

# BVRA newsheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

Vol: 17 No. 3 September 2001

Autumn beckons us with the prospect of a winter of uncertainty as far as the future development of the Village is concerned, and with the implications of global warming - if there is such a thing! I hope you have enjoyed the summer break and feel the benefit of recent sunshine.

Attendance at our Annual General Meeting in May was well above average, with 118 members and guests present. From what we heard from our guest speaker, a lower priority is being given by the Surrey Police to the organisation of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in our area, particularly the provision of funding and communication with the general public. This is a pity because of the contribution a community could make in crime prevention. We are grateful for the efforts of our community policeman, Mike Ward, in maintaining public awareness

Chairman (BH.357463)

## PLANNING - A CRISIS OF OVER-DEVELOPMENT

We are currently facing the prospect of five new major housing developments and four minor ones. All but one already have planning permission or will almost certainly get it and they will add 225 new dwellings to our housing stock. If the last one, which is recent, also gets planning permission, it will raise that total to 265. We think that represents a serious over-development and we have to consider how best to oppose it. We shall need your help in connection with a forthcoming public inquiry.

The first of the major developments is the conversion of the northern half of **Castle House**, a locally listed building in Park Road, from offices to flats. We opposed the first application, which was for 28 flats, and joined the Council's negotiations with the applicants, Prowting Homes, in which that number was reduced to 21 and then 18, with 27 car parking spaces. We were and still are worried about the paucity of car parking spaces but the DETR's (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions) new policy is to limit the *maximum* number of spaces which developers are allowed to provide in the hope that the residents will find it is too inconvenient to own a car and will take to walking and/or using public transport. We believe that, on the contrary, most of them and their visitors will hang on to their cars and, when they can't find space in the grounds, park them in Park Road and The Tracery, to the inconvenience of the residents. We persuaded

Prowting to provide a pedestrian entrance to the grounds at the corner nearest the shops and they also agreed to exclude a small area in the north west corner which some Tracery residents have cultivated to make a pleasant little piece of garden.

With those modifications, Prowting received planning permission and the demolition work is well in hand. But Prowting have now come up with a new application to provide all the parking spaces on the surface (some were to be underground) by taking back that small area of garden and also reducing the planted area elsewhere on the site. That would reduce the cost of construction but we have of course objected to it. Developers often try to go back on what they have promised but we try to stop them.

The second major development is an extensive reconstruction of the locally listed **Council House** in the Brighton Road. It was the head office of Banstead UDC before we were merged with Reigate in 1972. The Council sold it for redevelopment in 1999 as part of their project for centralising administration in Reigate. After refusing one application (which we had opposed), the Council gave permission in July for 27 open-market apartments, plus nine 'affordable units' on an adjacent site in Lyme Regis Road. ('Affordable' in the Local Plan refers to people who cannot afford adequate housing on the open market, and any development for more than 25 dwellings must include some affordable units).

The third major development, which has been outstanding for a couple of years and has now been called in by the DETR (we do not know why) is for 75 flats on the site of **the old Queen Elizabeth's Hospital** in Banstead Woods to the west of Holly Lane. A decision is expected early in September but not in time to include in this NewsSheet.

The fourth major development is for six town houses and 50 flats over and behind a new parade of small shops on **the old Waitrose site** in the High Street, with 92 car parking spaces. We think most of our members would have preferred a Sainsbury supermarket, but Sainsbury pulled out and the Council granted planning permission to Linden Homes in April of this year.

We reported in the previous NewsSheet on their proposal to redevelop the old Dillons/Waitrose store.



What a difference a couple of months makes! The planning application for the site (to demolish the existing building and construct a new line of retail units along the High Street frontage, with the remainder of the site developed for residential use with a total of 50 flats and 6 "town houses") was approved by the Council at the end of April. This time the developers (Linden Homes) moved quickly and at the time of writing (early August) demolition of the old building is complete – what a different aspect we now have to the High Street! The developers have already begun the foundation work for the new buildings and indicated that we should see the first residential units (on Bolters Lane) completed in spring 2002. Their programme is for completion of the whole development by the end of 2002.

The fifth major development in prospect is an application by McCarthy & Stone, the well-known providers of sheltered housing, for permission to pull down four houses on the east side of **Bolters Lane** (nos. 6 to 12) and build a three-storey block of 43 sheltered apartments, plus accommodation for the house manager. The new DETR policy is greatly to increase the housing density (measured in dwellings per acre) in urban areas, in order to bring more and more people into the south-east corner of England, although we are already seriously overcrowded compared with other parts of the country. But this site is less than one acre and the density will be eleven times as high as elsewhere in this residential neighbourhood, and three or four times as high as the new DETR target. The plans show one residents' lounge, measuring 26 x 21 feet, on the ground floor (none on the first or second floors), while the outside areas at the sides and behind the block will be mostly taken up by the few car parking spaces. There will not be much space for the vaunted "lifestyle like a club".

