



Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society

Newsletter 86: Autumn 2006
£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, Derek Walker, Professor Bernard Trevallion
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), Mick Horsfall (co-opted)
Contact address: HTPS, 1 Saxon Gardens, Taplow, Maidenhead, SL6 0DD

Cover picture: Rear view of 2 Cedar Chase showing distinctive mono-pitched roof. (Andrew Findlay)

Cedar Chase 40th Anniversary

In 1966, Span Estates built 24 new houses in Taplow. Replacing a run-down old house that had been used as a bible college, the modern architecture of Cedar Chase aroused strong feelings among the existing villagers. Many people in the Society were opposed to the development and to the influx of commuters that it brought.

The wheel of time has turned: landscape planting has matured, Cedar Chase residents

are active in village affairs, and people have got used to the unconventional design. Employment patterns have changed too: some long-standing residents have retired and of the rest many have offices at home and only about ten people regularly travel to work.

In this issue we celebrate 40 years of Cedar Chase with articles by current and former residents.



Editorial

Great Things are stirring and happening in Taplow these days...

While the battle for the Cliveden development is over, we are now seeing the first impact of the infrastructure changes that are needed to support that development, in the road works on Cliveden Road; we are experiencing the first stirring of the owners of Taplow Paper Mill wanting to capitalise on their investments in the riverside lands to the north of Bath Road; we are discovering what community involvement actually means in preparing the new Local Plan when we find the District Council preferring to discuss the future of Taplow with a strange unelected outfit called the Bucks Strategic Partnership rather than your elected Parish Council; the Crossrail proposals are firming up and will need to be examined for their impact on Taplow Riverside; and we have new and welcome proposals regarding the scope of the Conservation Areas in the village and the riverside settlement.

This issue sees a celebration of the building of Cedar Chase more than 40 years ago with commentary from a number of folk who live or have lived there. Dr Rogers, one of the founders of your Society, was strongly opposed to the Cedar Chase project on the grounds of its inappropriate architecture in the midst of much older traditional houses. In fact, it seems to have blended in and has engendered a strong community spirit among its residents. It is a fine example of a village adapting to change rather than resisting changing demands.

However, back to the future. I have just heard while writing this editorial that St Regis have actually sold the whole site to a commercial developer called Towntalk Ltd for a reported sum of about £30 million, as part of its "rationalisation" programme. This deal means the closure of the Mill around the end of October this year. The company's Severnside waste collection site will be relocated. I have done some research on the web for some information about this company, Towntalk, but at the time of writing I can find nothing about it, save it's also a residential property developer. It will be interesting to see how the Windrush garage comes out of this since it is part of the site and they have a lengthy lease period to run. Of late the impression I'm getting is that Windrush are

digging in rather than give up the remainder of their lease.

Up to now St Regis has been going through the motions of talking to the natives to elicit their wishes for the development of this 45-acre site.



The Taplow Parish Plan is very clear about how the residents of the parish want to see the riverside development take place; with emphasis on protection of the Green Belt land in that area; the recreational possibilities; and the potential for declaring the whole triangle, bounded by the A4, the Thames and Jubilee rivers a Conservation Area. Additional access to the river by the public and the preservation of the footpaths are all issues to be addressed if we are not to see the whole site disappear under a tide of houses and offices. If you feel strongly about what kind of development you would like to see, please contact an HTPS committee member or put your ideas on to our website.

Now we have to start our discussions again with a completely unknown company – and one with no particular association with or knowledge of the parish. We have to wait and see what Towntalk has in store for us. You never know, it might all be good news! One thing is sure, the long wait for something to happen on that site is over. Or is it? Towntalk may just be wanting to sell it on rather than see the development through. Watch this space.

Fred Russell

Living in Taplow Toilets

We were the first family to move into Cedar Chase, in August 1966 – there were in fact two couples already living on the estate, but they had no children, didn't socialise, and didn't stay long, so we can claim to be the true originals. Amazingly, we are still here.

We had been living in south-east London, not far from Blackheath, which was one of the strongholds of Span Developments. Span was then the trendiest developer in Britain, and although we lived in a Span-type house on a Span-type estate, it wasn't the real thing. So when we saw the first ads for Cedar Chase, which appeared in the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* that Easter Sunday, we leapt at the chance.

I was getting tired of dragging right across London every day to BBC Television Centre at Shepherds Bush, and a half-hour tootle down the new M4 motorway seemed very attractive (yes, seriously, it used to take me 29 minutes in my Mini; I even used to come home at lunchtime occasionally – but then, petrol only cost 3s 6d a gallon). As convinced modernists, we were bowled over by the brilliant design of the houses – Eric Lyons was probably the finest domestic architect in mid-century Britain – and by the intelligent layout of the grounds, centred on three great cedar trees. Sadly, the old trees fell victim to honey fungus long ago, but their replacements are thriving.

