



THE BEDFORD PARK SOCIETY
For the protection of the amenities of the earliest Garden Suburb

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Chairman's report

A busy year of campaigning and internal reorganisation

During 2015 your Society faced a number of threats in the Bedford Park Conservation Area. It has also responded to the challenge of updating and reforming its own structure and functioning.

Major issues included the proposal for a third runway at Heathrow Airport, the imposition of waste removal systems using unsightly wheelie bins, and Hounslow Council's pilot of inappropriate street-lighting. Our campaigns on these and other issues these are described in the reports in the following pages.

Opposing these and other threats by engaging with local councils and other authorities has become harder. Written representations and personal contact are less effective than in the past; our efforts are further hampered by councils' failure to retain knowledgeable staff, government funding reductions and the outsourcing of services. The mounting of campaigns involving residents is increasingly necessary to influence local bodies. Co-ordination of action with other organisations has therefore become very important. We co-operated closely with CHATR, opposing the third runway at Heathrow, and were able to provide them with valuable early finance. We have also worked regularly with other local residents groups and St Michael and All Angels.

The Society has now strengthened its own organisation with the creation of three new specialist sub-committees, covering infrastructure, events and merchandise and membership and communications whose work is detailed in the reports overleaf.

These sub-groups have the time and expertise to give detailed attention to the often complex issues facing the Society. We are delighted that eight additional residents have joined these committees, bringing in valuable specialised knowledge and new ideas. The main committee now has time to concentrate on other issues of major importance to the Society.

Our constitution was last amended in 2000. As a first step in updating it we are asking members to approve some minor changes, plus formalisation of the sub-groups. This will reflect more accurately the work in which the Society is now actively engaged. In a second stage we will consider a more general updating to modernise our constitution so that it conforms to modern practice.

Our faithful network of street representatives, who laboured again in all weathers to deliver the Newsletter and other communications to members, also function as a vital means of keeping in contact with members. We are profoundly grateful to them for their work.

Peter Eversden MBE
Chairman

Planning

All decisions to grant or refuse a planning application in the Bedford Park Conservation Area are taken by the planning committees of Ealing and Hounslow councils or, for small schemes, under delegated authority by officers, though councillors can request a call-in for further consideration.

Ealing Council has set up a Conservation Area Advisory Panel on which three of the Society's trustees serve and which comments on all new applications. In Hounslow the Society is directly invited by the borough to comment on planning applications; these comments are made by the same three trustees, ensuring a consistent approach throughout the Bedford Park Conservation Area. Individual residents also have the right to comment.

The boroughs may take account of comments, but they are not obliged to do so. Applicants have the right to appeal against the refusal of their application.

Decisions on applications are guided by a legislative and planning framework which lays down guidelines for appropriate development for listed buildings and conservation areas. This framework includes both national planning legislation and local plans drawn up by each borough.

In 2015 the Society commented on 38 applications to Ealing, four of which were refused by the borough while three were withdrawn. Two appeals were decided last year, one allowed and one dismissed.

The Society commented on 34 applications to Hounslow, 10 of which were refused by the borough, while two were withdrawn. Of the refusals, three went to appeal, two were dismissed, while the third (on which the Society commented favourably) is still pending. Of the remaining six refusals, two were for double and triple glazing to listed buildings which is not accepted under the guidelines of either borough; three were designs not by chartered architects and thought not to "preserve or enhance" the character of the Conservation Area. One has been redesigned, re-submitted and approved; the last is understood to be in the process of re-design.

Decisions in the four appeals heard during 2015 all supported the opinions expressed by the Society. In three cases where we had objected the borough agreed with our objections and refused the application; an appeal inspector upheld the objections of the Society and the borough. In one case the Society had made no objection to an application which was subsequently refused by Hounslow. However, an inspector did allow this appeal, thus again supporting the view of the Society, this time against the borough.

Clearly the frameworks within which applications are decided only provide broad guidance as to acceptable alterations to listed buildings and in conservation areas – they leave considerable scope for judgement by those commenting and deciding on applications. It is reassuring that the Society's opinions are so clearly echoed in appeal decisions by inspectors from the Planning Inspectorate, suggesting that our judgements are sustainable and reflect current conservation practice.

The team's work is intensive. Responses have to be made within three weeks and each response has to be carefully weighed. The panel meets at least once a month to discuss applications after which members prepare the detailed written responses. These responses are published on the boroughs' planning web-sites after each application has been determined.

Team members are available to give general advice to residents making planning applications. In addition to information on the Society's web-site, contact with the Society's planning specialists can often clear up questions about procedure and give residents guidance on policies. You can contact our planning group through our website <http://www.bedfordpark.org.uk/executive.php>

The group dealing with planning applications consists of: Carol Woolner, who chairs the team, George Butlin and Charles Lawrence.

Infrastructure

The Infrastructure group was formed in Autumn 2015 to cover a wide range of issues relating to the setting and amenities of Bedford Park.

Street lighting Negotiations continue with Hounslow Council about the replacement of street lighting. Hounslow Highways and the council are still apparently digesting the report the Society commissioned early last year, which demonstrated that the specimen lamp installed by the church did not conform to standards, and suggested alternatives. We have now asked Hounslow for a comparative costing of their policy of full replacement of pole and lantern compared with replacing the lantern only with a soft LED light.

