with 16 car parking spaces. They have bought the four existing houses outright. Their proposal is an improvement on McCarthy & Stone's 44 apartments with 12 parking spaces, which answers the folk who said we should not oppose McCarthy & Stone for fear of getting something worse. However we

have some serious reservations about the Pegasus proposal and, since their agents have courteously approached us and the Banstead Society, we have discussed them together.

In our view the proposed housing density is still much too high for this neighbourhood, bearing in mind that Bolters Lane is outside the defined Town Centre. The Linden Homes site is a high-density development in the Town Centre. Even if that density were to be applied to this small site it would only equate to 24 dwellings. Moreover the individual flats are larger and there are more two-bedroom flats than McCarthy & Stone proposed, so the block would be slightly wider and deeper and just as unacceptably massive in appearance. And the proposed levelling of the site would leave the attractive bank of trees and shrubs bordering the footway along Bolters Lane on a hump and so liable to dry out and die in a drought.

We are also worried about Pegasus's intention not to provide a resident warden, which the Local Plan assumes would be part of any sheltered accommodation and is included in the House Builders Federation's own definition of 'sheltered housing'. Pegasus propose to substitute a telephone-call service with daily visits, but will it always bring prompt attention to a midnight emergency in mid-winter? We rather doubt it.

In our opinion one parking space for two flats, though much better at first sight than McCarthy & Stone's proposal, is still inadequate, especially in view of the larger number of two-bedroom flats. We should expect the surplus cars belonging to the residents and their visitors to clutter up the surrounding streets. Unfortunately Surrey County Council's latest parking strategy, which has just come into our hands, does not appear to require a higher level of car parking spaces.

That document is long but we have the impression that Surrey are worried (as are we) about the difficulty of preventing people from parking in streets away from where they live or are visiting, to the great inconvenience of the residents in those streets and their visitors. However Surrey evidently lack the will or the ability or both to resist the government's present policy of imposing strict

maximum limits on parking provision in new developments, in the hope (we think the vain hope) of reducing traffic congestion thereby.

As we go to press, Pegasus and their architect are looking at some of our concerns and may come back with some minor modifications to their proposals. We suppose the Council might determine this application in September, but probably not until later.

Belvedere House.

It is now well over three years since the 70-bed seafarers' retirement home at the bottom of Holly Lane fell empty. The site is on the edge of, but definitely within, the Green Belt. It was owned by the Royal Alfred Seafarers Society since before it was designated as Green Belt. But the Local Plan explicitly forbids any new development in the Green Belt (except for agriculture or forestry), with the express purpose of "safeguarding the rural environment from inappropriate development and maintaining gaps between settlements, bearing in mind the considerable pressures for development that exist." It allows old redundant institutions to be preserved and enhanced if they are of architectural or historical interest but not replaced by new private housing.

The Society applied to redevelop the site as a care home in 1999. We objected that the new building would encroach onto open land and the plans were amended to keep it within the footprint of the old building. Permission for a 40-bed care home was granted under an agreement which permitted the Society to expand their other institution at Weston Acres in Woodmansterne Lane, with the condition that the old Holly Lane home should be demolished when the new Weston Acres was occupied.

The demolition went ahead in 2001 but, instead of building a new care home, the Society sold the site to Country and Metropolitan Homes who put in two applications for new housing, the first for a block of 24 flats on the old footprint and the second for 12 detached houses on a larger footprint, both with garages.

We discussed the applications in committee on 6 June and invited members living in Pembroke

Close, whose back gardens border on the site. A small minority thought we should go along with one or other application for fear that something worse might otherwise be imposed, but the general feeling of the meeting was that we should object to both. We did so a few days later, referring to the Local Plan as above and pointing out that Banstead Village had benefited particularly from the Plan's containment of unwanted development because we are surrounded by Green Belt on three sides.

At the end of June the local residents held a second meeting, inviting Councillor Brian Cowle to attend and us to take the chair. Brian did not refer to our letter at first but asked which of the two proposals the residents would prefer. When we brought up our letter he said he would have to get a legal opinion. He consulted the Borough Principal Solicitor but in general terms without referring to our letter. We rectified that omission and drew particular attention to the important difference in the Local Plan between Residential Institutions, which are allowed in the Green Belt in some special circumstances, and new Dwelling Houses, which are not. We await the Principal Solicitor's response.

Those two proposals are fairly typical, in our long experience, of how developers try - and regrettably sometimes succeed - to get round the Local Plan by successive applications, each a little further from the Plan policies than the one before and nearer to what the developers really want, namely as many private homes for sale on the open market as they can cram onto the site. There is of course an enormous commercial demand for such houses, but that is not the same as a real need for them in the long term if you take account of protecting the amenities of the area, the quality of life of the residents and not least the environment.

Two-storey side extensions.

We have seen a spate of recent applications for two-storey side extensions to small and medium semi-detached and detached houses. Some of them have the undesirable effect of gradually converting the road into a row of terrace houses. The Local Plan does not allow that kind of development (see Policy Ho 16, Amplification 4); we always oppose it and so far as we know the

Council seldom permit it. We think applicants would be greatly helped if the Environmental Services Department warned them of that policy in the early stages of their applications. We are willing to advise members about such matters but of course only that Department can do so authoritatively.

David Rudd 356427

Green Belt

David Rudd refers above to the proposed redevelopment of Belvedere House. This is one of a number of developers' proposals in or adjoining the Green Belt that threaten to damage the local environment. Others include the conversion of the former Queen Elizabeth hospital site into flats (recently approved by the government); land off Kingscroft Road, Woodmansterne, recently divided into plots for sale on the internet (but without planning permission or, we trust any hope of getting it!); and rumours of the revival of the Legal & General A217 access road proposal.