Jill Frost, operating from a small caravan on site, had an easy job selling us our house, for £7,650. It was not yet built, of course. Only the bottom row had been finished, including the show house at No 9, furnished and decorated in the height of sixties' style, with walls in Thames green, Seville orange and damson purple. The three and a half months until completion were an agony of impatience. We could hardly wait to move in. When we did, there were still no roads, footpaths or garden fences, and workmen were laying floor tiles in our dining room as we unloaded our furniture.

After all our excitement, our reception in the village came as something of a shock. We soon discovered that the locals had dubbed Cedar Chase "Taplow Toilets", because of the white brick, and they regarded us with suspicion and even hostility. We were not made welcome in the pub, the grocer's or the butcher's (Taplow still had all three, plus a post office). When Rosemary was finally invited to a

coffee morning, she was paraded as a curiosity as someone who lived in "those houses".

Our daughters, then aged four and 18 months, had been used to having many friends on tap but since there were no other children on the estate at that time, they missed the company terribly. The village itself was pretty child-free, too, and we began to be seriously concerned. There were a few children of the right age in neighbouring Saxon Gardens. But when we approached the families and asked if our girls could play with them, we got a frosty response.

Emma and Amelia had to wait several weeks until other families finally started moving in – and then our worries disappeared. By the time the houses were fully occupied there were around 50 children on the estate, enough to be the salvation of St Nicolas School, which had been under threat of closure. With hordes of friends and five acres of communal land to play in with complete safety and freedom, Emma and Amelia always say they had an idyllic childhood. They have no memory of those awful first few weeks. For many years, we stayed in Cedar Chase for their sake. Now, it is our grandchildren who howl with dismay if we ever threaten to leave.

Tony Read

Discovering Cedar Chase

I answered an advertisement in the *Sunday Times*, which read:

"If you want to live in a conventional red brick house, don't come here! But if you like sunbathing in the nude on a secluded patio without a house in sight, this is the place for you..."

It was and is!!!

Also a good place for my son who spent many school holidays in complete freedom, climbing trees and making dens in the woods. Freedom, too, for mothers who could take it in turns to be around in cases of acute hunger.

The support from neighbours when needed is just wonderful. Long live community housing!

Sally Kimminau

The Architecture of Cedar Chase

The architectural face that Cedar Chase presents to the pretty village of Taplow is bold and uncompromising, yet also quite introverted: a continuous, stepped terrace along Rectory Road of pale yellow brick housing, with dark-stained vertical timber cladding and distinctive horizontal white and green windows. The contrast to the established old vernacular of the village could hardly be more pronounced and the original reaction of many residents to the shocking new development can only be imagined!

projects and individual, bespoke architectural commissions. The buildings and landscapes were at the leading edge of architectural design, and Cedar Chase and the other 30-odd Span estates in the South-East of England are now widely recognised as exemplary far beyond the realm of Span aficionados.

Originally receiving a Housing Design Award on its completion in 1966, the Cedar Chase design is simultaneously open yet private. Each house is an L-shape in plan, with ground-floor living and first-floor bedroom accommodation enclosing a small courtyard. Although the private garden of each house varies in size, this layout of house and immediate outdoor space is one of the keys to the design – the courtyard becoming an extra "room" for much of the year and providing shelter from autumn winds and winter frosts.

Wrapped around the courtyard, the modest living spaces are open-plan and full of light, with large areas of south-facing glass (contributing to equally impressive winter draughts!), and reflecting the Scandinavian living model that the architect Eric Lyons is supposed to have admired.

Also vital to the longevity and success of the development is the overall planning of the estate, and in particular its sympathetic positioning within a large, existing garden. The retained trees and shrubs were complemented by a new landscape and planting design that is now beautifully mature and well-maintained, and which continues to provide year-round variety and interest as well as a great place for families to play.

The uniquely continuing freshness and modernity of the 40-year-old design are perhaps best illustrated by looking at contemporary pop music – The Beatles' double A-side, "Yellow Submarine"/"Eleanor Rigby", was at Number One in August 1966 – and cars – the Jaguar E-Type was the epitome of cutting-edge sports car design, while the Austin 1100 was typical of family motoring.

Or consider this: Cedar Chase was designed and built three years before the Apollo Moon landing, in the year that England won the World Cup – now doesn't that seem like a different age?!!

Martin Knight



Yet this shady north-facing elevation is a screen, concealing a unique and brilliantly-conceived estate of family homes that has become an exemplar for modern, low-density housing. As an architect, the unplanned opportunity in 2004 to buy into the Span legacy has provided a first-hand demonstration of the value of excellent design.

Span was formed by architect Eric Lyons and architect-turned-developer Geoffrey Townsend, who recognised in the growing design-conscious middle-classes of the late 1950s a market for innovative, well-designed housing. Their developments would literally "span" the gap between mass public housing

Cut to the Chase

Walking around Cedar Chase today, it quickly becomes obvious that all the houses have the same paint colours, the doors are all the same and the gardens all show the same taste for "architectural" planting. In fact, the houses themselves all look very much as they did when first built in 1966: trees and shrubs have softened the stark, newly-built look and some windows now have plastic frames but the overall unity of design is still there 40 years on.

