



High Wycombe Society

SECRETARY: J SCRUTON 17 LONDON ROAD HIGH WYCOMBE BUCKS Telephone
25933

Newsletter No. 14 - September, 1972

Group Activities

Planning

The Planning Group has been re-established and held its first bi-monthly meeting on 12th September. Planning watchdogs are examining applications on a weekly basis and matters of significance are brought to the attention of relevant Residents' Associations, and the Group's Chairman, if action is required.

Planning Watchdog:- Mr. K. Peatey, 44, Rectory Ave., High Wycombe. Tel. H.W. 26820.

Area H.7 - Hazlemere

We are glad to report that the application for the massive development in this area has been rejected. However, this does not mean we should now forget the matter, as there could be an appeal or even alternative plans.

Other Applications

During the period we have given support to objections against planning applications as follows

Watchet Lane/Primrose Hill, Widmer End - for residential development of 279 dwellings. Now refused.

Perks Lane/Hampden, Prestwood - for residential development. Now refused.

Totteridge Road, High Wycombe, for illuminated signs on new office building. The Council's ruling is awaited.

Also we have given support to the Hughenden Residents' Association at an inquiry into appeals against planning applications previously refused. The Inspector's report is awaited.

With regard to the Hughenden Valley area, we supported the residents in their opposition to planning applications by Bovis (Southern Homes) Ltd for the development of 80 acres of farm land stretching from the north west side of Coombe Lane, Hughenden, to Little Moseley Farm, Stocking Lane, Naphill. We have heard that the applications have been refused by the Rural District Council. Such a massive development would be disastrous for the Naphill and Hughenden Valley area.

The "Western Desert"

The Planning Group has been giving much thought to this area and will be producing a recommendation for consideration by the Executive Committee in November. If possible we wish to see an end to piecemeal industrial development which is being permitted at the expense of housing. We wish to see a balanced development of mixed residential/ commercial/light industrial premises, properly related to community open spaces and amenities. Included in this general arrangement could be a large hotel with conference facilities and a theatre complex ("The Dove"?) at the Octagon end of the Town centre. We see no reason why the River Wye should not be made a feature of such a plan.

Old Peoples' Homes

We feel the Borough Council and those directly involved in the development at Barracks Road are to be congratulated for a most effective and satisfactory project.

County Structure Plan.

We are giving full support to the initial statement and objectives as issued by the County Council. We shall be able to comment more purposefully when the Draft Structure Plan is published in May/June, 1973. Meanwhile we are seeking confirmation that South Bucks should be regarded as a "no growth" area. We also believe the Structure Plan and the Transportation Study should be properly co-ordinated. We hope that all Affiliated Societies will respond to the invitation of the County Planning Officer and forward their comments on the preliminary document which is available in the offices of local Councils and in Public Libraries. Copies were distributed to Societies at the recent Quarterly Meeting.

Metropolitan Green Belt

The Minister of the Environment has now given his approval to an extension of the Metropolitan Green Belt in Bucks by 127 square miles. This will give very strong support in preventing housing or industrial developments over this large area. Although this is very welcome news after a wait of ten years, it might well place much greater pressures on land outside the Green Belt. It is up to all of us to be watchful and to see that planning applications are treated strictly on their merits.

Traffic

The Traffic Group is continuing its efforts to have the High Street relieved of superfluous traffic. As a result of its objections to the Borough's gyratory scheme, the Minister has asked for a full report from the Regional Controller. The Group is considering whether the Traffic census, as at present conducted, is likely to produce any meaningful data, since doubts have been expressed by several professional friends on that score. If necessary, appropriate representations will be made.

The Group would welcome additional members in order to extend its activities.

Group Secretary: Mr. W. Kraft, 12, Wellfield, Hazlemere.

Telephone: Penn 2724.