McCarthy and Stone propose to provide 12 car parking spaces for the residents, the manager and the care staff, which we understand will be three persons living off the premises. The firm claims to have "unsurpassed experience in providing on site car parking within its sheltered housing developments for elderly people", although we are informed the minimum age is 55 or 60 - not the age at which people commonly give up their cars.

McCarthy & Stone's latest ploy (end of July) has been to distribute to our Councillors and others a pretty but misleading coloured 'perspective' of the proposal as seen from the Victoria roundabout. The trees in Bolters Lane are shown in full leaf and no vehicles or people are shown, which is not the normal scene. More seriously, the roof line of the proposed building is shown as well below the parapet of the adjacent block of shops and offices which ends the shopping area, whereas the application drawings show the proposed roof line well above that three-storey block. Our advice is: do not trust any information that is not part of a formal planning application.

We and the Banstead Society, with whom we are in alliance, have objected to the application, and the Council's Planning Committee have refused permission. Nevertheless the developer has now appealed. We have asked for permission to give evidence, knowing that the outcome will be cited as a precedent. If the appeal is allowed, there will be a flood of applications for more such over-crowded developments. Members in Wilmot Way, De Burgh Park, Commonfield Road, The Orchard, Colcokes Road, Garrard Road and no doubt other parts of the Village have been approached by developers' scouts. If the appeal is refused, we may hope for a respite and perhaps a gradual realisation by DETR of the damage they are inflicting on us.

In our experience, whatever may be said in public, inspectors at planning appeals can be influenced by the strength of public interest, especially at public inquiries where the local - and perhaps even national - news media may smell a story.

So this is where you, our members, can come in. **You can write to our Councillors and to Crispin Blunt, our Member of Parliament**, at the House of Commons, London SW1 0AA (individually please, petitions are no good). Most important is for as many members as can find the time to come to the Inquiry, which will be on **Tuesday, 23 October, starting at 10.00 a.m.** Your silent, orderly presence there and *particularly at the inspector's visit to the site* will tell him or her that the people of Banstead are deeply concerned about what is happening to our amenities and quality of life.

We asked the Council to move the venue of the inquiry from the Town Hall in Reigate to our new Banstead Civic Centre in the Horseshoe and are grateful that they agreed. Unfortunately the Banstead Centre was only available for one and-a-half days. McCarthy & Stone have now said that they wish to produce more expert witnesses; the inquiry is now expected to last for three days, and will therefore have to be at the Town Hall, Castleford Road, Reigate RH2 0SH after all.

If members who are able to go, or would like to go if they can be given lifts, will contact me not later than Tuesday 9 October, we will endeavour to coordinate our transport to minimise the number of cars descending on the very limited parking facilities at and near the Town Hall, and we are planning to hire a coach for the occasion. My address is on the last page of this NewsSheet.

David Rudd (BH. 356427)

### Decriminalisation of parking

The lack of Traffic Wardens in Banstead High Street has become a bit of a joke in recent years, but there is a serious side to this. Whilst motorists who park illegally will (usually) escape without a penalty notice, life for the rest of us is made more difficult, more



unpleasant and potentially less safe. How often have you had to dodge around the cars that are clustered (illegally) around the cash point at Barclays Bank? Or tried to cross the road by one of the designated crossing places on the footway, only to find a car parked (illegally) across it? Less obviously, but just as importantly, there are a large number of areas along the High Street where cars can park quite legally for a period of up to 2 hours so that people may drive in to visit our shops and businesses. But if those cars stay there all day, as many of them do, that means less opportunity for other people to find a parking space in the village. Our businesses complain that this means fewer people through their doors than would otherwise be the case.

For some time now the Local Authority has been considering the introduction of a scheme for "Decriminalised Parking". This is where the local authority, and not the Police, have the responsibility for enforcing the parking regulations. Our council already does this in the off-street car parks. We think they should be given the opportunity to do the same for on-street parking as well, if only because Surrey Police (and the Met before them) have so obviously failed to provide that enforcement. The Association, in conjunction with our partners in the High Street Steering Group, are preparing some proposals for how this may be done within the village. We hope to be able to publish details of the proposal in the next NewsSheet.

Tony Ford (BH. 354757)

### Traffic in Court Road and Avenue Road

We reported in the previous NewsSheet about an initiative for a possible scheme for "traffic calming" and better crossing arrangements for pedestrians in Court Road and Avenue Road. A circular letter, describing the scheme and inviting feedback and comments, was delivered in March to 187 households in Court Road, Avenue Road, Cheviot Close, Clifton Place, Courtlands Crescent and De Burgh Park. A total of 48 responses was received by the closing date of 21 April, a response rate of 26%. Thank you to all members who took the trouble to return the circular with their comments and views.