It is reasonable to wonder how this has come about, as it is not the normal state of affairs for a 40-year-old housing estate. Are the houses perhaps owned by some powerful and reclusive landlord, or maybe the residence of some vast extended family, ruled by an iron matriach? The truth, of course, is less fanciful and involves a lot of hard work and diplomacy by many people over the years.



Span Estates was a very unusual property developer, which operated in the Home Counties from 1947 to 1978. They believed that there was a market for good, modern design, set in carefully designed landscapes. They "designed-in" a sense of community: every Span estate has a residents' society charged with the maintenance of the grounds, external painting and generally keeping everything ticking along happily.

All the houses were originally leasehold, with Span as the freeholder making sure that everyone paid their share of the maintenance costs. This changed as a result of the 1967 Leasehold Reform Act, which threatened the unity of the estate by allowing people to buy out their freehold. Like all the other Span developments, Cedar Chase went through a difficult and expensive period culminating in the approval of a Scheme of Management by the High Court. This allowed the Residents' Society to enforce the collection of fees from freeholders, if necessary by blocking the sale of houses. Once

the legal side was sorted out, all 24 houses contributed a substantial sum of money to buy the freehold of the estate. As a result, the houses are now freehold (though it takes an alert conveyancer to spot that first time) and each household owns one share in the Society, which in turn owns all the communal ground.

The Society is a company (technically a Friendly Society) with all that implies: directors, accounts, AGMs and so on. Its major costs relate to the five acres of communal gardens and woodland, and to repainting all the houses every four years. This defines the planning cycle, and our treasurer Jane Curry keeps a detailed spreadsheet with estimates stretching forward over the next two cycles. This is updated every year and presented to the members at the AGM so that the fees for the coming year can be set at a suitable level to maintain the sinking fund.

The committee of the Society is also the board of directors, so the estate is controlled entirely by its residents. Everyone has a specific role and the names of these have passed into local idiom, so it is common to stop for a chat in the car park and be asked, "Are you Paths and Boundaries this year?"

There are no Utopian communities, so an important part of the Society's job is to act as mediator and to smooth ruffled feathers from time to time. It does not always get this right, and there have been some noisy arguments over the years, but on the whole it all works and the sense of community is very strong.

Andrew Findlay

Moving in

We moved to Cedar Chase from London in 1982. Everything was unpacked and we were in our sitting room surrounded by displaced furniture and other household items, when came a knock on the door – a neighbour inviting us to join them for an ox-roast in the grounds. From that visit we had the feeling of friendship and neighbourliness that we came to find characterised this unique place and has remained with us to this day.

Marjorie Ball

Cedar Chase – Home to Two Generations

Anne: We moved into 9 Cedar Chase, the show house, in the spring of 1967. Our eldest son, Jonathan, was nearly two years old at that time.

We moved directly from another Span development in Blackheath, which we had very much enjoyed. We needed to move house due to a change of job for John and were therefore pleased to find another conveniently located Span development. The main elements that had originally appealed to us about Span were their high-quality houses of modern design, set in carefully landscaped surroundings. We also liked the community aspects of the Residents' Society running the estate for residents' mutual benefit and protection, and the social contact with neighbours which this encouraged. We also particularly liked the warm-air heating with dual thermostats, the large windows looking out on the garden and many other of the design features in the house.

One of the greatest benefits was the extensive grounds where children could safely play from an early age with minimum supervision. During our time, there were dozens of children providing a source of playmates and friendships, some of which still survive.

We also enjoyed participating in the various communal activities, garden working parties, annual bonfire and firework parties and other more ad hoc events. John was Chairman and I was Secretary of the Residents' Society for some time, and the first Cedar Chase representative on the Committee of the Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society. This was most welcome after rather strong initial local resistance to the development!

Eventually in 1975 we reluctantly had to take leave of Cedar Chase. The house had become too small, or rather the inhabitants had become too large and too numerous! By then, we had three sons and a living-in nanny. It was very difficult to find a satisfactory replacement. Well-designed modern houses had become a rarity, that is if you don't care for mock-Tudor or mock-Georgian. However, even more important, large gardens with safe playing and bicycle riding facilities were even more rare. After a considerable search, and some misgivings, we settled for a house with no architectural pretensions, but large, safe

grounds. It also happened to be just round the corner so friendships for both us and the boys were maintained. We also still have the benefit of a view of Cedar Chase. We look back on our time there with pleasure and fond memories. It obviously had a continuing effect on Jonathan, who now lives at number 17, so I'm going to pass over to him to say what he likes about it and why he chose to live there.

Community

This is the only place I have ever lived where I have known the name of every resident.

Andrew Findlay

Jonathan: I lived at Cedar Chase with my parents from the age of two until ten. It was a great place to grow up and I have plenty of memories of playing in the grounds with my friends and brothers. When we were small, the area available to play in seemed huge, a whole world to explore. The firework displays were always a cause of great excitement. I don't know why but afterwards we used to spend days scouring the grounds looking for the spent fireworks and rocket sticks.

