



The Walton Society

Members' Newsletter

September 2009



PLANNING REPORTS

Former Ambleside School Site

Following a Public Inquiry held on April 28/29, the Inspector issued his decision – to approve the application to replace the previous Ambleside and Swansmere Schools by 112 dwellings – having accepted every submission by the QC representing the developer, APlus New Homes, and recognising none of the very serious arguments presented by local objectors.

He concluded that as parts of the nearby St. John's Estate were constructed at a density of 60 dwellings per Hectare (compared with a Council standard of 40 DpH) it would be alright for the new development to be built at 60DpH overall. Arguments about the cramped plan, the small size of dwellings, lack of amenity space, inadequate parking provision, traffic congestion in Ambleside Avenue and poor transport services were all rejected out of hand.

Notwithstanding that the North Area Planning Sub-Committee had unanimously refused the scheme and were supported by a very able advocate at the Inquiry, he swallowed the counter argument that the scheme had been recommended for permission by the Planning Department.

It is this sort of undemocratic and arbitrary action by unelected non-local Inspectors that gives the whole system a less than satisfying reputation and leaves local people with a bad taste that will remain with them for a very long time.

Walton Bridge

The latest, and hopefully the last, Public Inquiry on Walton Bridge – concerned with the Compulsory Purchase aspects of the scheme – took place at the Holiday Inn in Shepperton on 30th June and 1st July before the appointed Inspector, Mr. Robert Luck.

Surrey County Council having granted itself Planning permission for its own proposals, both Elmbridge and Spelthorne Councils had raised no objections which left only those few people who had spotted the obscurely-placed Notice in the Surrey Herald, in the week before Easter, to persist with their objections. In the event, most of those had decided to withdraw before the Inquiry, mostly upon learning that Surrey had no choice but to purchase land but would not retain it after the 21/2 years of construction and restoration had passed.

Nonetheless, the reasons for those objections remain but may be resolved in future contacts with Surrey's Officers – who proved to be reasonable people.

Dairy Crest

Travis Perkins, owner of City Plumbing Supplies in Winchester Road, and Paragon Community Housing Group appealed against the Council's decision to refuse planning permission for a new 8000 square foot warehouse, 9 flats and 5 houses. We felt this was a ridiculous overdevelopment of the site that would be out of character with the nearby High Street buildings, and would lead to a dangerous increase in Heavy Goods Vehicles and other traffic crossing the pavement so close to the traffic lights.

The appeal was heard at Riverhouse Barn on August 11th and Chris Sadler spoke in detail on the risks involved, noting the accident that occurred where a vehicle crossed the pavement and hit a cyclist, and the accident in 1999 when a 77 year-old pedestrian was killed at the junction of High Street and Churchfield Road.

We expect to hear the outcome of the hearing later in September and can only hope that the Inspector is more influenced by the adverse traffic risks of such a development than by the developer's ill-founded argument that they are only re-creating the volume of traffic that existed when the Dairy was in operation.

STOP PRESS The Appeal has been allowed and Planning Permission granted.

Former Walton Swimming Pool Site

In early April, with no public consultation whatsoever, the Conservative Council Leader, Roy Taylor, and his Portfolio Holder for Resources, Roger Whittaker, decided to pursue a course of political and financial expediency to instruct the Council's Officers to present a new planning application for the former swimming pool site. The only difference from the application rejected last December is that 4 houses have been deleted from a part of the site that is public open space. Roughly 70% of the Kings Close Amenity Green Space area would still be swallowed up under housing or relocated parking provision.

