

Shortlands Residents' Association Open Meeting
16th November 2024, 10:30 – 12:00 at Harris Primary Academy Shortlands
Shortlands - Past Present & Future

Chair: Mike Ricketts, Shortlands Residents' Association Chair

Chairman's Welcome

Mike Ricketts (MR) opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees, including Liam Conlon MP (Beckenham & Penge), Councillors Adam Grant & Gemma Turrell (Shortlands & Park Langley), Michael Tickner (Beckenham Town & Copers Cope) and London Assembly Member (Bexley & Bromley) Thomas Turrell and introduced the panel:

Danny Miller (DM), Shortlands Residents' Association Development Officer
Linda Baldwin, SRA Liaison Officer

A Short History of Shortlands

Linda Baldwin gave an illustrated talk on the history of the Shortlands area of the Ravensbourne Valley from the earliest evidence of habitation at Kingswood Glen through the 19th century transition from a rural estate to Victorian suburb and the story of the associated village to the present day. Linda also spoke about the history of Shortlands Residents' Association and its campaigns over the last 90 years. (The slides can be viewed at: <https://shortlandsra.org.uk/about-shortlands>)

Issues and residents' concerns affecting Shortlands Present

Mike Ricketts itemised the following concerns of SRA members and residents:

- Development – controlled or uncontrolled
- Parking – more car parks?
- Station – lifts, carpark, staffing
- Shortlands Village – shops (open and closed)
- Road Safety – speeding, zebra crossings, bridge junctions
- Law and Order/local crime
- Potholes – danger to people and transport
- Housing – affordable, houses in multiple occupancy (HMOs)
- Pollution/environment – traffic congestion
- Litter – need for more bins?
- Leaves – collection systems
- Drains – Thames Water responsibility
- Lack of community activity – is there a real sense of community in Shortlands?

Possible solutions, ideas for Shortlands Future

Danny Miller raised the question of how Shortlands and the SRA will develop over the next 10 years. He put forward the following scenarios:

- How much influence will residents' associations, planning officers and councillors have in the face of growing pressure to fill quotas for new housing stocks? Permitted Development regulations allow increasing the height as well as extensions to the footprint of existing buildings. Applications for HMO applications are increasing, including one proposal to divide a flat into units (rejected).
- Boris Johnson's government produced a white paper proposing a radical overhaul of the planning system. Something like this might be revived.
- The construction of tall tower blocks in Bromley Town Ward is likely to increase to meet quotas, impacting the skyline above Shortlands Ward.
- The Shortlands Blueprint seeks to make the Shortlands Village street-scene inviting to residents and visitors. The ownership and use of the shops forecourts has been a vexed question since at least 1924 and only recently become clearer through the work of Cllr Adam Grant and the

Bromley Council Legal Dept. The Small Parades Grant awarded last year will be used in part to install planters and seating to improve the "triangle" of land in front of the hairdresser and the mini markets and encourage pedestrians to linger in the village.

- A few years ago, the SRA researched local parking and proposed additional controlled parking zones (CPZs) close to the Village centre. We felt this would have prevented excessive commuter parking and help improve business for Village traders. This was rejected, but it did lead to increased use of double yellow lines at a number of road junctions. I think the role of CPZs should be reconsidered.
- The perennial traffic issues around Shortlands rail bridge are being looked at by SRA's Road Safety Group and councillors. Traffic congestion has returned to pre-pandemic levels and tailbacks on the five roads that share the junction produce unacceptable levels of emissions at peak times. Should there be a 20mph zone around the junction to make it safer for pedestrians? Should Shortlands install electric car charging points to encourage EV use?
- How do Shortlands residents want to use the village? What shops and facilities would we like to see encouraged? Would we like to see: more coffee shops with outside seating, more community social events and clubs in the area, such as music, crafts, sports etc.? Reference was made to the work in Beckenham High Street and the shops near the Chinese Garage, where there is time limited parking and cafes with outside seating for people to meet with friends.

Q&A Session -Mike Ricketts invited questions from the floor.

Question 1: Richard Hart, Newbury Road

Regarding the history of Shortlands: was Shortlands bombed by Luftwaffe bombers dropping unused bombs on the way back from London?

A: LB understood that this may have been the case for the destruction in the early years of WW2, but in 1944 it was caused by V1 & V2 rockets falling short of targets. MR said that the towers at The Crystal Palace were demolished to stop German navigators using them to line up bombing runs on London's Docks.

Question 2: James, Bromley Crescent

As a new resident of Shortlands, where can I find information on volunteering? Can residents clean up the Shortlands sign under the bridge? How can security be improved at the refurbished Queensmead playground to discourage the teenagers who smoke there?