I continued to live in Taplow even after leaving home, and when Jane and I were looking for a house, Cedar Chase was a natural choice. I've always been a fan of the bold design, which still looks modern 40 years on. The design of the whole place has clearly had considerable effort put into it, from the orientation and placement of each of the houses, to the trees and landscaping. Inside the houses, the large picture windows provide plenty of light, making the garden seem part of the house, almost like an extra room. I guess it says something about modern life (or me), but two of us have no problems occupying and using the same amount of living space used by six people 30 years ago! I value the communal aspects of living in Cedar Chase as well, it's great that people are willing to put time and effort into looking after the place and the interests of the people who live there. I really do find it hard to imagine living anywhere else.

Anne and Jonathan Hanford

Old Manor House, Rectory Road

What's in a name? "Old" is a word rightly associated with many named properties in Taplow (Old Cottage, Old Malt House, Old Rectory, etc.) but Old Manor House seems a bit strong for a couple of farm cottages, joined together and extended over many years.

We don't believe our house was ever a manor house but it is old and has quite an interesting history. However, if I was trying to make a case for it once being the Manor House, I could mention a number of possible qualifications.

The records we have go back to 1886 when the property (known then as the Old Manor House) was occupied by a certain Baron Rozenkrantz. However, we believe parts of the house to be at least 200 years older. From the deeds it is clear that the property included a house, a bakehouse and a shop, and extended over a lot of land, including the area now covered by Elm View Cottages, "to a total of 36 perches". There were several outbuildings, but only the foundations now remain.

We have ghosts. There is a small room in the middle of the house that has no exterior windows. Many years ago I used it as an office and I frequently saw an elderly lady walking past an internal window. I subsequently discovered that such a lady had lived and died in this very room about 60 years earlier. There is also a story about a man who fled up the chimney to escape a pack of wild dogs and never came down again. We have not seen him, but I sometimes wonder if the howl we hear from the chimney when I light the fire really is caused by the wind.

We have a wine cellar. When we bought the house in 1984, the only access to the cellar was down a flour chute (for the bakehouse) in the conservatory. The floor was covered in earth and you could barely stand upright. My son, Richard, discovered the staircase but it was broken and went nowhere, so the cellar was difficult to access. But, with my love of collecting fine wine, it was only a matter of time before I would attempt to restore it. And so it was that last year we employed a small company to give it a go. First of all they had to remove 20 tons of earth, which we believe were from the construction of

the cottage "Mysteria" next door. To the amazement of all, they found a magnificent brick floor under two feet of earth and it was in very good condition. They also found several interesting mementoes from the past, including graffiti dated 1812 and a beer bottle embossed "Langdons, Maidenhead". Furthermore, they found a fireplace and a window frame, indicating that the cellar was once above ground. When I look around my restored wine cellar, it amuses me to think that my oldest bottle of port, which is dated 1900, would presumably



have been considered far too young to drink by Baron Rozenkrantz.

We have a very old barn, which is our kitchen and has recently been restored. The exposed oak beams have been identified by a naval historian as particular sections of old naval ships. To think that they might have seen action at Trafalgar...!

Our garden is on two levels, due perhaps to a large deposit of soil from the Elm View footings. We frequently discover interesting bits of pottery and flintstone in the garden but our greatest discovery was made by accident. My wife, Liz, was collecting material from the compost heap when the ground gave way and her leg disappeared down a hole right up to her hip. The hole was the opening to an impressive Victorian brick cesspit, as confirmed later by the local Archaeological Society.

Looking at our house from the Village Green, it is clear from the design of the windows and the roofline that the half attached to the pub was once part of a block of four terraced cottages. The other half, however, is of a quite different design and was once a shop, as a photograph of the front of our house dated 1880 clearly shows.

So, if German barons, stable yards, ghosts, barns and old oak beams, cellars and cesspits constitute claims for the existence of a Manor House, we have the genuine article. On the other hand, I can't help feeling that Taplow Court, Cliveden and Dorney Court have greater claims and I personally favour Taplow Court because of its history and its physical position in the village.

Alistair Forsyth

Village Green Party, 17th June 2006

Once again, we were very fortunate with the weather and enjoyed a lovely summer evening. The band was a success, with the regular caller present again this year, encouraging participation in the dancing.

St Nicolas Church was very appreciative of the opportunity to use the occasion for its raffle to raise funds for the restoration of the churchyard path. A total of about £2,000 was raised overall, with a substantial contribution from the sale of tickets at the Party.

The attendance was around 600 people but ticket sales for food were less than 400. The ticket price has to include the substantial overhead costs of the band, insurance, first aid cover, etc. The increasing tendency for people to bring their own food meant that the takings



did not cover the total cost, and the event made a small loss. We are, however, most appreciative of a community events grant from South Bucks District Council, which will help to offset this shortfall. This may not be available next year so the

event cannot continue making a loss. Those attending need to give their financial support if the Village Green Party is to survive as one of the few community events in Taplow.