The circular identified four types of problem experienced by residents due to traffic. These were:

- Excessive speed;
- Congestion and safety concerns related to St. Anne's School traffic;
- Illegal parking by Barclays Bank;
- Safety on the corner of Court Road and Avenue Road.

The responses broadly endorsed this list. Additionally, three respondents felt parking at the corner of Avenue Road and Court Road was a problem, and four considered that an excessive

amount of kerbside parking space in Avenue Road was occupied by Waitrose staff. One respondent thought that volume of traffic was also a problem, and one pointed out that the road has inadequate visibility in places. One respondent considered that there are no problems that need addressing.

In considering ways in which these problems could be alleviated, the circular firstly identified three types of traffic calming measure which are considered to be NOT appropriate for use in these roads, namely:

- One way traffic;
- Road narrowing;
- Speed humps.

Of those that commented, seven agreed that one way traffic should not be introduced, with one respondent saying it should be reconsidered. Similarly, five agreed that road narrowing should not be introduced, with one response proposing reconsideration. It was more evenly split on road humps, with four agreeing they should not be introduced, but five respondents suggesting they should be.

Moving on to the suggested scheme, this comprises a package of measures as follows:

Provision of five safe crossing places for pedestrians, (in the vicinity of St. Anne's School, near Courtlands Crescent; on the corner of Avenue Road and Court Road; at the end of Avenue Road by Waitrose and Barclays Bank), to be formed with "raised tables" across the road so as to also result in reduction of vehicle speeds;

Minor changes to the kerbline at the corner of Avenue Road and the High Street (by Barclays Bank) to reduce the speed at which cars turn left off the High Street;

Introduction of reminders that this is a 30mph speed limit (perhaps with enforcement measures such as a speed camera) or introduce a "20mph Zone";

Signing or other measures at the ends of the road to discourage through traffic;

Minor changes to parking restrictions.

A total of 30 respondents commented in overall terms on this set of proposals. Of these 28 were supportive, with two opposed. Many respondents commented on the individual elements of the scheme, thus:

Element	Agree	Disagree
Crossing points formed by raised tables	9	5
Signing at ends of road	8	3
Barclays Bank / Waitrose area	0	3
20 mph zone	11	2

As a consequence, the scheme will be reappraised



in respect of the Barclays / Waitrose area, and further consideration will be given to a 20 mph zone.

A total of 26 suggestions were made about ways in which the proposals could be modified to improve them. Many of these ideas were sensible and have been given further consideration for incorporation into a revised set of proposals.

It was also apparent from some of the responses that the rationale behind some of the scheme proposals had not been sufficiently explained within the circular (for example that excessive speed only occurs at certain times of the day and by a minority of vehicles, and excessive above what measure?). It is proposed that, as the next step, an extended version of the circular will be prepared with a more thorough description and with some revisions to the proposals to incorporate the results of this survey.

In parallel with the survey, we have also been in contact with the Borough Council to determine their attitude to the scheme. As we suspected, although for some time now the Council has earmarked these roads for, as they call it, a "traffic management scheme", there have always been competing requirements for resources from elsewhere in the Borough. This year is no different, but we hope that by taking the initiative and developing some proposals that have the support of local people we can get a head start for next year's allocation.

Tony Ford (BH. 354757)

### Primary Care Trust

Readers of the latest issue of "Care Spectrum", produced by East Surrey Health Authority, will be aware of the proposed creation of the Primary Care Trust (PCT) for East Elmbridge & Mid Surrey, which includes Banstead.

Primary Care is at the heart of NHS modernisation, and the proposed Trust would create one organisation, integrating community based services, to shape them to local need. The PCT would aim for a clear and strong involvement with local people, with the vision of integrated care considering the 'whole' patient, recognising that other aspects of a person's life impact on their health. PCT would provide 'health' services rather than 'illness' services, with improved access. One of the targets would be to provide same day access to a family doctor, rather than having to wait days to see the G.P.

The PCT would be independent from East Surrey Health Authority and would have the power to 'buy' secondary (hospital) services from the NHS and private providers, as well as provide a range of community based services. It is hoped that the PCT would be

operational from April 2002, but in the meantime a period of consultation is under way. Public meetings arranged to be held in Epsom, Banstead, Dorking, Esher and Leatherhead will already have taken place by the time this NewsSheet has been distributed, but the Consultation Document can be obtained by writing to:-

Candy Morris, Chief Executive  
East Surrey Health Authority  
West Park,  
Horton Lane,  
Epsom  
KT19 8PH  
or telephone freephone 0800 7833617

Comments are invited and must be made by 12<sup>th</sup> October 2001. The BVRA will be responding, and if members wish to raise issues or concerns, please contact me before 5<sup>th</sup> October.

