

HITCHAM and TAPLOW PRESERVATION SOCIETY



BARGE FARM - Threatened by Gravel in 1979
Preserved in 1980

NEWSLETTER

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HITCHAM & TAPLOW PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL

A Member of the Society's Executive Committee saw in an Editorial of the magazine Country Life a piece headed 'The Philosophy of Conservation'. We feel that this is very apt and concisely put and so, with the approval of the Editor of Country Life, have much pleasure in reprinting it below.

The Philosophy of Conservation

At the heart of many of the problems connected with the conservation of the landscape lies a fallacy; the belief that the beauty of the English countryside is "natural". Natural in this context, is presumably taken to mean something other than manmade. The confusion is exemplified in that curiously misleading term, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The average AONB contains much beauty, and some of it is outstanding; practically none of it is natural. If the fertile English countryside were left to return to this "natural" state, that is to say left without the influence of man and his domesticated livestock, it would revert in a century or so to impenetrable thicket. After another century or two it might again become primeval forest - either hardwood or softwood, depending on the altitude and the soil. Neither thicket nor primeval forest would provide the kind of accessible countryside that the average man or woman wants, for recreation and relief from the pressures of an industrial society. The beauty of the English countryside has been created largely by the land of agricultural man; only by agriculture can it be maintained.

BEACONSFIELD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

Introduction

Last September the District Council issued a Paper to ratepayers outlining the issues which it thought should be included in the proposed Plan and seeking the view of residents. This was described to our AGM by a member of the District Planning Staff and was discussed by the Meeting. Members of the Executive Committee also attended other Meetings about it, and, as a result, a Memorandum was sent to the District Council. The following are some of the points we made.

Housing

The population of the District has declined by about 9% in the last 7 years, but nevertheless the Minister, Mr. Michael Heseltine, is reported to have claimed that housing for 7,600 more people will have to be accommodated in South Bucks to meet the requirements of Heathrow and Slough; of these, the District will have to accept 1,700. It is not clear how these will be spread over the Parish but if this were done in proportion to the number of ratepayers, Taplow would have to find 1 in 30 (20 dwelling units) over the period. It is therefore important to find out how many

planning permissions had been granted for housing in Taplow but are not yet used. We also need to check that Heathrow will continue to grow inspite of the rocketing cost of fuel, and to confirm that derelict areas in London would not meet some of this demand.

The disappearance of private letting and the sharp increase in the price of houses means that young families cannot move into the District. Those growing up and wanting their own home have to move away leaving their parents growing old in houses too large for them. Early relaxation of the controls of private letting could cause a marked improvement in the situation and could go a long way to provide the extra dwelling units called for.

Green Belt

No developments should be permitted in the open Green Belt. In Taplow, however the built-up areas are included in the Metropolitan Green Belt and some infilling has been refused in consequence. Modest infilling should be permitted provided that, firstly, the result in density building is not high, secondly, ribbon development along roads is not involved and, thirdly, erosion of the edge of the Green Belt does not occur.

Shopping

Villages need a local shop, but this is economic only for a living-in family who are prepared to work long hours and at weekends. Planning restraints on the conversion of dwellings into such shops should not be an obstacle.

Buses

The fewer the buses, the more important is the reliability. The withdrawal, without warning, of a bus due once every two hours can have severe effects and the departure of buses from Taplow Station a few minutes before commuter trains are due is irritating as well as uneconomical. Freedom should be given to small private enterprise bus companies and the combination of passenger transport with postal services encouraged. In the past, residents in Marsh Lane had a reasonable service from private enterprise buses but they were absorbed into what is now the Alder Valley monopoly.

Recreation and Leisure

Taplow has enough facilities. The Colne Valley Park may provide opportunities though it is questioned whether there is any demand for more water sport. The large leisure centres in Slough and Maidenhead are losing money, possibly because of lack of transport for their young clientele. This money should be spent locally to help people to help themselves.