Historic Works and Buildings

Old Chequers

Another Chapter is being written in the saga of the Old Chequers at the corner of White Hart Street and Church Street. No sooner had the work of restoration started, as a result of the last Public Inquiry, when it was abandoned. The owners again applied for permission to demolish it, and after receiving objections from this Society, and other amenity organisations, including the Chiltern Society, the C.P.R.E. Penn Country Branch, and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Minister ordered another Public Inquiry. At a meeting of the High Wycombe Borough Council a number of Councillors raised the alarm. The building was a dangerous structure, and the Society was "like a dog in the manger, burying its head in the Sand" for trying to save it. A notice has been displayed by the Council warning everyone of the danger.

The Society had its doubts, and was able to persuade the owners to allow an inspection of the building by Mr. Gunolt Greiner, who has a unique experience in the field of timber-framed buildings. Mr. Greiner has now inspected the building, and will report shortly. From a preliminary verbal report it appears that he was unable to support the view that the building was dangerous and he is of the opinion that the building can be, and ought to be, restored. He was of course accompanied by the owner's representatives who drew his attention to every defect.

Timber-framed buildings are extraordinarily resilient, and are able to lean in various directions without losing their stability. It is these idiosyncrasies which give character and added interest to these buildings. As for woodworm, this has absolutely no effect on the heavy hardwood beams, and can never penetrate beyond 3/16th of an inch. Beyond that the wood presents the most formidable opposition, even to the sharpest saws.

There is no doubt that the Old Chequers is worth preserving. Mr. Greiner thinks that it is no less important than the Guildhall. It has a crucial position in the Conservation area, and its loss would be a tremendous blow to the town centre. If fully restored it would be a building of outstanding interest and charm, and would attract many visitors. The owners need never regret its restoration.

The owners have invited the Society to a meeting, to discuss the report of Mr. Greiner, and arrangements are being made for this meeting to take place at an early date.

Conservation Area, High Wycombe

Since the designation of a Conservation Area in High Wycombe, we have been conscious of the need for a general improvement. There have been a number of encouraging advances recently and these suggest that the enhancement of the whole area is now possible. The Borough Council can take a great deal of the credit for the Inner Relief Road landscaping scheme, the restoration of the Guildhall and the Old Market Hall, and for their firm support of the Parish Church restoration. Some people may look upon the new Woolworths with mixed feelings, but it could have been far worse and is a far more pleasant sight than some of the other recent buildings in the High Street. In Easton Street a number of fine buildings have been redecorated and some of the ugly gaps are being filled in. The small but enthusiastic group now restoring Nos. 19 and 20 Easton Street are playing their part in the general improvement. With the incomparable Rye, Holywell Mead and the Bassetsbury Areas, linked by the River Wye, the Conservation Area has much to offer.

We made an approach to the Borough Council about the possibilities for improvement and they have agreed to a meeting with the Borough Engineer to discuss proposals. Of course any scheme must be under the control of the Borough Council, and must have the support of the various owners of properties. It must also have the support of the general public. There is a widespread movement of this kind throughout the country, and we hope that High Wycombe will play its part.

Saffron Platt

On 18th July we took part in the Public Inquiry about the houses in Saffron Road and Station Road. We pleaded for their retention and rehabilitation, and asked that consideration might be given to define the area as a General Improvement Area. We now await the Minister's decision. We thank Mr. Kraft for leading the case for the Society. We also appreciated the work carried out by Mrs. Cassidy and Mr. Hutchinson in providing photographs.

Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1972

This Act of Parliament includes a very welcome innovation which gives power to local planning authorities to control the demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas. Previously demolition did not need planning consent except in the case of listed buildings. Many conservation areas, including our own, contain buildings, groups of buildings, or whole streets which, although not of listing quality, nevertheless contribute a great deal to the area. Planning authorities will now need to identify those buildings, group or streets in conservation areas, which should be made subject to demolition control. We shall certainly press our planning authority to do this.

Water Group

The Group held another successful River clearance morning on 19th August, when both branches of the Wye were cleaned up at the eastern end of Desborough Recreation Ground. We filled 31 sacks with small items, and had several larger catches of logs, car tyres, and a gas meter! All the spoil was removed by the co-operation of the Borough Council.