Anne Hanford

Dropmore Update

External work on the foundations, ground floor and mezzanine floor of Dropmore House has been completed. Work is in progress on the first floor. Plans submitted for a workshop, bat roost and accommodation for a maintenance cum security man have been approved by SBDC. This last was supported by the Parish Council on the condition that the residential accommodation be limited to use by security and maintenance personnel only. According to the architects the local planning authority has given notice that it proposes to approve proposals for the rehabilitation and extension of Taplow Lodge (also known as Lower Lodge), which falls

within Wycombe District. The design of the rehabilitated Lodge reflects the original building and is most appropriate in the view of the Dropmore Society.

Design work is on hand for the restoration of Oak Lodge at the junction of Wooburn Common Road and Dropmore Road. The current proposal is to restore the Lodge to its original design, for which the architects have obtained drawings from the British Library, and to include a contemporary extension. Proposals have yet to be discussed with the Dropmore Society and submitted to SBDC.

Bernard Trevallion

The Trees of the Village Green

My interest in the Village Green trees occurred as a result of a *Maidenhead Advertiser* article, which spoke of an event "under the oaks on the Village Green". I took a degree in botany many years ago, and although taxonomy was not my speciality, I did not think there were any oaks on Taplow Village Green.

I was right and wrong; there are not oaks, but there is *an* oak; and in wandering around the Green looking at the trees, I was struck by their amazing variety. There are not many of them, but there are over 12 different species, one of them very unusual. They could form a useful nature lesson for the children at St Nicolas School, especially as one has edible berries and one is so poisonous that anyone eating its fruit would require immediate treatment with a stomach pump at Wexham Park Hospital!



White mulberry fruit

The Green was originally part of Glebe Farm and had farm buildings on it. It was purchased by Eton Rural District Council as a result of a campaign by local residents to prevent houses being built there. It is now leased by South Bucks District Council to the Parish Council, who cleared the buildings, although much of the rubble was grassed over, which accounts for the poor state of the grass in some places.

There are two clumps of sycamore trees (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), one on the right of the road leading to the school, and one in the middle of the Eastern Green, which appear to be self-seeded. All the other trees appear to have been planted.

If we take the Western Green first, this has only three trees. The oak (*Quercus petraea*) is not the English oak but the less common Durmast oak, or Sessile oak, so-called because the acorns do not have stalks. There is also a copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), with its reddish copper-coloured leaves. The other tree is a tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), which has beautiful greenish-yellow tulip-like flowers in the spring and curiously lobed leaves. It is related to (but different from) the magnolia with its pinkish-white tulip flowers, which is also often (but erroneously) called the tulip tree.

The Eastern Green has, in front of the church, a magnificent London plane (*Platanus acerifolia*), probably planted when the church was built and therefore about 150 years old. Next to it, along the High Street, are two lime trees (*Tilia vulgaris*), and another sycamore. In front of the School House is the gracefully shaped black locust tree (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), with its bright green pinnate leaves, and in the centre of the Green is a horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), presumably planted before it was realised what a danger conker-playing was to children. On Rectory Road is the tree which, though having very beautiful pendulous flowers and pea-like pods, is poisonous, the laburnum (*Laburnum anagyroides*) referred to above. There is also a silver birch (*Betula pendula*) with its beautiful silver bark, and a mountain ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*), which bears white flowers and red berries.

Finally, there is the most unusual tree of all, opposite the Oak and Saw, a white mulberry (*Morus alba*), a native of Northern China, which has succulent whitish-pink fruit, delicious to eat or to make into jam. The more usual mulberry (itself not very common) is the black mulberry (*Morus nigra*) – no political correctness in botany! – which has the familiar, dark red/black berries. Curiously, the Parish Council have recently planted another white mulberry next to it, supposedly because the original tree was dying, although it seems very healthy to me.

So there we are: the Village Green and its native and exotic trees. Perhaps the Parish Council should label them so they can be better appreciated.

John Hanford

Cliveden Road

A condition for the redevelopment of the Canadian Red Cross Hospital site at Cliveden states that additional visibility splays for vehicle drivers must be created at the entrance in order for drivers leaving the site to be able to see oncoming traffic from the north for a sufficient distance for safety as they pull out. In order to provide enough visibility, the brow of Cliveden Road to the north of the entrance must be lowered by about one metre at the maximum point: hence the current closure of Cliveden Road.

The road has been closed for 16 weeks from June 19th and will re-open mid to end of September. The building of the 135 homes (with a condition that at least one occupant must be over 55 years old) will begin in October. There will be a community building, a medical building and a sports hall with gym on the site, and it is envisaged that the estate manager's office will provide a modest shopping facility for bare essentials.

The first new homes are scheduled to be available in June next year and the selling agents will be Frosts. A brochure will be available from the end of August.

Euan Felton

Come to the AGM!

