

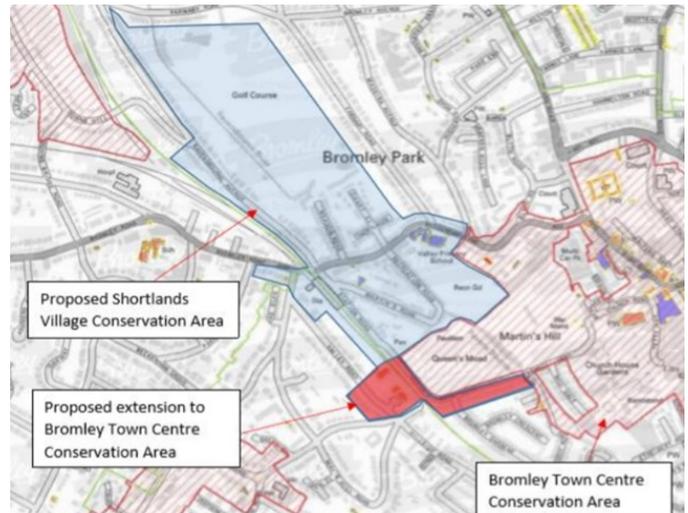
SRA Shortlands Residents' Association **NEWSLETTER**

Summer 2021
www.shortlandsra.org.uk

NEW SHORTLANDS VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA APPROVED

At its meeting on 8 July, the Council Executive agreed the new Shortlands Conservation Area and the extension of the Town Centre Conservation area. Proposals had previously been scrutinised by two other council committees. This follows extensive consultation with local residents and businesses and was strongly supported by the SRA, the Ravensbourne Valley Residents and the Bromley Civic Society.

This is part of the process of protecting the character of our towns, high streets and communities. Protecting our green spaces is central to this too. Councillors in Shortlands, Bromley Town and Copers Cope wards were also very supportive. Conservation areas help to protect the special architectural and historic interest of an area. It means there are extra planning controls and considerations in place to protect what makes our places special.



MEMBERSHIP SURVEY – HAVE YOUR SAY!

This Autumn we are planning to do a survey of the views of our members and non-members within the Shortlands community on what the SRA is currently doing to support them and what they would like the Association to do for them in the future.

Questions we shall cover will include whether we are doing enough to support our local community and which areas on which you would like us to concentrate or campaign.

Are we reflecting your views and concerns effectively in our engagement with local Councillors and Council officers? Are we keeping you well enough informed about our activities and what is happening in Shortlands? Should we consider merging with a neighbouring residents' association to add weight to our influence?

The survey will be both in hard copy via the Autumn Newsletter and online through the website.

It will help us shape our policies and strategy for the future. Indeed, our very existence depends on being sure we are properly representing the views and concerns of the people of Shortlands.

Watch this space and our website for more details!

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Following on from last year when membership was down due to the pandemic, we are now receiving more requests from local residents to join the SRA. These new members are preferring to pay by standing orders or bank transfers, which helps to streamline the Association's finances and lighten the workload of our volunteer Road Liaison Officers. Therefore, we continue to encourage all our supporters to pay their membership subscription by standing order, if possible.

If you would like a membership/subscription form, please contact Rob French:

Tel: 07817490611

Email: robertfrench3@outlook.com

NEW LEADERS NEEDED FOR SOUTH HILL WOOD FRIENDS

The Friends of South Hill Wood and Kingswood Glen are on the hunt for a new Chair and Secretary to fill these key roles after the present leaders step down at their next AGM in October.

The Friends are seeking replacements and fresh ideas to carry forward the work of this successful group. There will be training on offer to interested candidates and the present Treasurer will remain in post to ensure continuity. Further information is available, if you are interested in joining the committee, via the secretary at: bill@curiousferret.com.



The Friends are an active group and have achieved Green Flag awards (the Quality Mark for parks) for the Wood on several occasions, including the last two years. Both the Wood and Kingswood Glen are registered as local Green Spaces, signifying high local value and Town and Country Planning protection.

