

# *Copers Cope Area Residents' Association*

*Founded in 1936 to protect and promote the local interests of residents of central and northern Beckenham*

# **The Express**

## **Newsletter October 2009**

### **Emergency Edition**

**BECKENHAM'S £23 MILLION  
HOSPITAL IS COMPLETED**

*Your chance to ask the  
managers: what's in it for us?*

**OPEN MEETING**

**Bromley Road Primary School**

**(Opposite the Public Halls)**

**8 p.m. October 21<sup>st</sup>**

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*Afterwards we will discuss  
whether Copers Cope Area  
Residents' Association can be  
kept alive*

# BECKENHAM HOSPITAL REPLACEMENT COMPLETE

Our Open meeting on October 21<sup>st</sup> puts a searchlight on Beckenham Beacon, the large and sparkling new buildings now officially complete and open on the Beckenham hospital site, (though still with a few more facilities to come).

It has taken four years of building works and a public/private investment of more than £23 million. Two of the major executives controlling this were Jill Webb, Assistant Director for Commissioning and Performance, and Heather Bruce, Beacon Centre Manager. Both will speak and answer questions at our meeting about what has been going on.

The new buildings are much bigger than the old, despite having no operating theatres or wards for inpatients or convalescents. They provide facilities we did not have in 1998, when we first knew Bromley Hospital was to be demolished and its services moved to Farnborough, three times as far away.

These new facilities include an Urgent Care Centre – a kind of Minor Injuries Unit (we didn't have that in 1998, either), but which deals with illness as well as injuries. Here patients who can't get to their GP can simply walk in any day, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and get quick attention for anything except serious emergencies.

There is also a new, GP-led Health Centre, providing access to a GP from 8-8 seven days a week all year, for patients whether registered with it or not. It will work closely with the Urgent Care Centre and means that, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, local people with an urgent (but not life-threatening) medical problem will not need the A&E centre or EMDoc services based at Farnborough.

## Long list of new medical services

We now have new clinics for chronic obstructive pulmonary (lung) disease, primary care mental health, diabetes and diabetic retinal screening. The diabetes services reflect the creation of a new community diabetes service, with its own specialist consultant, based at Orpington with a “mini-centre” at Beckenham.

The building also provides modern premises for the GP practice which formerly operated near the Baptist Church in Beckenham Road, dental services for those with special medical problems, podiatry (formerly chiropody), a GP shared-care clinic for substance abuse, and headquarters for the district nursing and health visiting services and for practice-based commissioning of services.

And there is more in the pipeline including cardiac rehabilitation and ophthalmology clinics. This is all on top of the facilities we have always had – X-rays (now working extended hours), blood tests, physiotherapy, antenatal, audiology, sexual health, contraception and reproductive medicine, minor procedures, pharmacy, speech therapy (now for both adults and children), surgical appliances, and outpatient clinics for children, dermatology, ear nose and throat, gynaecology, urology, medicine, surgery, orthopaedics and pain control.

The car park is larger than before, though charges are now applied, and residents may have noticed that a large late-night pharmacy shop has opened right outside. Some may still miss having Bromley's district general hospital only a couple of miles away, some would have preferred to keep the title “Beckenham Hospital”, and some may feel concern lest the “mini-PFI” method of financing the new buildings comes back to bite us in the longer term but, for now, we can feel the “Beckenham Beacon” has quite a few candlepower.

## REVOLUTION IN BECKENHAM HIGH STREET

The possibility of revolutionising Beckenham's congested High Street, perhaps making it one-way or introducing pedestrian sections and a "Puffing Billy" electric road train, is among ideas from which costed proposals to support its economic sustainability were due to be put to Bromley Council by the end of September.

The Council's Beckenham & West Wickham Town Centres Review group, chaired by Copers Cope Councillor Michael Tickner, has spent much of the year hearing evidence on issues like empty shops, parking, bus services, leisure facilities, drunkenness, cleanliness and anything else that affects keeping the town centre alive.

Councillor Tickner will be at our Open Meeting on October 21<sup>st</sup> and able to give some glimpses of the likely outcome of all the debates. Councillors, joined by representatives of traders, the CCARA and other residents' groups, have been keen to examine new traffic-handling ideas, including Continental concepts such as mixing traffic and pedestrians in "shared-use" areas, said to reduce accidents by making people respect each other's rights.

