

Chislehurst High Street - ten design objectives

Following our discussions with Ben Hamilton-Baillie last autumn, reported in the Winter edition of *Chislehurst Report*, we continue to pursue our objective of making Chislehurst, and particularly the High Street, a more attractive location for traders, shoppers and residents alike; we are in discussion with Bromley Council and the Chislehurst Town Centre Management Group to take this forward. To focus on the key issues, we have drawn up ten design objectives. These objectives have been made broad and non-specific so as to facilitate a review of as many possible options within these themes, and to enable us to move to more specific proposals. The objectives are:

- to make Chislehurst a more attractive place for residents, businesses and visitors,
- to improve the quality of the retail environment in Chislehurst and to attract better quality businesses,
- to make Chislehurst a more attractive venue for evening entertainment,
- to improve the High Street environment for pedestrians, including adding more social space,
- to reduce the clutter on the High Street and to rationalise the car parking, including making the off-street car parks more attractive,
- to create a delineated and unified town centre for Chislehurst (so that visitors see it has a clear identity and know when they have arrived),
- to smooth traffic flows on the High Street using designs to reduce speed below the existing speed limit. A design using some of the concepts of 'open space' might be appropriate,
- to strike a balance between the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles,
- to consider how the Commons and High Street can be integrated,
- to consider the impact on neighbouring roads within Chislehurst on proposed changes to the town centre/High Street.

We are planning to have presentations and discussions on these objectives at our AGM in April, and we are also distributing a questionnaire to find out users' views on the issues facing the High Street. See page 4 for more information.



One of the High Street 'problems'

Chislehurst Library and M&S

The Society was contacted at the end of November about a proposal to build a new retail unit for M&S Simply Food in Chislehurst, which we understand is still live.

The proposal as it stands envisages the demolition of the existing Library and slight extension of the parking to the south side of the present parking area. This would result in a partial loss of the sports field to Red Hill School and new sports facilities would be provided in return. It will also take in the land currently occupied by a pair of semi detached houses (115-117 High Street) to the north side of the present public footpath. The footpath would need to be diverted to connect with the High Street.

The retail unit would be on the ground floor (with an element of storage on the first floor) with a new Library located predominantly on the first floor but with a generous ground floor entrance. The proposed unit is designed to be a strong retail anchor at the end of the present retail area of the High Street. The library in turn, it is argued, would benefit from totally modern facilities .

Some modern designs have been proposed (see below), but the architects recognise that the final architectural solution will be the subject of discussion with interested parties as part of a public consultation which may ultimately result in a more traditional architectural response. Although a new building would optimise the provision for both the library and store for M&S, the architects would consider a refurbishment option.

The plans were outlined to those who attended the December road stewards' meeting. Views from the meeting (and subsequent emails) were mixed, with some welcoming the idea of an alternative to Sainsburys, others excited about the prospect of a new building, and some concerned about the loss of library facilities.

The developers tell us they want as much public consultation as possible. We understand that initial enthusiasm following discussions at Bromley Council has cooled as a result of planning concerns, particularly the impact on the sports field.

A suggested design for the new building. What do you think?



Chislehurst High Street - a chance to have your say



A questionnaire has been designed to obtain the views of Chislehurst residents and other users of Chislehurst High Street to help inform the proposals to improve the High Street. There is a series of questions on particular issues, including parking, traffic congestion, range and quality of shops.

Society members can complete the questionnaire online at the Society's website, or paper copies can be obtained at Wratten's, Chislehurst Library, and at many other locations on the High Street until mid April. You can download the questionnaire, or call us to receive a paper copy.

The results of the survey will be announced at the Society's AGM and published in the Summer edition of *Chislehurst Report*.



Why do we have to put up with landlords who leave shops empty for 15 years?

Telecoms mast erected illegally in Elmstead Lane

On 9 February the Society was contacted by a number of residents in and around Elmstead Lane about the erection of a 50-foot-high telecommunications mast in the grounds of the Chislehurst Sports and Social Club (see photograph below). The Society acted quickly to bring the matter to the attention of Bromley Planning.

It quickly emerged that Harlequin Ltd, acting on behalf of Orange, was erecting the mast as an 'emergency' measure whilst the transmitter at Ravensbourne College was being dismantled.

We also found that last summer Harlequin had lodged an application to erect the mast permanently on this site, but Bromley Council had rejected the application. Harlequin has lodged an appeal, but in the meantime had erected it anyway, claiming it was allowed to do so under emergency provisions. This argument seemed nonsensical, but Bromley Planning Enforcement were inclined to accept it.

Enter a group of dedicated residents who were not satisfied with the response, nor convinced by the arguments. To their credit, they quickly unearthed precedents elsewhere which had ruled that these emergency provisions could not be invoked by Harlequin in the present case.

With this information, Bromley were contacted again, and Tim Horsman of Bromley Planning confirmed that *'in our view the installation requires planning permission... A supplementary report is currently being prepared for consideration at Plans Sub Committee tomorrow evening 16 February which will recommend that enforcement action be authorised.'*

At that meeting, just one week after the first contact, the sub-committee voted unanimously for enforcement action to be authorised for the removal of the mast, emphasising that speed was of the essence.