The Countryside

Barge Farm and its surroundings should be acknowledged to be an Area of Attractive Landscape.

Every effort should be made to restore Gravel Workings to their formal level and quality of land.

Community facilities

In the present financial circumstances, no developments should be permitted that the present services, such as schools, water and drains cannot support. When facilities such as local hospitals are withdrawn, the site should be used for other community facilities,

RECENT PLANNING DEVELOPMENTS

Berry Hill Farm - Gravel extraction

Our Chairman wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Mr. Michael Hesseltine, on 23rd November 1979 explaining the situation and objecting to the possible access into Boundary Road going behind Hillmead and other properties.

Hedsor - Gravel extraction

Although this application was for extraction from an area in Wycombe District, your Committee wrote to Bucks County Council objecting as it was close to us and any lorries involved could have passed through our area. We understand that the application was not granted.

Reconstruction of the Old Coach House, Hillmead

This application was refused and an appeal failed. It is understood that another application is to be made and is receiving support from the Taplow Parish Council and the Society on the grounds that the property is nearly derelict and that granting the application would save it and turn it to good use.

Chalet Bungalow next to Greensleaves

This application concerning infill just North of Greensleaves (or Losuce) on the West side of Hill Farm Road, was originally made in September 1978 (BD886/78) and the Society asked for reassurances; the application was refused. On appeal the Society again commented as did others who lived near by including our President. However the appeal succeeded and, subject to some non-onerous decisions, the bungalow may be built.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Footpath Walk. This has been arranged for Sunday 11th May leaving the Reading Room, Taplow at 2.15 p.m. It will be a "family walk" returning about 4.45 p.m. and will be led by Paul Lampitt.

Burnham Abbey and Huntercombe Manor. Arrangements have been made for combined tours to visit both these places on:-

Sunday 20th April 1980
Sunday 18th May 1980

Space is only available for 15 people on each date so please give your names, with 60 pence per head, to Mrs. Christine Morgan, 1 Stockwells. Tel Maidenhead 34141 as soon as possible to reserve your place and you will be told where and when you are to assemble.

Cliveden - Wine and Cheese Party. Arrangements are being made for an evening visit to Cliveden later in the year.

Details and date will be circulated to all later.

S T O P P R E S S

BARGE FARM GRAVEL ENQUIRY

The Secretary of State has dismissed the Appeal by Boyers against refusal of planning permission for gravel extraction at Barge Farm.

In his reasons, he agrees with most of our points - that the land is of high agricultural value, such that permission for development should only be given in special cases; that there must be considerable doubts as to the quality of the land if restored as suggested; that the site is part of a pleasant rural locality fulfilling an important Green Belt function separating built-up areas close to London. He also said that, though the noise from the plant might not be unacceptable, additional traffic along Marsh Lane could not be adequately controlled and would give rise to nuisance from noise as urged by the amenities organisations in spite of the lack of objections from the Highway Authority! Traffic congestion would be caused and road safety hazards increased. The proposed "bund" and the upper parts of the plant would be an unwelcome intrusion into an otherwise flat landscape and would obtrude into the background of the Thames river scene.

The Inspector went on to say that the issues were no longer as finely balanced as they were during the previous Appeal dismissed in 1967. The amenity objections remain unchanged but the minerals policy in the County Draft Minerals Subject Plan, which identified 'Preferred Areas' for sand and gravel working other than this Site, shows a genuine effort by the County Council to make adequate provision for the output required.

The Inspector's findings, with which the Secretary of State agrees, conclude that he cannot find any grounds to outweigh 'the strong policy, environmental and agricultural objections. In that respect the appreciable, informed and well presented opposition from interested bodies and individuals and written representations cannot be discounted'. The 14 excellent photographs by our Secretary, Richard Nutt cogently illustrated these points.

It would seem very unlikely that such a firm decision would be questioned in the near future and, provided that the County Mineral Subject Plan works, we can reasonably hope that Barge Farm will remain free from threat of gravel extraction in the future.