



The Bracknell Forest Society

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR BRACKNELL FOREST

Newsletter - Issue 40 – Summer 2021

SOCIETY NEWS

Week of Walks 2021

The Week of Walks was a great way to restart the Society's events with enthusiastic support from members. This year, we limited the numbers so that as many members as possible would feel comfortable to participate.



Photo: Swinley Park - Lynda Lunn

The photograph below is from our first walk which was led by Warfield Parish councillor Hugh Fitzwilliams who showed us the sites of 5 current and proposed SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces) that provide some compensation for the continued housing developments in Warfield.



Photo: Malt Hill SANG – Alison Bird

Later in the newsletter is an article based on Andrew Radgick's walk to show some of the history of Priestwood.

AUTUMN PROGRAMME

We are planning a full programme of talks and events for the autumn. Please put the dates in your diary.

Thursday 2nd Sept – 2.00pm

Easthampstead Park Mansion – Tour, Afternoon Tea and Talk (Fully booked)

We will have a tour of the house and grounds followed by afternoon tea accompanied by a talk on the history of the park and mansion by Diane Collins. Numbers are limited to 25 at a cost of £28 per person.

If you have booked but not yet paid, please do so as soon as possible.

Monday 4th October –7.30pm

Warfield Park - a tale of India, a Country House and Cricket. A talk by Colin Bird about the history and owners of what was one of the largest estates in Warfield.

In the Recital Room at South Hill Park.

Monday 1st November –7.30pm

Bracknell's Pubs – a virtual Pub Crawl. A talk by Andrew Radgick about the history of Bracknell's pubs – past and present.

In the Recital Room at South Hill Park.

Monday 20th December

Christmas quiz and meal – details to be confirmed

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan

There will be a referendum on Thursday 9th September on the Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan. All Bracknell Town residents on the electoral role area are being asked whether they want to accept the plan that is published on the town council website:

<https://bracknelltowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/bracknell-town-neighbourhood-plan-referendum-plan.pdf>.

For events see our website: www.thebracknellforestsociety.org.uk or find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/bracknellforestsociety)

For further information, please email: tbfsinfo@gmail.com.

Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and came into effect in April 2012. It is a government initiative aimed at trying to empower local communities to help make and take forward planning proposals at a local level.

A neighbourhood plan establishes general planning policies for the development of land in a neighbourhood. Any plan must meet 'basic conditions', which include the need for policies to be generally aligned with strategic policies.

Once a neighbourhood development plan meets all the requirements and has been adopted after a referendum, it forms part of the overall development plan for the area. It can then be considered in the determination of planning applications by Bracknell Forest Council or planning inspectors.

The plan includes 36 policies across the following sections:

- Environment and Community (12 policies)
- Heritage (3 policies)
- Housing and Character (8 policies)
- Economy and Employment (6 policies)
- Transport and Infrastructure (7 policies)

The Neighbourhood Plan should not be confused with the Bracknell Forest Council's draft Local Plan which is currently progressing towards examination by a planning inspector.

Parking Issues

The committee recently discussed parking issues on developments near the centre of Bracknell. Residents of The Parks (on the former RAF site) consider this the major problem on the estate. Large blocks of flats on



Photo: Broad Lane – Andrew Radgick

Eastern Road and Old Bracknell Lane have inadequate parking provision, while the recently completed Sterling Square has led to parking restrictions being

introduced on Broad Lane. These developments appear to have been agreed without meeting the parking provisions guidelines used by the BFC Highways Department (who have recommended acceptance in each case).

A recently lodged application to redevelop the Bracknell Beeches site (behind Cooper's Hill) only provides 80% of the parking spaces required. Will it also be approved?

The committee would be interested to hear of any other schemes that have been passed in the last ten years without the required number of parking spaces, and how this has impacted local residents.

Bracknell to rival Manhattan?

Okay, so the headline is a bit of an exaggeration, but it helps to highlight that Bracknell's skyline is likely to change considerably over the coming years.

The first re-development of the town centre introduced tall buildings such as Ocean House and Winchester House (3M building). We can expect many more tall buildings as further phases of development of the town centre progress. Bracknell Forest Council's policy is to encourage residential developments in and around the town centre to reduce the number of greenfield sites that would otherwise be needed to meet the government-imposed target for new dwellings in the borough (614 per year up to 2037).

Two recent planning applications (see below) propose 16 and 17 storey residential developments which we think are higher than any current buildings in Bracknell.

Recent Planning Applications

The Society continues to review new planning applications each week. After a quiet period for applications during earlier periods of the pandemic, there has been a bumper crop of significant applications recently. These include proposals for over 700 new flats near the town centre.

