

SRA Shortlands Residents' Association
NEWSLETTER

Winter 2021
www.shortlandsra.org.uk

VIRTUAL AGM – 28 APRIL 2021

We were not able to hold an AGM in 2020 as a result of the lockdown, and it seems sensible to assume that large gatherings will still be outlawed in the coming Spring. However, it is important that we report back to members on what we have been doing on your behalf. We therefore propose to hold a virtual AGM using Zoom at 7.30 on Wednesday 28 April – details below. We hope to see as many of our members there as possible.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84585954425?pwd=N2hmdlpHeGhqUURKMGRaSlY5TnRxUT09>

Meeting ID: 845 8595 4425, Passcode: 992577.

IMPORTANT PLANNING DECISION IN THE VILLAGE

We have a significant twist in the saga of the development behind the hoardings in the Village. On 15 December a Planning Inspector dismissed the developer's appeal against the decision of Bromley Council to refuse a second application to develop the site.

So, once again, we have a very uncertain situation about what will happen next.

The shops have been closed and hoardings have surrounded the site for some years. It is a serious eyesore and commercially damaging to have such a large area doing nothing right in the centre of the Village. So, how did the inspector reach his decision and where do we go from here?

Before the developer filed their appeal after local consultation they submitted modified plans and asked the inspector to allow the appeal but including the changed plans. The modified plans were supported by the SRA. We took the view that they provided a reasonable compromise between retaining the existing frontage and the need to have the buildings commercially active.

It was a matter for the discretion of the Inspector whether or not to consider the modified plans as part of the appeal. The Inspector decided not to take that approach on the basis that the alterations to the original application were substantial and not just minor. In other words they should have been the subject of a new planning application.

The inspector also took the view that there had not been sufficient local consultation or at least there was no evidence of such consultation.

The Inspector looked at the history of the buildings and although not listed by Historic England, the buildings were nevertheless locally listed and of significant local architectural and historic interest. The proposed new development, he said, would *unduly compromise the form and appearance of the building and reduce its historical, architectural and visual value.*

There was another very significant factor to be taken into account; a separate but linked line of applications dealt with the right of the developer simply to demolish the buildings. The developer has that right and that remains a threat. The Inspector decided that he would attach limited weight to that risk in weighing up whether or not to grant the appeal.

Also considered were the potential traffic

Continued on page 2



Beckenham Lane, Shortlands. Early 1900s

Continued from page 1

problems resulting from vehicles parked on the roadway to make deliveries to the proposed new shop. The Inspector did regard these as considerable despite the fact that the shops now boarded up would also have received deliveries from Beckenham Lane.

The appeal was therefore rejected. That leaves us with another long period of uncertainty and inaction. Those hoardings will not be going away anytime soon. It seems to us that there must be urgent discussions between the developer, Councillors, the planning department and locally interested parties as to what would be approved. The present situation is a blight in the centre of our Village and the SRA has offered to broker such a meeting.

WHITE BRICKS

Some weeks before Christmas residents in a number of roads in Shortlands were perplexed to find white bricks outside their front walls. The local police were alerted and investigations began into this strange 'brick-laying'. Were they intended to mark out for thieves houses worth burgling, or was it a prank ... or something more sinister? Sadly, to date neither us, nor the police are any the wiser. If you think you know anything behind this mystery, please write to us at info@shortlandsra.org.uk

LAPTOPS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Rotary Club of Beckenham has a project to provide primary school pupils with refurbished equipment loaded with Windows 10 Education. To date they have provided 31 laptops to seven schools in the area.

Schools are desperate for more equipment and sourcing it is slow. Currently the Club are working on five laptops - wiping clean the memories, repairing anything faulty, loading Windows - and they have another three laptops promised. This won't be enough to satisfy the demand and they are looking for ways to raise the profile of the project, as well as the good work that Rotary does generally, so more laptops are donated to them.

