

Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society

Newsletter 84: Autumn 2005
£2.50 to non-members

www.taplowsociety.org.uk

Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society

Formed in 1959 to protect Hitcham, Taplow, and the surrounding countryside from being spoilt by bad development and neglect.

President : Eva Lipman
Vice Presidents: Tony Hickman, Dr John Kennedy, Derek Walker, Lincoln Lee
Chairman: Anne Hanford
Treasurer: John Hanford
Secretary: Jeremy Vanstone
Asst. Secretary: Allyn Anthony
Committee: Euan Felton, Heather Fenn, Karl Lawrence, Andy McKenzie, Barrie Peroni, Fred Russell, Louise Symonds, Esther Willmore (co-opted), Gill Holloway (co-opted)
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Cover picture: Maidenhead Bridge and the new flats (Andrew Findlay)

Editorial

Notwithstanding that the District Council is widely regarded as the most inconsistent, centrist and inflexible in the land (like every other council?), there are signs that just maybe there is a chink of light climbing over the horizon. For many years the Planning Officers have repeatedly told us that each planning application must be treated on its own merits, independently of any impacting parallel developments, and specifically refuse to take into account the developer's likely intentions. I was given a copy of of the Council's reasons for rejecting an application for retention of three portable buildings owned by the Paper Mill on the grounds of 'presumption against new building in the Green Belt' AND 'if permitted, would be liable to act as a precursor of further proposals for similar forms of development'.

This is a remarkable change of policy, which opens the door to a more rational basis for examining developers' strategic or tactical applications in which the real purpose is masked behind a relatively innocuous application. A classic of this form is the 15-year-old struggle to prevent 'proposed' development in Ellington Gardens. Everyone here knows quite well the

real intent of the developer is to open the way to the lovely old house 'Hermitage' with its acre of garden so that they can replace it with an estate of high-density housing.

Attendance at the Cliveden Enquiry was disappointing since only a small number of stalwarts sat through the stupefyingly detailed arguments advanced by the National Trust / Countryside barristers to prove that 191 houses was a better deal than 135. The two opposing counsels spent an immoderate amount of time arguing about the actual area to be considered for density calculations. For example, did you know there was a significant difference between 'landscape incidental space' and 'significant buffer zone'? Apparently it all depends on whether you are standing under the outermost twig of a tree or have open sky above you! Your Chairman and Treasurer, Anne and John Hanford, sat through the whole thing with a small number of us turning up at frequent intervals to support 'our side'. Just as well we did turn up, otherwise the Inspector could easily have drawn the conclusion that SBDC weren't terribly interested since there was hardly anyone there from

the Council at all! I have have no news of the outcome at the time of writing but we are assured we shall have our answer before the 7th of December.

Our website is up and running well and interestingly is being accessed by old Taplovians across the planet. We seem to be forming a Friends Reunited service for exiles. I am delighted to see that the Parish Council also has a nascent website under development so we should be able to have firm links between your Society, the Parish Council and SBDC.

There has been a considerable amount of community activity around the parish this last 6 months including the evolution of the Parish Plan (*see article*). This plan is now entering the 'how to implement' stage and we shall soon see how serious the District Council is about consulting with the local people in developing their Local Development Framework.

It has been a sad year since we lost Anne Milne, who saved our village green, Helen Lee, a past president and great contributor, and Harold Eley, who led the original battles to save the Hermitage from developers.

Fred Russell

Common Land Battle at Cliveden

Bordering the road by Cliveden is a strip of land which technically seems to belong to the Parish as common land. This may be a new battleground in the on-going development argument with the National Trust.

Despite its dismissal from the decision equation at the Canadian Red Cross Memorial Hospital Appeal, the issue of common land remains one of the most tantalising aspects in the fight against the attempt to plant an urban housing estate at Cliveden.

A strip of registered common land runs unbroken along the east side of the application site. This is one of the last remnants of Great Taplow Common, most of which was lost to the big estates during the Enclosures movement. At the last public enquiry into its ownership, in 1982, no one came forward to claim it and it was registered as being of 'no known owner', thus leaving Taplow Parish Council responsible for it under Section 9 of the 1965 Commons Registration Act. This means the Council can act as if they are owners and defend the land against encroachment and trespass.

Does it matter?

