



High Wycombe Society

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NEWSLETTER No. 43

SPRING 1981

Malcolm Dean

The Wycombe District Council has suffered a great loss with the death of Malcolm Dean, the Planning Officer and Architect, and he will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues. Since the formation of the Society we met Mr Dean on many occasions and always found him willing to listen to another point of view. He carried out his very difficult job with great integrity, backed by a profound knowledge of architecture and the European heritage. He had a passionate belief in the need to treasure the good things which remain with us and was a champion of the aims of conservation.

On 26th February a memorial service was held in Hambleden Parish Church which was attended by a large number of his friends. A most moving tribute was paid by Miss G Belson, Chairman of the Planning Committee, and in this she revealed his many gifts, not only in his work but in his musical abilities and the arts generally. His death is a severe blow to the District Council and we offer our sincere condolences.

Jack Scruton

PLANNING GROUP

Development Control

The latest D. of E. Circular, 22/80 - Development Control, Policy and Practice - has aroused deep misgivings in many parts of the country, not only within the Amenity movement, but also among the ranks of local authorities. It seeks to secure a speeding up of the planning system, and to remove obstacles in the path of developers. Speed does not always spell efficiency. Quick decisions are often faulty. Our planning procedures have faults, but by and large they are sensible and prevent wholesale abuse. They must not be dismantled and we hope that local authorities will resist the unwarranted pressure to relax their controls.

Ted Keatney

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Housing in South Bucks

The decision by the Secretary of State to increase the housing allocation for South Bucks in order to accommodate 7,500 additional people up to 1991, despite the protests of the County Council, is causing deep concern, especially in the areas concerned. The vulnerable "white" areas, such as H.7 (Hazelmere), H.6 (Green Hill), and the Gomm Valley could be threatened. These and other "white" areas are precious stretches of countryside for a number of reasons, and they must be defended at all costs. With the present and future uncertainties it is foolish in the extreme to impose this burden on Wycombe and District. The need could easily be examined at the periodic reviews of the Structure Plan. The reasons advanced by the Secretary of State are without real substance and it would be extreme folly to sacrifice open countryside because of them. The principal local housing concern must be the people already here in need of homes who are unable to buy one of the very large number at present available. This means satisfying the genuine local need of those on the waiting list by means of local authority housing or some form of joint venture developments, and using small sites within the present boundaries of the town. The Saffron Platt and Albert Street sites are examples and there are undoubtedly others within the district.

The Biffa Tip Inquiry

Congratulations to the residents of Loudwater and District for the great victory in the Biffa Tip Inquiry. The defence of the important Dareham Valley was conducted with vigour and great skill, and with the knowledge that they were right. The prospect of the tip has haunted a large number of people for a long time and we can imagine the enormous relief on hearing the Secretary of State's decision. We would like to thank Eric Alexander for presenting evidence on behalf of the Society in support of the local residents.

Totteridge House and Sports Field

Applications were submitted for building five houses near to this fine house and to make use of the Sports Field to build 40 houses and a block of flats. The decision about the five houses has been deferred, but the building of houses on the Sports Field has been refused. Among other objections the local residents feel very strongly that the Sports ground should be retained and that extra housing would create severe traffic problems. We support them in their opposition.

Jackson's Site, Bourne End

Jackson's of Bourne End have made several applications to establish warehousing on the mill site and to make use of the old Sports Field for further warehousing or industrial use. The local residents have opposed the applications for a number of reasons, including traffic, the effect on the local environment and the loss of a Sports Field, which could and should be used for the benefit of the local community, deprived as it is of recreational space. The District Council has agreed with them and refused the various applications. The latest application is for warehousing on the mill site and to use the Sports Field for housing. The local residents have again opposed the applications and the Society will support them.

Ted Kearney

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HISTORIC BUILDING GROUP

Open Air Museum, Chalfont St. Giles

We are arranging a visit to the Open Air Museum on Saturday afternoon, 20th June 1981. The Museum will not normally be open on Saturdays, but the Museum authority is to make special arrangements for our visit and to provide guides to accompany our party in a tour of the interesting buildings already erected. In addition to this tour there will be an opportunity to follow the Nature trail laid in the beautiful grounds of Newland Park. A picnic tea can be taken.

The Coach would leave at 2.00 p.m. and return to High Wycombe about 5.30 p.m. A number of our members have already indicated at our last Quarterly Meeting that they would like to go. Members who would like to be included should contact Derek Woods, 19 Adelaide Road, High Wycombe - Telephone High Wycombe 20284.

Derek Woods

Old Chequers

Despite the strongest possible plea from the Chiltern Society and this Society, supported by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, to "call in" the application to demolish the Old Chequers, the Secretary of State has decided to take no action and he has therefore allowed the District Council's decision to demolish to stand. In view of the past history and the two decisions of the Secretary of State in refusing previous requests for demolition, we find the refusal to intervene most baffling. Despite all the brave statements made by the Government and others in authority, it seems that our historic buildings are still without proper protection and that until legislation is tightened up many more will disappear needlessly.

After such a bitter blow it is tempting to lose interest in fighting for historic buildings. Instead the two Societies are resolved to continue with this never ending battle and do our utmost to prevent a repetition of the Old Chequers disaster.

Jack Scruton

Conservation Area, High Wycombe

A Planning Application was made recently to build 40 flats at the corner of Priory Road and Priory Avenue and this would have meant the disappearance of two fine Victorian houses within the Conservation Area. After refusal by the District Council the applicant appealed, but the Secretary of State has decided that the Council was right to refuse. It was a plan out of keeping with the area and was a great over-development of the site. The loss of the fine houses was also an important factor. This was a very pleasing decision and we were very glad to support the District Council in their refusal.