We are planning an Exhibition in the Library from 25th November to 12th December, in collaboration with the Exhibition Group. In it, we hope to show various aspects of the River from West Wycombe to Loudwater. If any members of the Society have any material relating to the Wye that they would be prepared to loan for the

Exhibition, the Group Secretary (Anthony Smith, Old Mill Cottage, Bassetsbury Lane - Tel: H.W. 29301) would be most grateful.

We have also been in correspondence with the Council about the possible restoration of the Pann Mill machinery to a working condition. The first response was unfavourable, but we are pleased to report that the Council now consider that there is something in this proposal, although "action at the present time would be premature". Naturally this is a rather more cautious attitude than we would have liked, but at least there is now the definite hope that at some time in the future this important survival from the past might receive the restoration that it deserves.

Biological Survey of the River Wye

A detailed Biological Survey is now being planned. The aims of this survey are to ascertain the biological status of the River in terms of the species of flora and fauna present, and to give an indication of their distribution and numbers. Also, a study of a limited number of chemical and physical characteristics of the water will be carried out, and an attempt will be made to correlate these with the biological researches.

A large work force will be required to carry out this project, and help has already been offered by two local Secondary Schools and the High Wycombe College of Technology, as well as a number of individual members of the local community. It is hoped that more schools, amateur naturalists and interested parties will come forward to help with the survey.

The work to date has been concerned with assembling all the existing data on the River Wye, and consulting with various bodies such as the Freshwater Biological Association and Thames Conservancy for guidance in the preparation of a realistic and worthwhile working plan.

Anyone interested in this work is asked to contact John Peek, 11, Longland Way, High Wycombe. Tel: High Wycombe 31564.

Trees Group

As a result of our last Newsletter, Mr. and Mrs. Rippington volunteered to try to form a Trees Group. A meeting was held in the Friends' Meeting House on 14th September and the members present agreed to form such a Group. This is most encouraging as the Society does need such a Group to carry out work in the Borough and surrounding area. A wide variety of tasks could be carried out, all of them of value and interest. Some of these are:

- (i) Surveying particular areas to act as a basis for further action, especially with regard to recommending Tree Preservation Orders to the local authorities.
- (ii) Woodland walks and woodland tidying, in co-operation with the owners.
- (iii) Tree planting - suggestions to Borough and R.D.C. for planting of trees.
- (iv) Tree Bank to provide trees.
- (v) Studying important planning applications to guard against needless destruction of trees, and in order to recommend new plantings.

The Year 1973 is to be Tree Planting Year, and the Government is hoping that this will be the beginning of a long term campaign to continually increase the number of trees in this county. Obviously there will be a great deal of publicity during the coming months sponsored by the Ministry and local authorities, but we hope that all our affiliated Societies, and especially Residents' Associations, will decide to make some kind of contribution to this special Year. The Secretary of the Trees Group would be pleased to hear of any action decided upon by local Societies, or of any proposals they have for the town in general.

It is hoped that Residents' Associations will help the Trees Group by

keeping a watch on their local woodlands and trees and seek the Group's assistance if they wish to ward off any threats.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Group should contact the Group Secretary.

Group Secretary: Mrs. Barbara Rippington, 52A Booker Hill,
High Wycombe. Telephone : High Wycombe 26616.

Exhibition, Publicity and Social Activities Group

In July the Group moved well away from Exhibitions and arranged a Quarterly Meeting with a difference! Anne and Patrick Reyntiens very kindly allowed us the use of Burleighfield House and Grounds, and on July 21st we held a Serenade Concert of 18th Century music, with barbecue and wine. The weather was kind and 130 members and friends attended. The evening was voted a great success and we are indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Reyntiens, the Misbourn Players, members of this hard working Group, and other helpers. Perhaps we can undertake more of this kind of activity.

The Group has once again turned its attention to Exhibitions, and in co-operation with the Water Group is now preparing what might well be the first of a series of exhibitions depicting the various activities of the Society.