Although the appellants' lawyer tried to argue it doesn't really matter who owns the land, this is far from the case. He who owns the land controls the access. Unless there has been relevant use on which to claim an easement, then there can be no access by car across common land without the owner's permission, and under a Section 9 stewardship no one appears able to grant this right. The Open Spaces Society has said every resident who crossed the common land by car would be committing a crime of trespass, so off to the Magistrates' Court!

Access is not the only issue. The

National Trust also needs land for visibility splays. A recent High Court judgement has asserted that it is unreasonable to expect an adjoining owner to provide land for this and turned down an application on the grounds that the developer did not own the necessary land. The visibility splays argument applies not only to the main access to the

... one of the last remnants of Great Taplow Common

proposed development but also to the proposed emergency exit at Woodgate Lodge where, although the common land strip is broken for the existing access, the visibility splays would encroach. The proposed development would also include road improvements that would involve cutting into the common land embankments. This is another activity that would need permission from the owner.

How important is it to the National Trust?

The National Trust themselves do seem to think ownership of the land is important. They have recently gone to the trouble of re-registering the Hospital Site at the Land Registry, using a map that showed the land that Lord Astor donated to the National Trust. This included some of the common land that was not his to donate. The Parish Council have challenged this registration and the matter will be going to mediation if the National Trust refuses to withdraw their claim.

The Trust have also claimed there was an access shown on a 1925 OS Map, so they cannot be stopped from crossing the common land. However, they do not mention

that the access was to the Tennis Court and therefore may not be relevant.

There is not only the Canadian Red Cross Memorial Hospital Site to consider. The main gates to Cliveden are also built on common land and maps suggest that the road between the main gates and Green Drive is a public road, another little purloining by the Astor family!

What now?

If the Parish Council can prove the common land should stay as 'of no known ownership', then out could go the visibility splays, the road improvements and possibly the access to all the developments proposed at Cliveden. With no access, no visibility splays and no road improvements, there can be no development! Expert legal opinion is now needed.

Is there a lawyer in the house?

Mary Trevallion

'Cliveden 170' Turned Down

We are delighted that South Bucks District Council turned down the National Trust's planning application to build 170 units at Cliveden. The Hitcham & Taplow Preservation Society opposed this application. It was almost identical in design to the 191 application, which went to public enquiry on the 8th August (see page 11). The footprint was approximately the same but the 42 small affordable units were replaced by 20 larger units. It was proposed to give an unspecified sum to SBDC in lieu of building the affordable homes. It remains to be seen if the National Trust will appeal this decision.

Puzzled by Planning

I have attended many meetings of planning bodies and amenity groups during the past year or so and so far have found no one who could define for me how the present new planning system is supposed to work, not even the planning authorities themselves.

The old system had two levels, the county level Structure Plan and the district level Local Plan.

The two plans were supported by various types of government 'guidelines', which were, as the saying goes, intended for the obedience of fools and the guidance of

wise men. It soon became apparent that guidance was interpreted by the planning authorities as law, since it made their job easier to be able to cite (for example) the PPGs (Planning Policy Guidelines) as government 'requirements'. The interpretation of these guidelines became an art generating its own bureaucracy within the Planning Office hierarchy.

It now appears that the government decided that this existing two-tier system was far too complicated, and that a system that had existed successfully for 50 years must be in need a major overhaul.

So they overhauled it, but this time they made sure that guidelines became law in fact, and there is little pretence now that local development is driven by local needs and involvement. The structure is not so much a logical framework as a set of nested relationships and Planning Offices are indulging in a frenzy of paper production to show that they understand what the government wants and will

deliver it. Most of the changes will affect the plan-making process itself rather than the operational side of dealing with individual applications. This new system is confusing even for experts and seems designed to place the comprehension of it beyond normal human ken, much as the Mandarin language and governance bureaucracy in

ancient China were designed specifically to ensure that the control of China always lay with those with the leisure to learn the language, thus ensuring

a self-perpetuating ruling class.

The government has been making lots of noises about listening to us. However, in reality we seem to have a system where you and I have a voice in the early stages of the 'bottom-up' planning system (e.g. our Taplow Parish Plan), but then it runs into the irresistible force of the 'top-down' plans emerging from an unelected Regional Assembly who have the force of law behind them. It's still too early in the game to see what will happen when these two forces meet in the middle, but it's hard to imagine that local needs will overrule the national or regional needs.