A: MR asked James to speak to any of the SRA Committee members after the meeting about volunteering with SRA. The Railway sign is affected by the water leak from the bridge and is the property of Network Rail. It would be better if repainted on the opposite wall, but the cost of repainting is £3000. SRA and RVR contributed to the regeneration fund for the Queensmead playground and a further phase is possible next year. Cllr Adam Grant advised that new signs will be installed in Queensmead, giving contact information for the park security team to report incidents, he would also speak to the Safer Neighbourhood team to request more frequent visits to the play area. Cllr Grant also advised that it is proposed to have wearable pollution monitors issued to parking attendants to gather air quality data around the Ward. He also advised that Cllr Gemma Turrell is forming a Business Forum Network with local village traders. If residents have concerns about a planning proposal, please contact your councillors (details at end of this summary), who will look at the application and, if necessary, call it in to the committee.

MR advised that the new part-crowdfunded Shortlands Christmas Lights will be switched on on 25th November.

Question 3: Leonie, Queen Anne Avenue

Thanked the SRA for organising this meeting. As a resident of 20 years, it is her first attendance. With regard to the suggestion that a 20mph limit be enforced around the rail bridge, that is as fast as it is possible to drive at peak times! Is there a river behind Queen Anne Avenue?

A: Keith Baldwin, Kingswood Road, replied that her address is near the site of an old mill pond. Bromley Mayor, David Jefferys, concurred that the area had many springs throughout.

Question 4: Peter Ricketts, Queensmead Road

Thanked SRA for organising the meeting and asked if traffic calming measures could be put in on Glassmill Lane/Queensmead Road to tackle the problem of speeding down the hill. At times 100 children are using the Mead for football and many have to cross the road. The occasional Police Speed Checks are not deterrent enough.

MR confirmed that the upcoming report of the SRA Road Safety Group includes this issue and it will be discussed with the councillors.

Question 5: Don, Kingswood Road

Thanked LO Patricia Braithwaite for encouraging him to attend his first Open Meeting. Don would like improvements to the Village “feel” and for the triangle area near Station Road to be tidied and greened up.

A: DM advised that the Parades Fund Grant will be used to install planters and seats to attract more people. However, more work needs to be done to address the random car parking and the untidy storage being left on the forecourt by some traders. The work done to the parade near the Chinese Garage and Beckenham High Street shows what can be achieved. MR advised that the “Shortlands Village Blueprint” is under discussion with the council and it can be read via the link on the www.shortlandsra.org.uk homepage.

Question 6: Brian Reading, SRA President, Westmoreland Road

As a former local councillor, he is aware of flooding being an issue in the Ward and a lot of campaigning since 1970s for Thames Water to act. Housing is needed, especially social and affordable housing. With additional housing, additional amenities (doctors, dentists, schools, retail and open spaces) are necessary. It is also necessary for new housing to be in pleasant surroundings. He urged the council and government to consider these things alongside the targets for new homes.

A: MR confirmed that SRA campaigns for infrastructure to be considered with planning applications for successful development, as housing without amenities leads to lack of care for surroundings. Shortlands is not a cheap area in the housing market and the council is under constant pressure to allow more building. There is an increase in applications for houses to be divided into HMOs to keep prices down.

DM said this is a recurrent issue, as developers do not consider transport, schools, etc. in their plans. This is an issue that will continue to be discussed by SRA committee.

Question 7: Tricia Braithwaite, Liaison Officer, Kingswood Avenue

Regarding the issues at Queensmead Road, as a Safer Neighbourhood group member, she can confirm that this is raised frequently, but there is an issue with funding for more speed checks. Two options are: to move the exit gate at the bottom of Glassmill Lane further down the hill and; to have width barriers installed to slow traffic.

A: Wendy Scudder of the SRA Road Safety Group confirmed that this is addressed in the group’s strategy report and that the road had to be passable by emergency vehicles. Wendy advised that she had draft copies of the group’s report if anyone would like one after the meeting.

Question 8: Malcolm, Mays Hill Road

Who owns the shop forecourts in Beckenham Lane?

A: DM advised that most on the south (odd number) side are owned by LB Bromley or GLC, although the forecourt 95-99 is unregistered land. On the north side, the forecourts are owned by the freeholders. DM felt that parking spaces are needed to attract retailers and shoppers. The Village Blueprint group is looking at options including restricted parking spaces (20-30 minutes) and to mark

official parking bays in the triangle by 99 Beckenham Lane. There are finance considerations to all these options.

Question 9: Tony Banfield, Bromley Civic Society

The Shortlands Village Conservation Area and the environment are important matters in considering the community value of small parades. The new shopfronts look good and he looks forward to greater enhancements in future through council grant schemes. One urgent issue is the Valley School Field, which is temporarily a depot for the station lift works. It is important that on Network Rail vacating the site it is not used for car parking, but is retained as a greenfield site. Network Rail say they have “not decided” on the future use and the council must ensure it is subject to a planning application for any other use.