In addition Sunrise Homes have recently held a local display of their proposals for a development of over 80 dwellings at the junction of Croydon Lane and Sutton Lane, immediately adjoining Green Belt land.

It is clear that developers are heeding the government's call for more housing in the south by targeting the green spaces we treasure.

This includes the proposal for a new sports centre on playing fields at Beacon school in Picquets Way, Nork, (although in the local plan this is "urban open land", not green belt).

Editor 355454

The Royal Golden Jubilee

The proposal to erect two pole mounted Village Signs at the Sutton Lane and Garratts Lane entrances to Banstead Village was submitted to Reigate & Banstead Borough Council Golden Jubilee Grants Committee in April. In May we were told that we had been successful in obtaining a Grant, which together with a contribution from BVRA funds, and donations received (see Chairman's Notes) will be sufficient to pay for the

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two signs. It is also intended to plant a selection of flowering shrubs round the base of each pole.

Surrey County Council Highways Dept have approved the siting of the signs, but at the time of going to press, the situation with Planning Consent from R&BBC is not known.

Once all the hurdles have been cleared, it is hoped to have the Signs in place before the end of the year.

Dennis Woolmer 361769

Highway Matters

Victoria Roundabout.

Long serving members of the Association will recall that, some years ago, the roundabout by the Victoria pub was altered as part of a road safety scheme undertaken by the County Council as highways authority. The primary purpose of this was to reduce the speed of cars as they approached and left the roundabout, as well as providing better crossing points for pedestrians. Whilst the new road layout is not the prettiest piece of highway engineering (some of the kerblines look a bit contrived), it has nevertheless achieved its purpose and traffic speeds at the roundabout are now much more appropriate to the High Street environment.

But in traffic engineering if you solve one problem another one frequently appears - in this case long queues of traffic at peak times, particularly from the Garratts Lane end of Bolters Lane. So the County Council, at the request of our County Councillor, are now investigating a further alteration to the kerblines at this point, which would in effect bring it back to where it started.

We say this is nonsense. Whilst many motorists (including no doubt some members of this Association) will fume about waiting in that queue of traffic, and would quite like a faster journey through this junction, consider the arguments:

- outside peak times, when there is not a queue, traffic speeds would inevitably rise, leading to reduced safety at the roundabout and at the pelican crossing by the Library;
- if traffic is able to travel more quickly around the roundabout, then more cars would be

- attracted to use that route, so the net effect on peak time congestion would be negligible;
- there is concern from many members about excessive traffic speeds along Holly Lane and Bolters Lane. We should be supporting measures which will help to reduce that problem (such as the new crossings reported below) rather than ones which will worsen it.

The Association is therefore opposing this proposed change as a backward step.

New crossings at Holly Lane and Garratts Lane. Meanwhile another part of the County Council is seeking to reduce the dangers from traffic on the routes that children take to the schools in the village. For a long time, the difficulty and danger to pedestrians of crossing Holly Lane and Garratts Lane has been recognised. The School Crossing Patrol (or "Lollipop Lady"), who used to provide school children with safe crossing at this point, is unfortunately no longer a viable proposition - abuse from motorists, insurance problems and lack of applicants have put paid to that.

So, what is being planned is a pair of zebra crossings (the ones with the flashing orange globes), one across Holly Lane, the other across Garratts Lane, both close to the mini-roundabout. In addition, a new pedestrian refuge in Bolters Lane, again just next to the mini-roundabout, will provide better means to cross Bolters Lane on foot.

Whilst this will not be a cheap scheme, the Association fully supports this proposal. It can only improve conditions for pedestrians at this difficult point, and might just persuade some people who currently drive their children to St. Anne's School that there is a viable walking route instead. Furthermore, many motorists travelling from Bolters Lane to Holly Lane (and vice versa) seem to do so at excessive speed, apparently failing to realise that this should involve slowing for the Give Way line. The new refuge will help to slow down this traffic.

We understand that design work for the crossings is underway, but there is as yet no decision on when they will be installed.

Tony Ford 354757

WANTED - Road Steward for Sandersfield Road and Gardens.

In response to my recent letter to members in these roads I was delighted to receive a kind offer of help from a lass in Sandersfield Road. She has a very young baby so her time is, naturally, at a premium. Surely there is another member who would be willing to share the burden of delivering NewsSheets and collecting subscriptions. As our volunteer puts it in her letter, "I would rather find the time than lose the service". Can you help? If so, please let me know.

Peter McLaren 357463

Subscriptions

May I please remind our Road Stewards that membership subscriptions, £1.50 per household, are now due for the year 2002/2003. Could I ask that subs. and receipt books are returned to the Treasurer by the end of November 2002 at the latest. This will obviate the need for a telephone reminder over the busy Christmas/New Year period. Many thanks.

Chairman 357463

Highways Issues and Responsibilities

As reported in the January 2002 NewsSheet, the Agency Agreement between Surrey County Council and our Borough Council was terminated in April this year. So who do we contact now if we want to report a problem? I hope the following numbers will be helpful:

Borough Council's Responsibility

Abandoned vehicles:	Ext 6239
Blocked gutters/highway flooding:	Ext 6262
Fly-tipping on highway	Ext 6262
Grass cutting:	Ext 6226
Land drainage/flooding:	Ext 6606
Street sweeping:	Ext 6262
Street trees:	Ext 6226
Weeds:	Ext 6219

S.C.C. Local Transportation Services

On-street parking:	Ext 6230
Overgrown vegetation:	Ext 6140
Pedestrian crossing lights/ Traffic signals out	020 8541 7343
Potholes /drainage:	Ext 6140
Street lights out:	(Call centre 08456 009009)

N. B. Access to the above extension numbers is via the switchboard on: 01737 276000

Chairman 357463