Where was I? (Even I'm confused.) Oh yes, trying to explain how this new system works. It's probably best to show the structure as a diagram, so take a look at the opposite page.

This structure is still very loosely defined and one suspects the local authorities are having to make

things up as they go along. What does seem to be clear, however, is that the Planning Authorities have generated a blizzard of paper and bodies that feed this structure. No one seems terribly clear what a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) consists of, except that we are told by SBDC that unless we are represented on one we are not likely to have much of a voice in the preparation of the LDF (that's the Local Development Framework - please try to keep up). We have formally asked SBDC to be formally involved but the answer so far has been vague, to say the least.

Another area that remains unexplained is what opportunities there will be for public participation at regional level. We do know, however, that there will be no right to be heard at public examination of policy. Surprise, surprise! As the RSS (Regional Spatial Strategy) will be a key driver for what ends up in our LDF - which is not allowed to depart from the RSS - it would seem that we are not involved in a fair and democratic process.

The LDF consists of three documents: the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), the Action Plan and a Local Policy

Plan. These must be revised annually and replaced every three years, so to all practical purposes policy will always be under some form of review. It was my (obviously mistaken) view that policy was a longer-term framework within which to build strategic and tactical actions. Now it appears that policy is a plastic thing, changeable according to the latest government thinking.

...little pretence now that local development is driven by local needs...

...a blizzard of paper...

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)



South East Region (SER) ...one of nine in England



Regional Communities Plan

The Government's vision for us. It sets out strategic growth options.



Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

This will be a legally binding document and development plan, and Local Development Frameworks (see below) will have to be in 'general conformity' with it. So, if the RSS decides that our region is to be designated as, say, a Business Growth Zone, we have a big problem. It will be difficult to argue 'back up the line' from the local level once an RSS has been adopted. Also the RSS will have sub-sets, called Sub-Regional Plans, for all manner of topics, e.g. housing.



Local Development Framework (LDF)

Instead of a Local Plan, District and Unitary Councils have a Local Development Framework. The Framework is intended to be a less formal, more flexible plan and will have three parts:

1. Local Strategic Policy
This document will have a map, which will plot major planning designations such as Green Belt and major development sites. The policy will be briefer and much less detailed than current Local Plans. It will set out where the Action Plan (see below) will take place.
2. Action Plan
This will offer a detailed description of the way specific areas will develop. It is supposed to be prepared for areas of change, such as town centres or market towns.
3. Statement of Community Involvement
This will lay out how our local council should consult the public in plan-making and development control. We don't know what sort of standards these documents will contain but, in theory, local people could have a say in their preparation. The contents of an SCI will be subject to a public enquiry.



Local Community Strategies

Local Community Strategies were introduced under the Local Government Act 2000. These strategies are supposed set out a long-term vision for our area. They are important because Local Development Frameworks are meant to be based on the objectives of the Local Community Strategy. However, other bodies such as Local Strategic Partnerships also have a big input to these documents.

Each part of the LDF can be developed separately but SBDC are required to prepare the SCI before starting the rest of the work. As I understand it, the SCI is supposed to describe HOW local participation is to work; this discovery is important to us since that last time our society tried to get a commitment out of the planning authorities to ensure our voice was heard we were told it was still much too early - this in spite of their already having produced a massive document labelled 'Scoping Report for South Bucks District' in May of this year...

At a recent Chiltern Society meeting to review the South East Plan, it was pointed out that our society needs to be part of the South Bucks LSP (Local Strategic Partnership - you see why I have to keep repeating these acronyms?) I tried to find a global definition of these LSPs but all I came up with is the local variant of it. Here is one example:

A local strategic partnership (LSP) is a single body that:

- brings together at a local level the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together;
- is a non statutory, non-executive organisation;
- operates at a level which enables strategic decisions to be taken and is close enough to individual neighbourhoods to allow actions to be determined at community level;
- should be aligned with local authority boundaries.

As a comparison, it is interesting to look at the East Riding of Yorkshire LSP, which comprises 120 key local organisations from the public, private and voluntary / community sectors. There, the LSP provides the direction for

partners to work together to improve the quality of life in the East Riding. These are seriously big operations and there is no evidence that I can find that South Bucks has such a partnership in place to which your society can contribute. However, I did discover that there is a Bucks Strategic Partnership, which contributed its draft

'vision' for Bucks in September 2004:

www.bucksonline.gov.uk/BSPP

I am coming to the dismaying conclusion that perhaps these LSPs are designed to function only at County or District, and not at Parish, level.