Demolition of Coopers Hill Youth and Community Centre Crowthorne Road and re-development with residential accommodation (52 Units). The Society registered concerns about the overdevelopment of this site, increased traffic on Crowthorne Road North and inadequate parking provision that is likely to result in overspill onto adjacent roads. We requested that the name of the site or road should remain as Coopers Hill.

Change of use of Harmans Water Community Centre to place of worship with community use. This building has been out-of-use for some time. Whilst welcoming plans for a new purpose for this first-floor building, we registered concerns about parking which is already difficult at Harmans Water shops and potential conflict of proposals for Sunday parking at the primary school with parking for the gym and swimming pool.

Proposal for up to 150 dwellings on land west of Wokingham Road and east of Lower Church Road, Sandhurst.



This new application for this site follows refusal of a previous application last year. The Society has again objected to development on this countryside land that would have an urbanising effect on the rural character of the area and harm the setting of St Michael's Church, a Grade II* listed building.

Proposal to Wokingham Council for 95 dwellings on land adjacent to the Oakwood Centre with access from Old Wokingham Road. The Society objected to this application as the site is not allocated for development and is part of the 'green-gap' between Bracknell and Wokingham. In addition, Old Wokingham Road is not capable of accommodating the traffic to be generated

by this development. It is already a busy and congested road which has a relatively narrow carriageway.

Continuation of use of land at Whitmoor Bog by the Lapland Organisation. The Society registered concern about alleged breaches of existing planning conditions (e.g. hours of operation, restoration of the land to its prior condition) and asked the council to investigate as part of the assessment of the application.

Demolition of Gough's Garage and erection of 48 dwellings on land South of Forest Road, Newell Green, Warfield. This land has been designated for housing for many years and is surrounded by estates under construction. However, this is the first development that will front directly onto Warfield Street with several historic buildings. We agree with Warfield Parish Council that this is a very poor proposal that seems to completely disregard the nature of the surrounding area and plan to register an objection

Proposal for 169 flats and ground floor commercial space in three blocks on the former bus depot site Market Street, Bracknell. This land on the corner with Skimped Hill Lane has been derelict for many years part of the joint venture between Bracknell Forest Council and the developers Countryside (now known as Bracknell Forest Cambium Partnership). The tallest of the three blocks is proposed to be 17 storeys. In accordance with Bracknell Forest Council's policy for town centre residential developments only 0.9 parking spaces are planned per flat with about half to be provided in negotiated space in nearby public car parks which are considered to be under used. The Society is considering its response.

Proposal for 7 new buildings ranging from 5 to 16 storeys comprising 377 residential dwellings, commercial floorspace and new station access following demolition of existing buildings. Bracknell Beeches, Old Bracknell Lane West, Bracknell. This land immediately south of the railway station is currently low-rise office buildings. This would be the first high-rise town centre development south of the railway. Although 420 parking spaces are proposed, as highlighted in the previous article, we are very concerned about overspill parking in adjacent roads with consequent impact on existing residents. The Society is considering its response.

Proposal for change of use from offices to 150 residential units. Atrium Court, The Ring, Bracknell. Many of us will remember this as the building occupied by Oracle until they moved from Bracknell. This proposal continues the relentless conversion of office



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buildings to flats and adds to the many other plans for increased residential space in the town centre.

Proposal to convert Lily Hill House to 33 flats. Lily Hill House, Lily Hill Road, Bracknell. Yet another plan to convert offices to flats. The original house had modern office extensions built a number of years ago although the frontage of the old house to the park was retained. The proposal will be contained within the existing buildings so should not alter the views from the park. The Society is considering its response.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Lily Hill Park Picnic Table

A new giant community picnic table in Lily Hill Park has replaced the original table which had declined in condition since it was installed in 2010 and could no longer be repaired.

The new table and bench are made from the timber of a chestnut tree from the park, which was felled for safety reasons. The timber has been expertly crafted by local wood carving specialist, 3D Wood, to maintain the curved lines and branching shapes of the tree, retaining its natural character.



The new table measures a whopping 19.8 metres (65 feet). This makes it 1.4 metres longer than the original, which was considered as the longest picnic table in England carved from a single piece of wood. The council is planning to register the new table length with the Guinness World Records in due course.