The Glen is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and is thought to be part of an Iron Age fort, whilst the Wood is rich in flora and fauna and is in part Ancient Woodland with an interesting history. Future projects already in planning are the restoration of a heritage wall and an amphibian pond in the Wood and new fencing alongside the footpath through Kingswood Glen.

NEW SRA RECRUITMENT LEAFLET

We have just published a new edition of our recruitment leaflet as part of a drive to increase SRA membership.

It highlights our history, our aims and the many things we do to meet these aims, ranging from fighting local undesirable development projects to liaising with our police on their priorities for Shortlands, to combatting vandalism and helping people in our community learn more about the area in which they live.

The leaflet also includes a membership application/subscription form.

Our Road Liaison Officers will use the leaflet to recruit new members and it will be available at Open Meetings and other public events (like Shortlands Market) to encourage locals who are not members to join us.

The higher the level of SRA membership within Shortlands, the stronger and more influential is our voice in the local community to highlight and fight for those issues that concern local people most.

ADDITIONS TO OUR WEBSITE

Over the last couple of months we have made a number of improvements and refinements to our website at <http://www.shortlandsra.org.uk>.

You can now access our Newsletters more quickly online, as there is a heading devoted exclusively to them on the top of our home page.

Also, to enable members and non-members to reach us more easily, under the 'About the SRA' heading we have added an up to date list of all our Road Liaison Officers with the roads they cover and contact details, and a list of all the members of our managing Committee and their contact details.

Finally, under the 'About Shortlands' home page heading, we have added potted biographies of many of our famous 'Old Shortlanders', ranging from those internationally renowned like Enid Blyton to lesser known figures like William Wilkinson, nineteenth century owner of the Great House (now Bishop Challoner School) and funder of the first parish church of St Mary's.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In the Queen's Speech the Government announced a Planning Bill which would bring into law radical changes in the planning procedure. This had been anticipated through an earlier White Paper called "Planning for the Future".

This document anticipated that local authorities would divide up development areas into three zones, Renewal, Protected and Growth areas. In principle once these areas had been agreed then developers would use "deemed permission" rules with very limited local control over actual development.

While nobody doubts that change is needed to improve and speed up the planning system there has been a great deal of consternation over the extent of these changes.

A very recently published Select Committee report was critical of the original proposals identifying for example a lack of detail in the White Paper and that local authorities in their Local Plans should identify in growth and renewal areas the height of buildings, density and infrastructure to support the new developments. The report stated that local councillors, very important as part of the current planning process, were not mentioned at all in the White Paper.

The Secretary of State had said that 300,000 homes per year would then be built but the justification for this figure has been challenged.

We share concerns about the disappearance of local involvement. We are working with other Residents Associations to ask our MPs to play their part in challenging these new proposals.

We also plan to pursue our concerns about what we perceive to be an anomaly with Building Regulations. As a result of a building project reported to us by one of our members we tried to check whether the new structure complied with planning or building regulations. We discovered that so far as building regulations are concerned the owner/developer can choose whether to work with the local authority Building Control officer or engage a private Approved Inspector.

The problem is that there is nothing in law which requires the publication of building control activity. It so happens that Bromley choose to make public the building control

process. In the case referred to us a private inspector was engaged and when we contacted them they told us they could provide us with no information because of contractual privacy.

We are very concerned that important building work can be carried out without neighbours being able to confirm to their satisfaction that a neighbour's extension, for example, or a new roof has actually complied with building regulations.

We have been in contact with other Residents' Associations, who also recognise this problem, and we do plan to contact local MPs to see if they can influence a change in the law.

AUTUMN OPEN MEETING



We are planning to resume our programme open meetings in the autumn, provided that this is permitted by government guidance. One topic that has been raised with us recently is that of air pollution. This topic has received much attention following the death of a young girl with asthma, Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, and the coroner's injunction on the medical profession and government to do better.

While we often think of Bromley as a "green" borough, there are local hotspots, not least at the junction by the railway bridge and outside Valley School. There have been calls for local authorities to do more, including having the power to close or divert roads to reduce the volume of traffic, especially near schools when pollutant levels exceed defined limits.

As with previous open meetings, we will invite an expert panel to discuss the issues and give local people an opportunity to raise their concerns.

Watch this space!

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