The Annual General Meeting of the Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society will take place at 8pm on Friday October 13th at the Taplow Village Centre, High Street, Taplow. A detailed agenda is enclosed in this Newsletter.

The Committee is very keen to receive suggestions from members and potential members as to what they want from the Society and what changes in its aims and operation might be required. We are particularly interested in attracting more younger residents and those who have recently arrived in Taplow. Please encourage any of your neighbours who are not currently members to come to the AGM. They may join at the meeting if they wish. More active members are needed to secure the future of the Society, whatever form it may take. Most

Muntjak

John Hanford has one of these at the bottom of his garden.

The Reeves Muntjak or "barking deer" is native to South-East Asia, but is now the most common deer in England as a result of several escapes from captivity in the past 80 years.



urgently, no nominations have been received so far for anyone to take over as Secretary.

If you have any ideas that you would like included in the discussions, please send them to the Secretary:

Jeremy Vanstone, 8 Stockwells, Taplow SL6 0DB
e-mail: jeremy.vanstone@btopenworld.com

or post them on our web site:

www.taplowsociety.org.uk

Nominations for the President, Chairman, Secretary and committee members should also be sent as soon as possible to the Secretary, Jeremy Vanstone, details as above. Please ensure nominees are members of the Society and are willing to stand. They should have a proposer and a seconder.

Anne Hanford

SCI: Statement of Community Involvement

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the South Bucks District Council (SBDC) to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF) to replace the current South Bucks District Local Plan which was adopted in 1999.

The LDF is to comprise a series of Local Development Documents (LDDs), which will set out where development will be allowed to take place, the standards that will be applied when considering proposals for new developments and how the environment will be safeguarded for future generations.

Taplow representations are much concerned with the dismissive attitude to Parish Plans enshrined in the SCI

The Act requires SBDC to involve local communities at every stage of producing the LDF and at every stage of the implementation of the LDF through the consideration and the approval or rejection of planning applications.

The Act requires the processes and methods of involving local communities to be set out in a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Therefore the SCI is paramount in the consultation process to produce the LDF.

In January SBDC published a first draft SCI with an invitation to "community groups, stakeholders and the public" to express their views. The draft refers to preliminary consultations in early 2005 "with Town/Parish Councils, adjoining Local Planning Authorities, key stakeholders, organisations and statutory bodies".

Taplow Parish Council (TPC), Taplow Parish Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group (IMG), Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society (HTPS), Ellington Road and District Residents' Association (EDRA), and Cedar Chase Residents' Society (CCRS) responded to the invitation for comments and suggestions.

SBDC published a statement giving answers to most of the points that had been raised in the responses accepting a few relatively minor comments but rejecting the major suggestions.

The Act requires SBDC to submit a final draft SCI to the Secretary of State for Examination for "soundness" by an Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate. SBDC will be required to make any changes stipulated by the Inspector and to adopt the revised SCI. Then SBDC must abide by the SCI in preparing Local Development Documents and in considering planning applications.

The public was invited to make representations on the final draft SCI for consideration by the Inspector and to request to speak at the Examination. TPC, IMG, HTPS, EDRA, CCRS and several Taplow residents have made representations with requests to attend and/or to speak at the Examination.

Taplow representations are much concerned with the dismissive attitude to Parish Plans enshrined in the SCI and with the leading role of unelected bodies in the formulation of policies for future LDDs.

The stated intent at many points within the SCI to take action or to impart information "as appropriate" especially in the context of the phrases "to reduce consultation fatigue" and "the nature and complexity of the subject matters" heightens these concerns.

The strength of these concerns leads to the perception that the democratic structure of elected and accountable Parish Councils will be ignored and the role of the Local Strategic Partnership, the Citizen Panel and other appointed bodies will be a means of engineering the process of community involvement to produce a pre-determined result.

The representations detail changes to the SCI which, if accepted by the Inspector, will reduce the concern by a degree of magnitude.

As this Newsletter goes to press it is disheartening that the immediate response of the Inspector to the representations is a form letter attempting to discourage requests to attend the Examination.

Karl Lawrence

The Powers of Delegation

The new planning laws that were recently implemented now grant special powers to our planning officers. Individual planning officers are allowed under delegated authority to approve a very wide range of planning applications without reference to the Planning Committee. The significance of this change is that many applications, which are controversial and strongly opposed by the public, can be approved by a planning officer without the additional protection of the application being reviewed by your elected representative. The reasons given by the Government in introducing this change was to speed up the process. The Government target was for at least 90% of all applications to be dealt with in this way.

Allow me to quote a few of the rules:

A1(a) Any application may be authorised by the planning officer... where no material objections have been received. (*What constitutes "material" and who decides whether the term applies?*)

A1(c) Any application may be authorised by the planning officer... for listed buildings or Conservation Areas notwithstanding any objections that may have been received – subject only to the conservation officer finding the proposal acceptable. (*This rule suggests we need to make sure we have a good relationship with our conservation officer. We had with our last one but unfortunately*

he has now left and not been replaced to my knowledge.)