On the subject of Volunteering in Shortlands, the Friends of Bromley Town Parks and Gardens group have an event this weekend (www.facebook.com/groups/641379519352708/).

The loss of views from Martins Hill across Shortlands Valley due to overgrown trees is a concern in the Conservation Area and work is needed to both preserve and enhance the view.

A: MR agreed that the council needs to keep a close eye on Network Rail’s proposals for the future of the areas it is using during works on the station lifts.

Mike Ricketts introduced Liam Conlon MP, Beckenham & Penge Constituency & PPS to Department for Transport and invited him to address the meeting.

LC said that SRA had been the first group to visit him at the House of Commons after his election and that sustaining an association for 90 years is an achievement. He thanked Harris Primary Academy Shortlands for hosting the meeting, and noted he was looking forward to visiting the school to speak to pupils the following week, and organising a tour of Parliament for pupils at the school too.

He praised the SRA as one of the most active residents' associations in his constituency. He picked up on a few questions and comments that had been raised by SRA members at the meeting: speeding; housing and; the environment.

- He urged everyone to report incidents of speeding to the police or the council to ensure that the incidents are recorded.
- LC thanked Brian Reading for his thoughtful contribution (Q6 above) and said that there was a national housing shortage and that the Government plans to build 1.5 million homes. People want their children and grandchildren to be able to have their own homes, but younger people are unable to afford the high rent or mortgage interest rates. He acknowledged that the new homes needed to be the right mix and in keeping with the surroundings, also to have the right infrastructure.

He agrees that people do not necessarily want to be crowded into new housing in the South East of England, but to live in their chosen surroundings throughout the country, and that improving transport infrastructure and performance across the country is an important step in unlocking areas outside the South East for homes to be built too. He has visited housing schemes and knows that some people lived in “shocking” conditions and that new homes need to be good quality and to be kept in good repair. He had also seen a shift in the use of Food Banks from single young men to working families as housing costs rise.

- He is pleased that the 358 bus route, which runs through Shortlands, will be all electric, helping to improve air quality. There is a new playground opening at Beckenham Place Park and Crystal Palace Park transformation is going ahead with major investment. LC said it is a pleasure to be MP for Beckenham & Penge and he invites constituents to contact him by email where they can also book appointments at his surgeries and community coffee mornings, which will be held around the constituency, with residents receiving invitations in batches to manage capacity at venues. He thanked the meeting for welcoming him.

Question 10: Cllr. Michael Tickner, Beckenham Town Ward

Cllr Tickner advised that the GLC registered land was transferred to the London Residuary Body. The disposal of this land is administered by Bromley Council and he suggested that SRA may like to make an offer for the village triangle.

He also pointed out that developers make planning applications, but often do not build the new homes. He hoped that the Government would also prioritise the issue of illegal immigration.

Question 11: Patricia Braithwaite, Kingswood Avenue

When was the last Broom Fair held at Queensmead Recreation Ground? Could it be revived as a community event?

A: LB confirmed that it was not revived after WW2. MR added that it had been an annual event from Queen Victoria's Jubilee to 1939. Tony Banfield said Bromley Civic Society had held a Broom Day in May 2024 to prompt interest in a revival of the event. MR added that in the past it had been a visitor attraction with train excursions arriving at Shortlands to see the broom (from which Bromley gets its name) in bloom. It would require cooperation between council and community groups to revive the event.

Brian Reading, SRA President, thanked MR and the SRA committee for organising today and other meetings. He also thanked the people behind the scenes, including SRA Street Liaison Officers and the webmaster and authors contributing to the quarterly newsletter.

In this 90th anniversary year, we should spare a thought for our predecessors, who gave up their time and got involved because there was a need for change in Shortlands.

The current generation of the SRA committee will not be in a position to carry on indefinitely, and someone needs to take over from them. There is a high number of volunteers in the area and the older generation willingly gives up time for grandparenting duties. We need a new generation to step up for the next 10 years.

Mike Ricketts brought the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for attending and especially HPAS Head, Jordan Hollis, for allowing us to host this meeting at his school and Rohini Carroll for setting up the hall and refreshments. Attendees were invited to stay for refreshments and to speak to the panelists.

Useful contacts:

Shortlands & Park Langley Ward Councillors:

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Gemma.Turrell@bromley.gov.uk

Beckenham Town Ward Councillor

Michael.Tickner@bromley.gov.uk

Beckenham & Penge Constituency Office:

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London Assembly Member, Bexley and Bromley Constituency:

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Met Police Shortlands Safer Neighbourhood Team: 020 8721 2614 ShortlandsSNT@met.police.uk

Report It: www.bromley.gov.uk/report

FixMyStreet <https://fix.bromley.gov.uk>

Shortlands Residents' Association: www.shortlandsra.org.uk