Local residents have been infuriated by the lack of consultation, which is contrary to national planning guidance and best practice, and by the attempt by Roy Taylor to

shift the blame onto the previous administration and its decision 4 years ago when the Council "agreed in principle to the sale of the land formerly used for the Walton Swimming pool as delineated in Appendix C to the Report, **subject to approval of a Development Brief** delineating future uses with priority for the provision of housing." The minutes of the meeting also recorded the concern about "loss of land currently available for Leisure use" and "that the design and layout of the site would need to be sensitive to its surroundings." The proposal was purely aimed at helping to finance the new Leisure Centre without supporting plans or views of the public and **no Development Brief has ever been produced.**

As with the first application, David Walsh and Chris Sadler concluded that what is proposed – 22 houses and a 3-storey block of 12 flats - does not meet the criterion of a "design and layout that is sensitive to its surroundings." We do not feel that using the Kings Close public open space largely for housing complies with the Council's Planning Policy ENV29 which covers proposals for the development of "other open land." which contributes to the character, environment or amenity of the surrounding area. Nor do we feel that the development is consistent with Policy LER3, which covers the loss of public or private playing fields or leisure facilities, including common land, or that it is in keeping with the surrounding area of Kings Close and Kings Road.

These proper planning considerations are being overridden by the majority group determined to deprive Walton of one of its last open areas of established leisure land.

Accordingly, we have vigorously opposed these Planning Applications whilst pointing to the possibility of a compromise which involves a less dense development that retains all the public open space on the site. With ever more housing being squeezed into whatever available space there is around Walton, we feel it is important to preserve all the open green space that we currently have to prevent the character of the town from being eroded for ever. **A final decision on the latest Planning Application is due to be made at the full Council meeting on October 7th.**

We apologise for the lengthy interval since our last Newsletter, which is due to production and other difficulties.

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COUNTY ELECTION REPORT

It was with great satisfaction that I heard the result announced on Election Night – personal satisfaction of course, but above all satisfaction for all those who delivered, canvassed, “told” at polling stations, provided cheer and refreshment over long hours, and above all voted for me and kept the “swan” floating for another four years. I offer them all my warmest and sincerest gratitude.

Now looking forward, at County I have moved from the Schools & Learning Committee - although I remain a substitute - to Transportation, no less an important body, and one in which there is much to do. I am also a substitute on the Safer & Stronger Communities, a committee that seems to look after every thing from Fire Brigades, to Young Delinquents, to Libraries!

As for Walton, I shall try to keep my eyes on everything, but that will be a tall order. For instance, I attended the latest Bridge Inquiry – the only Councillor to do so – and I was at the meeting where the Borough tried to present the Government’s development plans for Elmbridge in their best light: a hard job!

Above all, keep the questions and complaints flowing in - that way I won’t put on weight!

TOM PHELPS-PENRY

Result:

Tom Phelps Penry	The Walton Society	1298
Rachael Lake	Conservative	1243
Porter	UKIP	435
Smurthwaite	Lib Dem	393
Baldwin	Labour	291

Chris Sadler writes:

A new Green Belt for Surrey

No, not a must-have fashion accessory or a Planning idea, but a reflection on the changing political landscape here. First, congratulations to Tom Phelps Penry on his re-election to Surrey County Council in June. As in 2005, it was a close contest, in fact the winning margin was the same percentage of votes cast – 1.5% - as in 2005. But everything else was different. 4 years ago, the elections coincided with a General Election called by a confident Labour Party. Turnout in Walton was a high 57.7%. This year, the Labour Party has lost its way, while the Conservative Party has rallied strongly in national opinion polls. There were also European Parliament Elections run under almost incomprehensible voting arrangements, we are in the midst of a recession, and the revelations about MPs dubious expenses claims have made many people sceptical about all the mainstream national political parties. Turnout in Walton this year was only 35.6%.

Surrey, however, especially the northern part, bucked the national trend of a swing to the Tories. They actually lost two seats, net of gains, whilst the Residents’ Associations’ and Independent candidates gained two seats. The Lib Dems gained one seat, net, and Labour lost one of its last two seats. The result is that the political map of Surrey shows a solid band of “green” areas where there are Residents’ Group or Independent County Councillors stretching from Walton, through Molesey and The Dittons to Epsom, Ewell and Ashted. The performance of Surrey’s Tory administration has been recognised as inadequate in many areas, from the state of the roads and street lights, inattention to on-street parking management, shortage of places in local schools or the poor standard of care of vulnerable children, which resulted in a highly critical report from Ofsted. The dissatisfaction this created, alongside the view that Residents’ Group Councillors have shown they can effectively speak up for their local communities and “get things done” locally, underlies the trend here. Long may it continue!