A1(i) Subject to (l) below... [the planning officer may] approve any application regardless of any objections received in respect of:

- Householder development, extensions, conservatories, etc.
- Developments of up to nine dwellings (*So, apparently, the planning officers can simply ignore our objections.*)

A1(l) The delegated authority cannot be exercised in any case where a member of the Committee has specifically requested, for sound policy reasons, that the matter be referred to the Committee for determination, and that such request has been notified to the planning officers within 21 days of the application being registered. (*You will have noticed the caveat "for sound policy reasons". Does our district councillor then have to argue with the planning officer about which policy he or she is intervening under?*)

This increase in the powers of the bureaucracy to control our lives can only be mitigated by making sure that where you have significant objections to any application you make contact with your district councillor – in our case George Sandy – to gain his support in fighting your corner of England.

Fred Russell

Planning applications

There are relatively few applications of significance this time round but a few stand out as worth a mention.

06/01098/FUL Old Court Hotel, Bath Road. Redevelopment of the site to provide 27 service apartments.

Last time round this developer (Asif Hussain) was granted permission to replace the old hotel with a block of 11 flats. This latest application is a gross over-intensification of this site.

06/01064/EUC Windrush, Bath Road. Certificate of lawfulness for existing use of the car park.

I seem to be out of touch here: does this mean Windrush, who seem intent on digging-in in the face of the St Regis upcoming applications, are parking illegally?

06/00651/FUL Cornerways, River Road. Retention of boat landing stage and mooring.

This is the site where Maidenhead Rowing Club were proposing to build a boat rack.

Infrastructure - Who Pays?

Following a recent application to build 400 new houses on a disused RAF site in Oxfordshire, the issue of infrastructure arose, particularly in regard to sewage disposal. It was estimated by the local water provider that it would cost them over £1 million to provide the resources required, which they refused to spend. The developer is still arguing with them.

The South-East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) is planning to build 80,000 houses in the south of Hampshire, but there are no plans to improve the existing infrastructure, which is already at breaking point. Ruth Kelly has now increased this number to a mind-boggling 146,000. There was already massive opposition to the 80,000 but SEERA decided to oppose only the new figure, thus appearing to be on the side of the residents but effectively diverting attention away from the 80,000. Neat. SEERA, our new – unelected – Regional Assembly covers both Oxfordshire and Hampshire, not to mention Kent, etc. Yet this is the organisation that will make decisions about our local environment, knowing little or nothing about our needs in little Taplow.

**The cost of infrastructure:
about £38,000 to £40,000
per house**

Take a moment to think about these figures and the infrastructure needed to support them. At a meeting to explain the South-East Plan to the Chiltern Society, a Bucks County planning chief estimated the cost of infrastructure to be about £38,000 to £40,000 per house. Looking at our little development in Oxfordshire (above) this comes to about £15 million. And for the 80,000 in Hampshire, the figure is likely to be £3,000 million! A bit closer to home, the additional houses at Cliveden and Dropmore should be supported by about £7 million-worth of additional infrastructure funding. Think about the mind-boggling total for the massive building programme that this Government is planning to unleash on the South-East as a whole.

Infrastructure, of course, is the provision of the services needed to support people living in a particular locale and includes, inter-alia:

hospital and school places (with a concomitant supply of doctors, nurses, auxiliaries, teachers and so on), utility supply (water, sewage, gas, electricity, telecommunications), road maintenance and upgrades, policing, waste disposal, public transport, etc., etc. This rather vague term actually defines our country. The quality of our life is conditional upon an adequate publicly provided infrastructure.

Today we are in an era of Government control of building programmes. Because of demographic and social changes, vast tracts of land scattered all over the South-East are being earmarked to absorb hundreds of thousands of houses and office spaces, which means people, which means facilities. The RAF site in Oxfordshire quite possibly has inadequate gas, water, power – you name it, it's probably not up to scratch. So where is the estimate of the slack in the publicly provided and maintained infrastructure that permits a private company to blithely propose an estate of 400 homes with possibly 1,000 people living there?

The cost is of course divided between capital expenditure and maintenance/running cost. We have to assume that the utility companies have set aside sufficient reserves for foreseeable changes to their supply position, but did they foresee the present government-generated demand? They can of course claim back the maintenance, running costs and capital levy from us, so they don't really worry. Or do they? No responsible utility company can be happy to see their assets depreciate beyond economic use. It doesn't help that utilities are now in private ownership and there is a natural conflict between shareholders' and users' interests. Normally a location will experience creeping development, a few houses here and there; a small estate springs up now and again and, somehow, the infrastructure copes. But the developers'

**The South-East Plan changes
the picture dramatically**

charter called the South-East Plan changes the picture dramatically. So, are we, the taxpayers of England, expected to quietly fork out the additional billions needed to fund this

infrastructure explosion, which will help private developers to become extremely rich?

Where is the mechanism in the planning process to properly assess the impact of development on the infrastructure?