Fred Russell

Weaving the Website

The Society website is growing - since the last Newsletter we have added part of the Taplow Parish Plan and there have been several contributions to the Forum. A good start perhaps, but not enough: the website is intended as a resource for everyone - all the people of Taplow - and that means **you!**

It is really easy to add comments to the website: you just need to register your e-mail address and then you can add your views to any page with a comments box. Better still, start a new topic in the Forum and make your ideas known. The Web has given us something that has not been seen since Roman times: an effective way for individuals to 'have their say' on any topic, so whether you want to vent your frustration with the state of the roads or advertise an unwanted rabbit hutch, do give it a try.

The address is: www.taplowsociety.org.uk

Andrew Findlay

Curious Conveyances



Spotted on the Thames opposite the Rowing Club

Taplow Parish Plan: Making It Happen

The concept of the Parish Plan and its role in the development of a master plan for the future of a village community is new to the arcane world of planning.

In its Rural White Paper *Our Countryside – The Future*, the Government has set out its clear intention that a Parish Plan is to be an integral element in reaching decisions on development and service provision relating to a community. Local Authority Planning Authorities are required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement setting out how it will ensure the active, meaningful and continuing involvement of local communities in the preparation of development documents and the consideration of planning applications.

The Government has made it clear that community involvement is not to be a rigid tick-box process nor is it to be delayed until a stage is reached at which there is little flexibility to make change. The

Taplow Parish Plan is published and the first stages of making it happen have started.

It has been adopted by the Taplow Parish Council, which has sent copies to the Local Planning Authority, South Bucks District Council and to the Highways and Landscape Departments of the Buckinghamshire County Council. For information copies have been sent to the constituency MP Dominic Grieve, to the Government of the South East, and to several environment and community organisations.

The Parish Council has the prime responsibility to enable the implementation of the Plan and to ensure that the implementation is in accord with both the spirit and the detail of the published Plan.

A working party from the Steering Group is developing proposals to submit to the Council for a structure of project teams and advisory groups to carry forward the implementation of the Plan.

Following the Parish Council defining the path forward, there will be a call for residents to participate in the gathering of information and the formulation of action plans to tackle the seven issues – Environment: Traffic: Footpaths, Cycle Tracks and Bridle Ways: Housing: Community Facilities: Public Transport: Communication. First and foremost in bringing the Plan to a positive next stage is the establishment of the mechanics of community involvement with the Local Planning Authority and the County Highway and Landscape Departments to enable effective community contribution to development plans in accordance with government directives.

As ever, the wheels of change turn slowly and the Parish Council awaits a response to its submission of the Plan on March 29th to the District Council.

Karl Lawrence

Planning Applications

Remember, readers, whilst your Society is responding to these applications on your behalf, it helps if you also write to the District Council stating your views, for or against.

**South Bucks District Council
Director of Planning Services
Council Offices
Capswood
Oxford Road
Denham
UB9 4LH**

05/09072/TPO Former Canadian Red Cross Memorial Hospital Cliveden Road This one is for permission to fell or crown various cedars. Is this additional to the hundreds of trees involved in the existing application? Pending.

05/06076/LIC Maidenhead Rowing Club River Road Licence Application. Serious objections have been raised by the local residents on the grounds that an initial approval for a rowing club with 75 members has increased to 400+ members of a Social Club in a quiet residential area. Pending.

05/01064/FUL Amerden Caravan Park Amerden Lane Replacement Dwelling – what are these? Pending.

05/07020/DMA Land At Junction Of Station Road And Bath Road Notification under Town and Country Planning (GPD) Order 1995, Schedule 2, Parts 6 and 7 for three polytunnels... Planning permission required – watch this space.

05/00040/FUL Nutshell, River Road (Antler Homes) Demolition of existing building, erection of a block comprising 6 flats and 7 associated parking spaces. Refused. However, they still have permission to build a block of 5 flats

The Party on the Green

The Society organised the Taplow Village Green Party for the 20th successive year. It took place this year on Saturday 18 June, a beautiful summer evening. The Party continues to be a popular local event, one of the very few opportunities for the whole community to participate in a social occasion. This year, over 370 tickets were sold for ox roast or BBQ food, but at least 450 people attended to enjoy Mike Sanderson and his musicians and generally socialise.