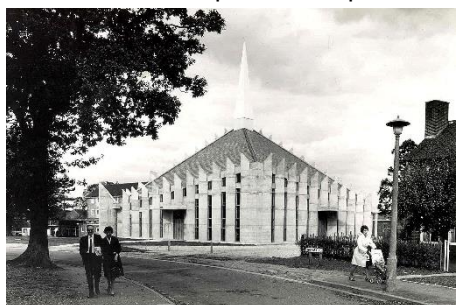
The table has a shorter bench on one side to make it more accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs.

PRIESTWOOD – WEEK OF WALKS

Our History Officer took us on a tour of Priestwood during the recent Week of Walks. Its name is due to the land being once a wooded area belonging to Hurley Priory, but it became common land after the dissolution of the monasteries. The first houses were built at the end of the 19th century to house brickyard workers and other labourers, and it was quite a rough area, with fights and gambling in the street

It was the first neighbourhood to be built in the New Town with the first houses (in Limerick Close) being occupied in 1951. The Admiral Cunningham opened as

a pub in 1954 (although the proposed name of The English Rose was dropped). The building had previously been a private residence, Priestwood Court. Bracknell Development Corporation wanted to keep local names where possible, so nearby is Windmill Road to commemorate the building that stood there in earlier times.



St Andrew's Church (beside the Community Centre) is the second one on the site; Prince Philip laid the foundation stone of the previous one on his visit to Bracknell in 1955, but it was demolished in the 1980s due to a permanently leaking roof.

The nearby shops opened in 1953 with two grocers, a greengrocer, a butcher, a tobacconist, newsagent and sub-Post Office, a radio, electrical, sports, cycle and hardware shop, a confectioner and café, a ladies' and gent's hairdresser, a draper, and a chemist. Each of the estates was to be self-sufficient with shops, a school, a church, and Community Centre. Prince Philip's tree at the shops has disappeared, but the stone on Queensway with the date of the Queen's coronation is still there. At the bottom is Meadowvale School, the first primary school, opened on time in 1954 despite a bitumen boiler setting fire to a roof during construction.



Turn left down the path to Brook Green. From here you can see number 6 Lindenhill Road which the Prince visited, a

typical house in the new estate. Crossing the green brings us to The Bridge, opened in 1865. The Downmill River, now culverted, runs under Wokingham Road here on its way to The Cut at Jock's Lane. The houses on your left are painted white as Brooke House originally stood on the opposite side of Wokingham Road, and the owner did not want to look at red brick houses!

Continuing on to Priestwood Avenue and Lindenhill Road, we stopped at the entrance to a block of garages. Here stood Priestwood House, the home of Dr Charles Caldecott who did pioneering work on dealing with patients with mental health issues. Continuing to Downshire Way, Boyd Court now stands on the site of the original St Andrew's Church, a daughter church in the parish of Easthampstead; Princess Diana visited the housing complex in 1988. Behind the row of Priestwood Terrace houses on the left was a Primitive Methodist Chapel, opened in 1843; its overgrown graveyard is behind the fence on the corner of Binfield Road. The building opposite was once a cottage home for the children of Easthampstead Workhouse; it now houses Bracknell Youth Offending Service. The Bevan Gate

development is the former site of Priestwood School, built in 1908 for Bracknell's expanding population.

Continuing along Binfield Road, we turned into Stoney Road where the large house called 'Gormoor' stands on the corner of Arlington Close. This was the former home of Gordon Clifford, the owner of Clifford's Dairies that delivered milk and associated products to the whole of Bracknell and the surrounding area. Cutting back through the trees opposite takes us back to the Community centre where our walk began.

Andrew Radgick

OTHER NEWS

Brants Bridge

The Urgent Care Centre at Brants Bridge, Bracknell, reopened to walk-in appointments for minor injuries from Monday 19 July 2021. This means the Urgent Care Centre has now fully reinstated the full range of services for local people which were in place before the pandemic.



Who remembers Boris Johnson talking about Brants Bridge (rather than Bracknell) as one of the locations of the national 'Lighthouse' Covid PCR labs? People in white coats can often be seen working in the top floor.

Forest Giants

Three tree giants up to 6.5 metre tall will be in the Lexicon from Friday 20th to Monday 30th August. Each Bracknell Forest Giant tells a story about the preservation and conservation of the amazing forests surrounding the town that make up almost 40% of the borough's landscapes. As part of the event two of the Society's members were filmed at the Look Out to talk about the Society's activities – this will be shown in Princess Square throughout the event.

Annual Membership Subscriptions

Membership is for the calendar year with renewals due in January each year.

It can be renewed at a meeting or by contacting:

10 Shaftesbury Close, Harmans Water, RG12 9PX

or tbfsinfo@gmail.com.

Subscriptions may be paid by Standing Order