Some important lessons learned:

- Act quickly
- Be prepared to challenge
- Keep pressure on for action.

Well done residents!



Litter in Chislehurst - an update

As reported in our last issue, a group of residents have formed themselves into an Action Group to tackle the unacceptable levels of litter in the vicinity of Coopers Technology College. The worst affected areas are Hawkwood Lane, Crown Lane, School Road and most notably Church Row, Royal Parade and the Common land adjacent to these roads.



One of the College's posters

The Action Group is consulting with Coopers on various ways to discourage students from dropping litter and the college has responded to many of the issues raised. It is launching its own anti-litter campaign with a combination of sanctions against those students found dropping litter. There will also be a series of projects and events highlighting the impact of litter on the environment and groups of students now collect litter regularly during the week. We will watch for any impact. The college's full note is on our website.

The many litter bins in the area surrounding the college are too small and are often overflowing so that litter is blown or pulled out. The Action Group is putting pressure on the Council to change the design of the bins and to empty them more frequently.

Much of the litter originates from foodstuffs bought in the delicatessen and the newsagents on Royal Parade. These shopkeepers are not responsible for the litter, but Coopers has approached them to try and find ways of reducing the amount of waste immediately outside their shops. Once again we will be watching for any changes.

A shift in priorities means that Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are no longer on duty every day in this area. They are unable to issue penalty notices to minors caught dropping litter, but they take offenders' names and report them to the college.

Almost 200 individuals have been in touch with the group to register their support so a big thank you to those of you who responded to the call for action. If you have not already done so, please contact Gwen Lardner via email (g_lardner@yahoo.co.uk) to add your name to the list of residents who support the group's efforts. All she requires is your name and postal address. By doing this you are not committing to anything other than being a signatory to the drive against litter. If you do not have access to email, you can call Gwen on 0208 295 3034 to register your support.

The Ponds and the Common

The Landscape Architect students at Greenwich University are now well engaged in their major project for this term, examining the Commons and the dying ponds. Their task is to produce schemes for the enhancement and revival of both.

Two seminars have been delivered by the Chislehurst Society with some lively questioning by the students at the end of both. Discussions covered diverse matters, from changing the road patterns, wildlife impact, human impact, and woodland maintenance, to turning the ponds into wetlands and even filling in Prickend Pond!

Plans are being made for a public exhibition of the best ten or so schemes to be held in the Methodist Church in early June. Watch for details on our website, or in the next issue of *Chislehurst Report*.



Alun & Joy Jones Environmental Awards 2012

This year the theme is *Pride of Great Britain*. With the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics in 2012, this is the year to celebrate the GREAT in Great Britain.

The competition is open to students 4–19 years of age, going to school or living in the Chislehurst area. Projects can be created by individuals or a group of students. An individual can submit multiple entries. Projects completed for GCSE, A level and Foundation course work are welcome. Entries will be received by the Chislehurst Society at Bullers Wood School, St Nicolas Lane, Logs Hill, Chislehurst, BR7 5LJ on Thursday 17 May 2012 between 3.30 and 5.00 pm. Prizes will be awarded on Thursday 14 June 2012 at Bullers Wood School from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. *All members are welcome!*

Road Stewards' update

Since the Winter issue of the *Chislehurst Report*, two Road Stewards have retired, Harry Hartley (Part Elmstead Lane), and Ann Pretlove (Heathley End and The Meadow). The Executive Committee extends the Society's sincere thanks for all their help and support over the years. We wish them both well for the future.

There are now several roads with current members but no Stewards. Can you help?

Elmstead Lane (parts), Berens Way, Marlings Park Avenue (parts), Holmdale Road, Victoria Road, The Meadow and Heathley End, and Greatwood and Beechcroft. We are keen to find replacement Stewards.

Contact Keith Heselden, Membership Secretary, on 020 8467 5503 if you can help.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES:

As we go to press we report that the first of our members' meetings in 2012 - Dr Vanessa Jenkins' talk on the Emperor Napoleon III - was well attended, and extremely interesting. *The next meeting will be on 3 May, at 2.30 pm, at our meeting room behind the Methodist Church. The subject is 'Is it an emergency?', a talk about the police 999 service, given by Keith Baldwin.*

Other meetings will be on 5 July and 6 September. Watch our website for further information on speakers and subjects.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee

There are a number of planned events in Chislehurst to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee.

Plans are under way for a Jubilee *Big Lunch on the Common* (behind Royal Parade)) on Saturday 2 June 12-4.30 pm, a party for all the family.

Chislehurst High Street Traders are planning a ***Food and Drink Fair*** on the common by the High Street from 2 pm the same Saturday with music and entertainment.



The Friends of the Recreation Ground are organising a ***Picnic in the Rec*** on Bank Holiday Monday, 4 June, with games and music, and a crown-making competition. Posters for all events will be available nearer the time.

The annual **Rotary Summer Fair** will be held on the following Saturday 9 June.

You can contact the Chislehurst Society

by phone: 020 8467 0900 or email: membership@chislehurst-society.org.uk

or by post: PO Box 82, Chislehurst, Kent. BR7 5TT