It's easy to forget that a great deal of effort goes into running the event and that the ticket price has to cover all costs including the band, insurance and first-aid provision, not just the cost of the food. The Society is happy to continue running it as a contribution to the community, but it is dependent on the support

of those attending.

The Taplow Branch of the Women's Institute was appreciative of the opportunity to organise the raffle at this year's party, and it raised a total of over £1,100, £700 of which was contributed during the evening. The proceeds will provide a much-needed sum towards updating their premises in Institute Road, which are widely used by the local community.

Many thanks are due to the hard-working volunteers who helped to make the evening so enjoyable. The Society would welcome views on the event: for example, should we continue with the same band, or is it time for a change? Let us know what you think by posting your comments on our website,

www.taplowsociety.org.uk

or write to the Chairman, Anne



Louise Symonds and Allyn Anthony at the raffle-ticket stall

Photo by Martin Gilmore

Hanford, 1 Saxon Gardens, Taplow, SL6 0DD. We look forward to hearing from you. See you again next year!

Anne Hanford

Anne Milne

A true friend of Taplow and a founder member of the Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society, Anne's loving defence of Taplow and its environs was rooted in her family's long connection with the parish. She continued their stewardship by always advocating a policy of responsible and necessary development. She was never a die-hard opponent of change, but was one who saw how an untenable situation could be transformed by planning decisions which respected the legacy of the past.

Anne was one of the original members of the Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society, recruited by the indefatigable Dr Maurice Rogers and inspired by the example of villagers who earlier had combined to buy the land now known as the recreation ground to save it from developers. As a member of the Society and as a councillor, she valued the support and strength of the Society as an auxiliary to the work of the Parish, District and County Councils, on all of which she served.

It was in the 1950s when Taplow was a rare, rather Edwardian, survivor in a vulnerable part of the Green Belt, that Anne returned to live here with her family. She played a leading role in the 1960s transformation of Taplow from a community of large and decaying mansions with a few very small houses, mostly occupied by pensioned or working retainers, to the present village with its wide range of housing styles and sizes.

It was not easy to convince developers that large gardens need not be transformed into grid-pattern estates, and without Anne's strong advocacy of a development plan it is probable that Wellbank, Stockwells and Cedar Chase would now be part of the less attractive legacy of that time. Also, her enthusiasm, vision and purposeful co-operation with fellow Taplow residents in local government gave us our village green and ensured that our school would continue to give Taplow children a full primary education..

Anne's life was spent in service to her country in war and to her neighbours in peace. If you seek her memorial, look around you.

Helen Grellier

The Hazards of Electricity

You may have read in the press that many local events like our Village Green Party (VGP) have been cancelled by their organisers as a result of the flood of regulations pouring out of Brussels and Whitehall. This may be only a British problem, however: we have a house in France, and the jollifications there on Bastille Night and at the various village fetes (of which there are many) seem to continue unabated.

The VGP is classed as public entertainment (we hope you enjoyed it) and therefore, apart from the problem of insurance, it needs an ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE. This is issued by the South Bucks District Council, and whilst attempting to obtain it this year, our Chairman was told she had to provide a test certificate for the cable and sockets used to provide electricity for the band's equipment, and for the lights.

In previous years these have been generously provided by Mr Bob Hanbury, and consisted of a huge (3 feet in diameter) rotating reel containing the wire, with a double socket on the end, and a very large yellow floodlight, which looked as if it could have done duty as a searchlight in the last war. Mr Hanbury confirmed (not surprisingly) that he did not have a certificate of electrical safety for these. We therefore rang around various contractors (some of whom would have been very expensive) to see if we could obtain one. We eventually found one who would come out to inspect the lights for a reasonable fee (£30).

The inspecting electrician, who turned out to be a very large black gentleman, took one look at our venerable equipment and pursed his lips. He explained that in order to be deemed worthy of the certificate, each individual part of

the equipment had to have a resistance on the earth wire of less than 1 ohm. He then found that the 30 metres of cable or so on the reel had a resistance of around 3 ohms. I said I did not see how a cable of that length could have such a low figure. He responded, "Well, if it were split into smaller



lengths, and each bit was less than 1 ohm, that would be all right." There was a pause, after which he realised the illogicality of that statement and said well, maybe cable was different, but certainly the light had to be less than 1 ohm. He applied one probe to the side of the light (where the paint had come off), and one to the plug but found it well over the minimum figure.

