

## **AGM Questions and Responses**

### **1. Tree trimming/pruning**

*Q. The trees of Bedford Park are essential for wild birds. Many trees have been recently trimmed/pruned. According to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the recommendation is "Avoid trimming or cutting trees between late February and the end of August as this is the main breeding season for birds in the UK". (See section "Maintenance" under Planting Garden Trees on the RSPB website.)*

*Why has this tree trimming/pruning activity been taking place in spring? What measures have been taken to protect the nests?*

A. We do agree that pruning trees at this time is not ideal but the programme in both boroughs has been affected by Covid, a change in contractors in Ealing and a general backlog. As a result, additional work has been necessary at this late stage to prevent trees from growing too large, thereby causing problems with excessive shading and damage to houses, pavements and kerbs.

Nesting birds are protected by law and both councils have confirmed that trees with birds' nests are left alone. A large plane tree at the top of Abinger Road — where a major programme and pollarding was recently completed — is an example.

### **2. Tree replanting**

*Q. When a tree is removed, the expectation is that a new tree is to be planted at the same place. However, it is not the case in Marlborough Crescent. What is the plan with tree replanting?*

A. Both Hounslow and Ealing have a policy to replace a removed tree, and this is something we regularly follow up with both councils. There has been an inevitable delay, more so in the Hounslow side of Bedford Park. In addition, there can be issues about using the same pit when the previous tree was, for example, diseased and when time has to be allowed for old roots to die off. Ealing have told us that they are planning to carry out further planting in the autumn.

Do let us know if you have any specific questions about individual trees in your road.

### **3. Energy efficiency**

*Q. With the Government emphasis placed on energy efficiency, do the Society, and the Council, have any views about the installation of heat exchange pumps in listed buildings, to replace our gas-guzzling boilers? We read they can be noisy, which seems to be replacing noise pollution for another, but the Government will be making life increasingly difficult for houses which do not reach certain energy standards and unless we are allowed to install double glazing and solar panels (away from the fronts of houses), there does not seem to be much else we can do to meet required standards.*

A. The context to this important question is that the significant issues of energy conservation are global ones, and most authorities currently consider that listed buildings comprise such a small proportion of the total building stock that their potential contribution does not warrant any compromise of their historic value.

Against this background there is a widely held view that 'green' objectives for historic buildings should be approached 'Fabric First' by minimising requirements for energy, especially in the form of heat, before addressing how energy is supplied or generated.

Unfortunately, the potential for any 'renewables' form of generating energy is very limited in Bedford Park houses:

- solar panels - the aesthetic impact is largely unacceptable from a Council planning perspective on listed buildings and on the front of houses in the Bedford Park Conservation Area
- ground source heat pumps – require extensive and expensive excavation, particularly tricky in the context of relatively small Bedford Park gardens
- air source heat pumps - are noisy and can be visually intrusive for neighbours, similar to having an external air conditioning unit attached to a neighbouring wall.

There are, however, a number of ways in which the thermal performance of a Bedford Park house can be upgraded, first by insulation and then by reducing and controlling, but not eliminating, air flow (it is important to be aware of the risks of condensation).

We are in the process of updating our guidance on improving the insulation of Bedford Park houses, and it will be available on our website when ready.

#### **4 Yeats sculpture**

*Q. I can't believe that the Society can ever approve, let alone support, that totally inappropriate "object" in a totally inappropriate setting. I regard The Triangle, War Memorial and restrained information column as a peaceful and caring place – not flashy and jazzy! Is it too late to stop it?*

A. This application was by its nature highly unusual and outside the normal pattern of applications in the Bedford Park Conservation Area, being for a sculpture in a prominent public space in front of the grade 2\* listed Church.

In commenting on the application, the Planning Committee of the Bedford Park Society was mindful of the frameworks established by documents such as the Council Management Plans, and raised a number of questions through the planning application consultation process.

The Committee questioned the proposed location for the sculpture on 'The Triangle' and suggested one possible alternative position which it was felt would be more appropriate in terms of having less impact on the view of the church from the Green and probably enhancing the visibility of the monument itself. However, Hounslow's decision allows the monument to be constructed in the location proposed in the application.

In addition, the Society raised questions on the detail of the construction that were relevant to issues such as safety, the dangers of vandalism, maintenance, and future insurance. These are not strictly planning issues and the sponsors have confirmed that they are committed to resolving the questions raised by the Bedford Park Society, and we have a continuing dialogue with them on these matters.

The proposal is outside the normal pattern in the extent to which it raised issues of taste and opinion. Views were bound to differ, and inevitably some residents were likely to be disappointed at the result. It should be noted that the substantial majority of comments (26 to 9) submitted during the consultation by residents were favourable to the monument.