Quarterly Meetings

Quarterly Meeting of Society, 8th September

This was held in the main Lecture Theatre of the College in co-operation with the Rye Protection Society and the History Society. Mrs. Pratt of the British Waterways Board talked about Canals and showed some superb slides. This was a most enjoyable evening, largely due to the eloquence and enthusiasm of Mrs. Pratt. The lively question time which followed was a tribute to the interest she aroused. Those of us who were hot canal addicts were converted on the spot.

Quarterly Meeting of Affiliated Societies, 22nd September

This, our first attempt at bringing together Societies affiliated to us, met with a most encouraging response. Twenty six Societies were represented and we feel that the exchange of ideas from all parts of the town could prove to be one of the most important functions of the Society. We intend to continue these meetings each quarter and will circulate the Agenda in advance for future meetings as this may be helpful for delegates. Any suggestions from Societies for items of general interest would be welcome. We hope to circulate the Minutes of the first meeting in the near future.

Membership and Finance

Our individual membership is growing but we need more members in all parts of the town. We hope that the Secretaries of all affiliated Societies will help us to increase our membership by persuading their members to join.

We are pleased to hear that the new East of Amersham Hill Residents' Associations have decided to join us. Their area is certainly a vital one and needs the protection of a vigorous Residents' Association.

We are sending out an appeal with this Newsletter to all members and Affiliated Societies who have not yet renewed their subscriptions for this year. With rising costs of printing, postage, stationery, and everything else we use, and the prospect of heavier expenses in appearing at Public Inquiries, we do need every penny we can lay our hands on. We do try to economise in every possible way, and in this we have had unstinting help from members, ranging from the humble but important task of delivering Newsletters to the difficult and vital task of appearing at Public Inquiries as expert witnesses. Many members have sacrificed time and money to help the Society and we are extremely grateful to them. We do need the financial and moral support of all our members and affiliated Societies. It was the wish of all Societies at the first Quarterly Meeting that not only do we maintain our present activities,

but we should extend them. Please help us to help you.

Aircraft Noise

Like many Societies and individuals, we have complained to our Member of Parliament about the serious nuisance of aircraft noise. Mr. Hall has been informed by the Minister that further investigations are now being undertaken with a view to improving the situation over Maidenhead, High Wycombe, and other places badly affected. The investigation will take a month or two, and Mr. Hall is pressing the Minister to let him know when the investigation is completed.

The Society would welcome the views of affiliated Societies and members, not only about the aircraft flying to and from Heathrow and Luton, but also concerning the activities at Booker Airport, about which people living in the vicinity appear to have mixed feelings.

Footpath Walk

On Sunday, 3rd September, some of our members and friends, with their children walked along footpaths from the Rye to Little Marlow, returning via the Crooked Billet to Flackwell. The walk was most enjoyable and we thank Ron Sims for organising this. Some of those who took part in the walk expressed an interest in the formation of a Footpath Group, with the dual purpose of walking the paths and some clearance work. Such a group would provide a great deal of pleasure and healthy exercise for adults and children, and would certainly be a great asset to the Society. We need volunteers and especially someone willing to lead such a Group. Anyone interested is asked to contact the Hon. Secretary.

Wanted

Trees Group

Our last newsletter produced leaders for a Trees Group, and we hope this one will bring forward others willing to help with the following:

Programme Secretary

We need someone to arrange a programme for the eight Quarterly Meetings to be held each year. The job would be interesting and not too arduous. Any volunteer would not be thrown in at the deep end - the introduction would be very gentle.

Newsletter Group

We would welcome some help once every three months in addressing envelopes, stuffing them with Newsletters, and helping generally in distribution. We could also do with more "postmen" and "postwomen" to deliver in their own neighbourhood.

Christmas Cards

Derek Woods is again producing Christmas Cards on behalf of the Society for sale to members. The subject chosen this time is a drawing of the Old Market House of 1880, showing a Market scene. He is not yet sure of the price, but it will be in the region of 35p a dozen. No profit will be made. The cards will be available in about a month, but orders may be sent now to Derek Woods at 19, Adelaide Road, High Wycombe. Telephone High Wycombe 20284.