If anyone has spare laptops or about to upgrade please contact the Rotary Club of Beckenham –

<https://www.rotary-ribi.org/clubs/homepage.php?ClubID=695>

SRA MEMBERSHIP

The support of our members in 2020 has been terrific. First of all, the number of those arranging Standing Orders not only exceeded our wildest dreams, but many added donations, and the income which resulted was really encouraging for those of us who give their time to help run our organisation. While almost one-third of our members made SOs, one-quarter made Bank Transfers, and so were not far behind.

Much of the above, happened before the virus made person to person contact really difficult. Now it has hit again, we hope many more of you, our supporters, will consider direct payments. If you do arrange a bank transfer or a standing order directly with your bank, please make sure either your Liaison Officer or the Membership Officer know that you have arranged an SO or bank transfer and give us your name, first line of address, plus the sum and date it was made.



OPEN SPACES CONSULTATION

The SRA recently responded to a significant consultation document from Bromley Council on a long term strategy for the management of open spaces in the borough. Bromley is, of course, lucky to have so many parks, woods and other open spaces, including South Hill Wood, Kingswood Glen and Queensmead.

We noted the threats from pressures from development and the pressure to deliver housing targets, and the fact that the consultation did not take into account the contribution that private gardens could make to wider environmental objectives. We also questioned the timing of the exercise – people's behaviour and how they value our green spaces might both be influenced by the current pandemic and it was too early to assess the extent of these changes.

Over 800 people and organisations responded to the consultation. The council has since put out a press notice stating that they do not intend to sell off open spaces for development.

NEW COVID 'LOCAL HERO'



Rainbow Boy, another local COVID initiative'

We are rightly reading a lot about NHS heroes during this dreadful pandemic, but we hear less about our own local heroes.

Seena Chand, who lives in Farnaby Road, did something ground-breaking in 2020 for the

local community and beyond. She and her husband Vishal set up the NHS Wellness Boxes project to send boxes containing individual messages of thanks, together with toiletries and snacks, to NHS staff members in the COVID and A&E wards of our local hospitals, other London hospitals and beyond. They are intended to help cheer and revive them and remind them they were being thought of and appreciated.

Seeking and receiving donations in kind and cash from the local community and further afield, everything was sent to their house, and they packed 1500 boxes themselves! They set up a collaboration with Kings College Hospital and other volunteer groups popped up around the country to help them and local hospitals. Over 7000 boxes have so far been put together and delivered to hospitals across the country, ranging from our own Princess Royal University Hospital (PRUH), to Guys and Lewisham and as far as Leicester and Cambridge...even to a couple of hospices.

NEWS FROM OUR LOCAL GREEN SPACES

Though the Friends' monthly 'workdays' are on hold due to COVID restrictions, activities in South Hill Wood and Kingswood Glen have not stood still over the last few months.

Many of you who took a walk through the Glen over Christmas and the New Year will have seen the Christmas decorations arranged by local children along the low fencing bordering the Glen footpath, for which they collected over £300 for the NSPCC.

Meanwhile a contract to restore and replace broken fencing alongside the path is being arranged by Council garden management company idverde, and the Friends are investigating restoration of the three smaller ponds in the Glen.

Back at South Hill Wood plans have been completed to surround the fountain in the middle of the Wood with dwarf hurdling, a low fencing to protect it against some of the intrusions which caused so much damage to fresh planting last year, but work to install this cannot start until the workdays resume; neither can the work to reveal original paths around the fountain and remove invasive plants. But there should be a good show of bulbs this Spring, as Langley Park Rotary has planted over 1000 purple crocus bulbs to mark the



Rotary End Polio Now Campaign. And the 'bug hotel' near the Queen's Jubilee Gate in Tootswood Road is now finished and the Friends look forward to carrying out a census of its new residents!

Our local green spaces are very important to all of us, especially in these dark times, and it is wonderful that their importance has been recognised by the award to South Hill Wood of another Green Flag (for 2019/20), 'the mark of a quality park or green space' – one of only seven awarded across the whole of Bromley borough. If you would like to become a Friend, please contact their Secretary at bill@curiousferret.com

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