At this stage, I realised we were going to have to find an alternative, so I thanked him and paid him his fee. He then produced a wad of yellow stickers with 'FAILED' in big red letters, and asked me if I would like him to stick these on the lights and the cable. I said I did not think Mr Hanbury would like that...

We hired lights and cable from an approved company for the party, and will use some of the surplus from the proceeds of the evening to buy some of our own.

John Hanford

Berry Hill Works

Dear All,

I would like to inform you all as representatives of the Taplow Quarry Liaison Committee that we will be starting work on the construction of the access road on the 4th September 2005. This will involve an archaeological dig and stripping of topsoil. This will take 4 weeks and be followed by the actual construction of the road, which will take 6-7 weeks.

I previously intimated that the start date for quarrying would be early 2006, however, it is now our intention to start quarrying during August 2006 as the expected finish date for Eton Aggregates (the company processing aggregate from the construction of the rowing lake at Eton) has slipped.

I will keep you informed of any further developments.

Regards

Mike Lowe (Summerleaze)

Membership and Finance

In the current year the Society has 228 family memberships and three corporate sponsors. It is difficult to compare this with last year as the membership records were then kept in a different form. However, it appears there may have been a slight increase in numbers.

The Society was never intended to make profits, and the Committee considers that generally the reserves of around £2,500 are sufficient to cover unforeseen expenses, and also would allow us to make one-off payments as the need arises. Audited accounts will be provided at the AGM in October, but it is anticipated that the Society will broadly break even for the year. There should therefore be no need to alter the subscription rates.

The Society has two major expenses on which the bulk of the annual income is spent: the printing of the two newsletters and the Village Green Party. For this newsletter, we are using a new printer who is cheaper than the previous one, and this allows us to have more colour in the magazine for the same price. The Village Green Party is very difficult to budget as the expenditure of around £1,300 has to be committed before the event and, since we cannot charge for admission to the Green, the only receipts are from the sales of tickets for food. While a number of tickets are prepaid at special rates, the vast majority are sold on the night, and there is always the risk of inclement weather affecting the numbers. Balancing the purchase of the food with the expected demand is therefore a bit of a gamble, and of course the band has to be paid in any event. We are very pleased therefore that this year we have again been able to break even, with a small surplus of around £50 which we intend to put to the

purchase of lights and cabling for the event, the need for which is the subject of another article in this newsletter.

The raffle tickets sold at the party are not used to finance the expenditure, but to raise money for various needs associated with Taplow and Hitcham. This year they provided around £700 towards necessary improvements at the Womens' Institute building on the playing fields.

John Hanford



Gaining confidence

Helen Lee

It is with very great regret that we have to announce the death of Helen Lee. Helen was a very active committee member of this society for many years. She was wife of a former president and gave us invaluable support.

Helen was very kindly, practical and down to earth. She trained as a nurse at Guys, and subsequently served with the Queen Alexander's Royal Naval Nursing Service, during which time she met and married Lincoln. They had three sons, five grandsons, a granddaughter and two great grandchildren, and celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary just a few weeks before her death. Helen involved herself in many local affairs and it was in her time on our committee that our very popular village green party, which has gone from strength to strength, was started. We have much cause to be grateful to her and she will be very greatly missed by us all.

Eva Lipman



A cheery wave...

Cliveden Enquiry

In the summer of 2004, the South Bucks Planning Committee refused an application by the National Trust and Countryside Properties to develop the site for 191 houses and flats, and in the autumn the applicants lodged an appeal against the decision. The appeal was heard at a local public enquiry at the beginning of August 2005 and the outcome is expected no earlier than the end of November. The final decision will be made by the Secretary of State after consideration of the Appeal Inspector's report.

The enquiry heard evidence from the applicants, South Bucks District Council, Taplow Parish Council and a number of Taplow residents.

The applicants' case was based on a fall-back argument: that the 191 scheme was an improvement on the extant 135 age-restricted scheme, which had been granted full permission at the same meeting at which the 191 scheme was refused. They claimed that:

- It complies with the development plan.
- It complies with the minimum density requirements for development of 30 houses per hectare.
- It includes 42 affordable housing units, whereas the 135 scheme had none.
- It would create a more mixed community than the 135 scheme.
- It provides alternative means of transport by means of two minibuses dedicated in perpetuity.
- It complies with the parking standards of an average of 1.5 spaces per dwelling.