Wheellie bins Despite our objections to huge bins, which would degrade the appearance of the conservation area, Hounslow Council has already introduced them while Ealing Council proposes implementing them in April. The Society will continue to monitor their use and the impact they have on the area.

Heathrow The Society welcomed the Government's announcement that it would postpone the decision on a third runway to investigate further the air pollution, finance, noise and roads/transport issues. Our chairman, Peter Eversden, took part in a local debate on the issue and headed the preparation of London Forum's influential report submitted to Parliament's Environment Committee. The Society supports Chiswick Against Third Runway (CHATR) both financially and with practical help.

Parking Parking in parts of Bath Road and in The Avenue alongside the Western end of St Michael's Church continues to cause problems, especially for the 94 bus. A plan approved by residents and officers in 2014 has been denied discussion at the Chiswick Area Forum by councillors. The Society has requested that a Hounslow Council scheme for double yellow lines at accident spots is used to introduce the necessary controls.

Hounslow Highways The Society continues to be disappointed with the frequent lack of response from Hounslow Highways (HH), who have a 25 year contract to maintain all the borough's highways, pavements, street lamps and trees. We welcome Cllr John Todd's offer to walk our streets with a representative of HH and hope that this will improve the responsiveness of the organisation. With other organisations in the borough, we are working on better methods of contacting HH, although problem clearance remains slow.

Bedford Corner forecourt The Society is negotiating with Ealing Council and Bedford House flat owners to halt the deterioration of part of the forecourt. We are focusing on the pot-holed track, which runs North-South alongside Melbourne House to Bedford House, and the adjoining part of the roadway.

Cycle racks The Society welcomed the significant addition of cycle racks opposite Turnham Green station by Ealing Council, but is opposing its plans to erect a permanent shelter over some racks, which would obstruct the view of the Common. Hounslow Council has approved – but not installed – extra racks on its side of the embankment.

Trees There are a few locations where trees might be planted in the Hounslow half of the conservation area, including Bath Road. However, it is not clear whether Hounslow Highways is obliged to provide replacements if the old tree was removed before their contract commenced. Ealing Council has generally been responsive to requests for attention to trees. We are trying to obtain the maintenance/pruning schedules from Hounslow and Ealing to determine their obligations.

The Triangle The hedge along The Avenue side of the Triangle outside St Michael's church is now well established. Litter is removed as and when necessary by Hounslow Highways.

Chaired last year by Simon Hillyard, the Infrastructure Group is now led by Helen Jameson. The other members are Martin Landy, Peter Eversden, plus new recruits Justin Morris-Wyatt and Paul Walker.

Events and merchandise

Events and Merchandise was the first sub-group to be set up, and hit the ground running with Green Day in June. A mug commemorating the centenary of the death of Jonathan T Carr, Bedford Park's founder, and a travel card-holder with Camille Pissarro's 1897 painting of Bath Road, proved popular new items on the Society's stall. For the first time we took a Christmas Fair stand at St Peter's in Southfield Road. This was part of our push to have goods available more than once a year. Our main publications are now promoted on our web-site (www.bedfordpark.org.uk).

The Society organised two lectures in 2015, both held in the Arts Education Schools theatre – a most attractive venue for these events. In May Professor Andrew Saint talked about Jonathan T Carr (see below). Then in November Dr Daniel Mulhall, Ambassador of the Irish Republic, entranced a capacity audience with stories about the Yeats family in Bedford Park.

Record numbers of guests crammed into the Church Hall for a highly successful Winter party in January.

Our highly creative team has given a professional polish to tickets and publicity for all these events.

Johanna Harrison chairs the group. Members this year were Amanda Court, Simon Baddeley, Sandra Grant, and Alyson Sich and newcomers Harriet Benton, Alan Weavis, Diana Johnson and Maggy Pigott. Amanda and Maggy have since sadly resigned owing to other commitments.

Communication and membership

During this year the sub-group for communication and membership has worked primarily on issues related to subscriptions. At the beginning of 2015 we adopted the government's Gift Aid scheme. At last year's AGM a significant proportion of members expressed interest in paying by standing order, and this was introduced with the 2016 renewal notices.

The Society is moving towards more active communication with members. We are placing more news items on the web-site. We have also increased the number of e-mails sent direct to members, bringing them up to date on local issues, particularly in connection with the Society's campaigns against the third runway at Heathrow and the imposition by Hounslow and Ealing councils of wheelie bins.

This group is chaired by Nick Mesquita. Members are: Sandra Grant, Carol Douglas, Alyson Sich, Linda Ambrose, plus Sarah and Nick Haimendorf, who run the membership database.

Commemorating the centenary of Jonathan Carr

Jonathan Thomas Carr, founder of Bedford Park, died in 1915, so 2015 was the year the Society wanted to commemorate his achievements. The main event was a lecture on his life and legacy by Professor Andrew Saint, biographer of Richard Norman Shaw, Bedford Park's main architect. To accompany the talk, the Society published an illustrated booklet, *Jonathan Carr His Family and Background*, by local historian David Budworth. The Society also contributed £200 towards the restoration of Carr's memorial plaque on the South wall of St Michael and All Angels church. This project was organised by local architects Oliver West & John Scott. Finally, a mug featuring Carr's profile (based on the plaque portrait) was sold on the Society's stall on Green Day.

These events were organised by a group consisting of Nick Mesquita (chair), Nigel Woolner, David Budworth, John Scott, Helen Jameson and Sandra Grant.

Nick Mesquita
Hon Secretary