Moreover, there is another issue here that needs addressing. Where is the mechanism in the planning process that permits planning officers to properly assess the impact of development on the infrastructure? The present system assumes the infrastructure to be available and able to cope with new planning permissions. This leaves the providers of services with the problem of having to meet the needs of the incoming population. What sort of demand is the St Regis site development going to make on infrastructure?

The term "sustainability" has been hi-jacked as a catchall word to cover many things it was not coined to represent. To paraphrase the Rio Conference definition, "Sustainability is about so managing the earth's resources that our grandchildren will not have cause to hate us". This definition is a long way from from the Cliveden interpretation but, since it's in common use, let's continue with it. The South-East Plan and all intermediate planning documents down to the new Local Plan do not specifically address the provision of infrastructure. The assumption implicit in these plans is that infrastructure already exists or will exist.

There should be a more structured approach that requires speculative developers to identify and pay for the infrastructure needed to support their building programmes. The £38,000 mentioned as the infrastructure cost at the beginning of this article was obviously based on some algorithm and suggests that somebody has done their homework on the problem. One possibility is that infrastructure could be assessed for cost recovery according to its "distance" from the action. We might define the bands of responsibility as direct, secondary and tertiary infrastructure. An example of direct

infrastructure is the provision of mains water to a new development, such as Cliveden. In this case the developer is expected to pay. Secondary infrastructure involves limited capital expenditure, such as expansion of sewage treatment or re-routing of water supplies (such as the filching of our water northwards last year) – a situation that arises due to increased overall demand which cannot be laid at the doors of any particular developer. Tertiary infrastructure is on a much larger scale and is the result of social and demographic pressures and includes projects such as widening motorways, a much-needed water grid, or a rebuild of the London water disposal system. This, of course, has to be paid for at government level, probably in combination with the local authorities. Unfortunately this seems to mean that the developer gets away with only direct infrastructure costs, leaving you and me to foot the bill for all the rest.

Sustainability is about so managing the earth's resources that our grandchildren will not have cause to hate us

This leaves a gaping hole in the recovery of secondary costs. Is this a challenge for the South-East Region to meet? For instance, each planning application could be accompanied by a Certificate of Infrastructure Compliance, which the developer is responsible for acquiring. The certificate would have to be approved by, say, all utility companies, county traffic authorities, etc., effectively certifying that the development will either have no impact on existing infrastructure or estimating the cost of providing it (witness the Oxford case above). If there were an additional cost, then an appropriate levy would be charged to the developer, payable to the utility, and ring-fenced to ensure it would be appropriately used.

Accepting that this article is a bit of a rant, the facts demand that some action is taken to correct this serious lack of forward infrastructure planning.

Fred Russell

Lincoln Lee: 7 January 1922 – 1 May 2006

It is with great sadness that I have to report the death of our Vice President, Lincoln Lee.

Lincoln served as a bomber pilot in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, and then moved on through Italy. On his return to the UK, while based in Bristol, he met his future wife, Helen, who was nursing with the QARNC. He knew instantly that she was the girl he was going to marry. As he sometimes remarked, he was unusual in aviation – "married for 60 years AND to the same woman!" He was demobbed in 1946. During the next few years he flew Yorks (adapted Lancasters) for British South American Airways. In 1949 the airline was taken over by BOAC and he continued flying Argonauts. He then made the conversion to Britannias, taking part in their proving flights in Africa, and assisted in the aircraft's first trans-Atlantic crossing. He subsequently flew Comets and eventually Boeing 707s.

He and Helen bought Lower Lodge, at the foot of Berry Hill, in 1947. Their first son, Neil, was born in 1948 and Nick two years later. In 1951, the family moved to Maidenhead where they had bought The Croft, a large Victorian house on Ray Park Road, where they lived for 13 years. Dougal was born in 1959.

In the preceding years, Lincoln had written articles on aviation for numerous publications. In 1962, his first book, *Three Dimensioned Darkness*, was published. Other books followed. In 1964, the family moved to Berinus, which they built in an old walled garden in Taplow.

In 1965, Lincoln gave up flying because of eyesight problems but the loss of his licence meant the beginning of a new career. In May of that year, he started working for the technical directorate of IATA carrying responsibility for North America and the North Atlantic.

He and Helen involved themselves deeply in life in Taplow village. He was a school governor, and after years of active involvement, became President of the Preservation Society. During this time, he regularly wrote informative amusing articles for his own column in the newsletter, known as "Lincoln's Corner".

Lincoln was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather and neighbour, and a friend to many. He was wise, considerate, thoughtful, erudite and witty. We all feel very privileged to have known him. He will be greatly missed.

Eva Lipman



Editor: Fred Russell

White Heath, Ellington Road, Taplow, Bucks, SL6 0AX. Tel 01628 672457

E-mail: editor@taplowsociety.org.uk

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

The Newsletter is published by the Hitcham and Taplow Preservation Society.

Prepared for printing by Andrew Findlay using Scribus, Linux, and The Gimp

Printed by Michael Burbridge Limited