South Bucks and Taplow Parish Councils based their opposition on the non-conformance with the development plan and car-dependant nature of the site, which has no realistic access to

employment and services without the use of the car. Stating that although this was true of both the schemes, the existing 135 age-restricted permission would have a far lower environmental impact and be more sustainable than the open market 191 proposal. They argued that:

- The intention of the development plan is to permit only a restricted housing use of the site.
- The developable area, when necessary landscape buffers are taken into account, is 4.5 hectares, thus achieving the 30 dwellings per hectare direction with 135 dwellings.
- The gain in affordable dwellings is a plus point but is insufficient to outweigh the inherently unsustainable location of the site.
- 'Mixed community' comprises far more than an economic mix of the occupants. Without any on-site shops, employment or facilities, the development would be simply a dormitory housing estate.
- The two minibuses would not provide a realistic alternative to the car, given the multi-timed, multi-purpose and multi-directional nature of travel from the site.
- The restriction of car-ownership could not be achieved simply by restricting the number of 'official' parking spaces, when the space available for parking could, and would be likely to, accommodate a far greater number.

The most telling outcome of the Enquiry was that both sides agreed that the 191 scheme would generate well over twice the number of vehicle trips as the 135 scheme, an increase vastly greater than the simple increase in numbers of dwellings.

In the opinion of both South Bucks District Council and Taplow Parish Council, the use of the fall-back argument sought to divert the Enquiry from considering the 191 scheme on its own merits or in the light of up-to-date Government planning guidelines, where the overriding emphasis is on considerations of sustainability. It must be borne in mind that the extant 135 permission could not be refused on the grounds of unsustainability because the first outline permission had been granted in 1995, prior to the recognition that sustainability is one of the key issues of modern planning. Neither of the schemes would be acceptable, from a standing start, in today's terms, but the 135 age-restricted scheme is less harmful than the 191 unrestricted scheme.

Footnote:

Those who are members of the National Trust will have received recently the notice of the National Trust AGM at which there will be a debate on a members' resolution seeking to reduce car trips to National Trust properties. It is revealing to contrast arguments put forward by the QC representing the National Trust at the enquiry and the statement by the Council of the National Trust printed in the notice of the AGM.

At the appeal enquiry, the availability of the minibuses was advanced as a strong argument to compensate for the inaccessibility of the Cliveden site. In contrast the National Trust Council's statement in the notice of the AGM, under the heading 'The Wider Context', states:

"Most people are so used to travelling by car that providing alternatives to using the car is not enough to change their behaviour."

They can't have it both ways.

Fred Russell

Lincoln's Corner

Berry Hill

Why is it called Berry Hill? Despite the curse of being repetitious, let me pose some ideas. The obvious answer is that lots of berries used to grow on its verges. More folk however suggest that its provenance was 'bury', and there are of course both burial mound and graveyard near the top. Some folk think that the name relates to 'burgh', and there are, of course, settlements at both ends. Yet another suggestion is that it was originally 'Bray Hill', and before the Bath Road was built you might have gone down this road to the ferry at Bray. Maybe we'll never know.

Burnham

This newsletter is not much given to advertising, but perhaps Burnham, which is our nearest village, deserves a mention. Burnham is not quite the sleepy place it used to be. There are two supermarkets, an excellent bookshop, and right in the middle, next to the health food shop, Susie Lipman (daughter of our present President) has recently opened a very superior art shop and gallery. Take a look for yourselves!

The Crossrail Project

Those of our members who think that there should be a reasonable rail service from Taplow Station might be advised to study the plans which are outlined in the Crossrail document (*and the article on our website by Jon Willmore - Ed*).

The editor of this newsletter has already pointed out that if the railway track is electrified it may have visual effects that many would regret. However, the concern which I am now voicing is about the length of the trains. The document promises an improvement in rail service, which seems splendid, but it also mentions that the trains will be so long that the platform at Taplow (and many other stations) will have to be lengthened. The platforms at Taplow are already two hundred yards long, and the trains seldom use half that length; if the train lengths are doubled, it suggests to a person with a suspicious mind (meaning me) that there will be even fewer trains than there are now...

Lincoln Lee

**...and they sailed off
into the sunset.**



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Unless otherwise stated, the views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society or its Committee.

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