Dennis Woolmer (BH. 361769)

### Business Community Representation

You will recall that in the May NewsSheet I referred to the need for the voice of the High Street to be heard in the debate of local issues. I am pleased to report this view received endorsement at the AGM by our members and, accordingly, three representatives of the business community were elected to serve on the Committee. Their names appear on the list of committee members published in this issue.

A copy of the previous NewsSheet was distributed by Ron Phillips to every shopkeeper and business in the High Street and the preliminary results of a follow-up canvass has resulted in a large number of new members. We must thank Ron for the amount of time and effort he has put into this initiative.

Peter McLaren (BH. 357463)

### CCTV in Banstead

Many people were able to see the display which, courtesy of Collingwoods (who lent the TV/VCR), signalled the launch of Closed Circuit Television in the High Street. This took place on June 16 outside Woolworth, and outside Waitrose. The display, which showed pictures of PC Ward walking along the street, gave a good view of what the cameras can see. We were able to show the pictures also to those who attended the BVRA stand at the Banstead Fair. Everyone agreed that the quality of the pictures was excellent and that Mike Ward gave a very convincing portrayal of a disreputable character.

Chris Penfold (BH. 212051)



**End of an era**

The Prisons' Minister, Beverley Hughes MP, has announced a change in the role of HMP Downview. From September it will become an establishment for female prisoners.

As someone who has served as a member of Downview's Board of Visitors (the public watchdog) since it was opened in 1989 this marks the end of an era during which the Village community has done so much to integrate the prison into our local society. I should like to pay tribute to all those community and other organisations which have offered work opportunities to inmates who have earned release on temporary licence, giving them the chance to regain some of their self-respect and to put something back into society in return.

The nature of the contribution a women's prison is able to make to Village life in the future remains to be seen.

Peter McLaren (BH. 357463)

**Let there be light**

The Millennium lights along the High Street remain and will play a part in the Christmastide festivities this year. If funds permit there may even be an opportunity to add more lights to ensure a better display throughout the Christmas period.

Chris Penfold (BH. 212051)

**Banstead Christmas 2001**

After the success of the Millennium Lights in the High Street we want to do even better. The councillors, traders and residents are planning to have a special day to start the Christmas festivities. On Saturday December 1<sup>st</sup> we want to light up the High Street with colour, street events and singing. The shops will be decorated and stay open until 6 p.m. for you to buy those Christmas presents.

The Council has agreed to make Saturday December 1<sup>st</sup> a free parking day. We have asked Father Christmas to come. We are looking for a "celebrity" to turn on the lights. Could you make the longest cracker in Banstead? Christmas is a time for friends of all ages to come together and celebrate this special time. If you have ideas or would like to help please ring me.

Councillor Brian Cowle (BH. 353631)

**BVRA Finances**

You will recall that our annual accounts, published in the May NewsSheet had not been audited due to the sudden death of our auditor, Frank Dadswell. I am pleased to say that Richard Bowes' offer to act in this capacity was gratefully received, and he was duly

appointed at the Annual General Meeting. Richard has completed his scrutiny of our accounts and given us a clean bill of health.

I should like to take this opportunity to remind our Road Stewards that membership subscriptions, now £1.50, per household are due. Could I ask that subscriptions and receipt books are returned to the Treasurer by the end of November at the latest. This will save the need for a telephone reminder over the busy Christmas/New Year period. Many thanks.

Chairman (BH. 357463)

**Committee News**

My appeal for public-spirited members to come forward and offer themselves for election to the Committee did not strike a chord! Disappointingly, only one member responded to the call and we have warmly welcomed Graham Ward of Court Cottages. Sadly we are lacking female members, with Shirley Conacher the sole representative on the new Committee. With three vacancies there is still the opportunity to co-opt new members and redress the imbalance in the genders! Please call me if you would like more information.

I am delighted to announce we now have an Hon. Editor of the NewsSheet (as from this issue). He is Mike Sawyer who will be pleased to receive any "letters to the editor" or public announcements for publication in future issues. His address, along with those of all Committee members, appears elsewhere in this NewsSheet which you may wish to retain for future reference.

At the May committee meeting Peter McLaren and David Rudd were elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the current year. I am hoping an 'apolitical' candidate for the Chairman's office will emerge during the coming months as it is time the present incumbent stood down after some 16 years! Please feel free to give me a call if you would like to take on the challenge in the future. It is both rewarding and worthwhile.

Chairman (BH. 357463)

**Age Concern Banstead**

A request has been received from Age Concern for drivers to help, on an occasional basis, with hospital, doctor's, chiropodist and similar visits.

Volunteers are urgently needed and if you can spare an hour or more a month they would like to hear from you. Mileage allowance is paid, and for more details please telephone me, or Mrs. Christine West on BH. 352 156.

Mike Sawyer (BH. 355 454)