EXPLORING THE WEY AND ARUN CANAL

After the tropical heat and the torrential rain of the previous few days, 9th July was kind to the coachload of us who gathered for our 10.30 departure. An hour later we pulled in to our starting point – the Onslow Arms in Loxwood, just over the West Sussex border. We had enough time to stretch our legs and have a good look at the nearby lock. This is almost fully restored after 4 years’ work, which involved tunnelling under the road. Beyond it was an overgrown dry ditch, which gave us an idea of the task faced by The Wey and Arun Canal Trust.

After lunch it was time to board the new electric boat, ‘Wiggonholt’, for our 2 and 3/4 hour cruise. Unlike most canals, this one had natural banking and felt more like a river as we wound our way between rushes brushing the boat on either side and admiring the dragonflies and other wildlife as much as the restoration. After passing through 3 locks and over an aqueduct, it was time to turn round at the end and retrace our steps after a most enjoyable day out.

I, for one, will definitely go back.

Helen Sadler

CAR PARKING IN WALTON

The proposed Walton controlled parking scheme has been met with mixed feelings in the town, with some in favour and others strongly opposed to aspects of it. Clearly, for safety reasons and for allowing the free flow of traffic, the situation on some roads is unacceptable. This is particularly the case with New Zealand Avenue and in the approach to Halfway on the Hersham Road. In streets near the town centre, cars parked all day have caused problems for local residents. Our concern here is that more residents could be tempted to convert front gardens into parking areas, and the CPZ scheme, which seems to work well in other areas, could prevent this from happening. The problem arises mainly from the high charges imposed in town centre and station car parks, which are now left with spare capacity. The view of the Society is that we will support the majority view in any particular road, as we recognise that each road has its own needs. We note that a number of on-road parking areas near the town centre will be re-designated as free short term spaces and that this should benefit traders in the High Street. Though we would also hope that some spaces in the upper levels of the Multi-storey car park could be released for all day parking for people working in the town, it does seem that there is insufficient capacity in the town centre car parks to meet the needs of the shoppers, (who maintain the viability of the shops) and the large number of people employed in the town. Perhaps the Walton Business Group could take the initiative and investigate some form of park -and-ride scheme for their members to help to solve this particular problem.

ANDREW REID, Vice Chairman

FUTURE EVENT

Wednesday 7th October – Riverhouse 8.00pm.
Illustrated Talk on the recent restoration and repair work to the 14th Century Grade I listed **Old Manor House**, former home of Ronald and Susan Segal, in Manor Road, to be given by **Richard Oxley** of Oxley Conservation. Tickets from the Barn Box Office (01932 253354) **£10.**

IN IT TO WIN IT

Members of the Society can enter the **100 Club** for a share in the 40 prizes on offer each year. A monthly share costs just £1. So, based on a standard of 100, each quarterly prize works out at £45, whilst monthly prizes are £20, £10 and £5. Please contact **Martin Schofield** at 226257 if you would like an entry form.

Recent winners include:

April Mrs E Harris £16.40; Mrs I Starnes £8.20; D Bunn £4.10.

May Mrs S Thornton £36.90; Miss E Sculthorpe £16.40; Mrs J Doery £8.20; Miss J Shearman £4.10.

THE WALTON SOCIETY COUNCILLORS

Surrey County Council

Tom Phelps Penry, Walton Division

01932 247519

Elmbridge Borough Council

Chris Sadler, Walton Central, 01932 881687

David Walsh, Walton Central, 01932 253315

***MIKE CHRISTIAN** the computer expert who created the Society's Membership and Elections systems sadly died on 31st August after a long illness. The funeral is being held at Randall's Park Crematorium on Wednesday 23rd September, with a gathering of his friends at riverhouse to follow.*