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New Conservation Areas and Special Areas

Recently, Wycombe District Council has approved Three new Conservation Areas and five new Special Areas within the High Wycombe District Plan Area.

One new Conservation Area is Four Ashes which includes four Listed Buildings - Brands House, Rockhalls Farmhouse and the barns at Rockhalls Farm which have been sympathetically restored. The garden walls of Brands House are also listed. This is an interesting and compact area well worthy of its new status.

Another new Conservation Area is an extension to the present Tylers Green and Penn C.A. at Tylers Green. This includes two Listed Buildings - the Old Rectory and Tyler End, and a large tract of open common.

The third new Conservation Area is Abbotsbrook adjoining the existing Well End Conservation Area. Although there are no Listed Buildings within the area, it is nevertheless a pleasant, well-laid out residential area with a tributary of the Thames running through it.

There are five new Special Areas to add to the four already designated - Flackwell Heath, Lane End, Downley Common and Saffron Platt. Special Areas are those whilst not considered to be of sufficient quality to be designated Conservation Areas, are recognised as possessing a special local interest and also significantly contribute to the character of the locality. Within these areas, any planning proposals will be given the same consideration as is given to Conservation Area proposals to ensure that they are in sympathy with the character of the area as a whole.

One new Special Area is Amersham Road with Lucas Road and Rectory Avenue. There is one Listed Building in the area - the Royal Grammar School. Terriers Special Area includes large parts of open land on either side of the Amersham Road and the two Listed Buildings, Terriers Lodge and 201, Amersham Road. A length of West Wycombe Road is the third area chosen and Mill End House is a Listed Building within the area. Hedsor Road, Bourne End is another designated area and possesses three Listed Buildings - Hollands, Jeffries and a Toll House. Frogmoor has also been chosen as a Special Area and while it is something of a tarmac jungle at the moment, it is hoped that by designating it a Special Area, the Local Authority will be enabled to take action to restore it to something of its former glory.

Janet Tully

HERITAGE GROUP

Good News About the G.I.A. of Green Street

As many of our members will remember, the Council proposed some time ago that the area around Green Street in the Western part of the town should be declared a General Improvement Area, with housing restored and the local environment improved generally. The local inhabitants in general

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welcomed the proposals and an attractive scheme was drawn up by the Environmental Health Department. The Scheme remained frozen because of financial restrictions, but happily these have been removed, and the new 1980 Housing Act has encouraged the work to go ahead. The full Council made a formal declaration at their meeting on 2nd March and the Secretary of State has been informed. Two houses will be prepared as show houses to illustrate possible improvements, and it is hoped that the local people will seek financial help from the funds available in order to improve their homes. Other work to improve the local environment, such as tree planting and better traffic and car parking arrangements will be undertaken gradually.

We hope to see the Western Desert reclaimed and become a showpiece for Wycombe.

Bill Willson

Queen Mother's 80th Birthday Celebrations

We are indebted to some of our members and local business organisations for donations to the tree fund to buy trees and plant them in celebration of the 80th Birthday celebrations of the Queen Mother. The District Council has agreed to provide a sum equal to our fund up to a maximum of £100, the money coming from the Lottery Fund. We are very grateful for this help and we hope to obtain trees in time for a Spring planting. If delays do occur, the work will be undertaken in early Autumn. Young people taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme have volunteered to undertake the planting. This seems an admirable arrangement in view of the fact that this year is the 25th Anniversary of the Scheme.

Quarterly Meeting

On 28th January Mr Few from the Friends of the Earth at Watford gave a talk to our members and representatives from the local group of the Friends of the Earth. The talk was most interesting and deserved a large attendance. Mr Few described eloquently the major concerns of the Friends of the Earth and brought home to us in a vivid way the urgent need to husband our finite resources, and to look after this poor old planet. We certainly need his organisation and many more people should think seriously of ways in which they can help to prevent the sad waste of materials, and the many threats to our environment, including the wanton destruction of wild life. As Mr. Few emphasised, we must learn to live with, rather than at the expense of, our natural environment.

Roger Lawson

Wycombe Arts Festival - High Wycombe Society Exhibition

At the time of going to press we are putting together our Annual Exhibition as part of the Wycombe Arts Festival. The theme we have chosen is "Shopping in Wycombe - Past and Present". It has been the most difficult and yet the most fascinating Exhibition we have attempted and we hope it will be a success. It contrasts shopping in Victorian Wycombe with subsequent times and we are indebted to a large number of people and organisations for their help. Although much of the work has fallen on our Heritage Group, many others rallied to the call for help. In addition we would like to thank all those members who have agreed to look after the Exhibition.

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Future Programme

Thursday, 9th April 1981

Annual General Meeting in the Guildhall at 8.00 p.m.

Bernard Beard, Chief Forester in charge of the Chiltern Forest, will give an illustrated talk about the Trees and Woodlands around High Wycombe.

Saturday afternoon, 20th June 1981.

Visit to Open Air Museum, Chalfont St. Giles, to tour the historic buildings and follow the Newland Park nature trail. Coach leaves Wycombe at 2.00 p.m. and returns about 5.30 p.m.

Wednesday 7th October 1981.

Quarterly Meeting. Illustrated talk by Denys Ovenden on "The Making of a Natural History Book". In the Guildhall, High Wycombe, beginning at 8.00 p.m.

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