Such experiments, some felt, would bring in more visitors and trade, while still reducing congestion. Against this were the special problems of partially-sighted people in shared use areas, and the possibly serious knock-on consequences of preventing traffic from using the High Street in one direction, or even stopping through-traffic altogether.

One suggestion on transport to take home drinkers emerging late from "the strip" of bars and clubs near Beckenham Junction was that a night bus which currently comes up the hill and turns into Bromley Road by the church should, instead, continue up the High Street and be allowed to turn right into Albemarle road, with a bus-stop visible from "the strip", then get back into Bromley Road past the police station and through St George's road.

A representative of Beckenham traders said a problem with bus stops outside shops was that when the protective sidewall was on the road side, to stop traffic splashing the queue, traders suffered more windows broken. Other ideas included: to end charges in car parks at 6.30 p.m., the same as on street meters; to pay businesses a small fee to make their toilets available to the public; and to enhance a "feel-good" factor by devices like putting decorative plastic film inside empty shop windows.

## RE-BIRTH FOR ARTS BUILDING

By next Easter, Beckenham may once more have the use of that quirky old building next to the Library and the Spa, which was opened in 1901 as Beckenham Technical Institute, later used as schools and most recently as a Council-run arts and media venue, The Studio.

For months it has lurked behind hoardings but the Council is now agreeing detailed lease terms so it can be refurbished for a list of community uses: an auditorium, drama workshops, rehearsal room, dance studios, recording studio, music rooms, mother and toddler groups, youth groups, counselling and psychiatric practice, computer room and café.

The lease is with Citygate, the Christian Outreach organisation that took over the former mail-sorting centre next to Beckenham Post Office, but we understand the former Studio will not be used for religious assemblies. The next step is to agree Citygate's detailed plans to modernise the tired interior of the Grade II Listed building, with work to start sometime this winter, and stage one finished by Easter.

## WHY IS THIS AN “EMERGENCY EDITION”?

**Because your local Residents’ Association is dying, from a lack of people willing to do the small back-room jobs that keep it going.**

It is not quite dead, yet. Some dedicated members continue to fight the more damaging licensing and planning applications, and to keep an eye on local NHS changes, crime, public transport, traffic and car parking proposals.

But we have lost half our committee. Our members can’t easily communicate with us, or we with them. We don’t even know the addresses of some of them. We have not sent round a newsletter since March last year. We have staged none of our regular “Open Meetings” (on a topical local subject) for the past 18 months.

We don’t need money, but we do need people to help with secretarial and administrative jobs and to bring back some ideas and action. Otherwise this could be the last issue of The Express, and the end of the Copers Cope Area Residents’ Association, after 73 years.

So please, e-mail us at [info@coperscope.org.uk](mailto:info@coperscope.org.uk) and offer to help with any of these jobs, as an officer such as vice-chair, a committee member, or simply a helper.

## WHAT ARE THE JOBS WE MUST GET DONE?

**Secretary** is the most vital task and takes the most time. You attend the committee meetings seven or eight times a year, take and circulate a note of the decisions taken and who is to carry them out, and make sure any necessary letters are written, and meeting places booked. The job could be split between two or more people.

**Express Editor** Like the Secretary you need access to a computer and e-mail. You fit together the reports from members on topical local subjects, and get them to the printers on deadline. If you join the committee you will be more in touch.

**Website Reporter** We have the prospect of setting up a proper, comprehensive website. The website reporter will send its manager the latest information, already received for use in the Express, or from reports to the committee. You do not have to seek out news yourself.

**Advertising Manager** Printing and distributing The Express costs more than the subscriptions can cover. The Advertising Manager would start by contacting past advertisers to take space again, and checking that their adverts will appear correctly.

**Advert. Finance Officer** needed to send out invoices to each advertiser (anything from 20 to 50) in each issue, and check that the money reaches the Treasurer.

**Representatives** We need more people to volunteer as non-party residents’ representatives on bodies that matter to the community such as on parks, or leisure facilities, health, the special needs of old or young people, or many others, and report back to the community via the Express or the website. We may also need to rebuild our network of road representatives who took the Express out to nearby members, and reported back on their concerns. For all CCARA jobs, out of pocket expenses are repaid, against receipts.

## ***Local Democracy: can we still say “No”?***

A Government Inspector has just dismissed an appeal against Bromley Council’s rejection of an unpopular proposal to erect an “oppressive” four-storey tower, garishly clad in a blaze of glass and coloured tiles, by the railway bridge over Beckenham Junction.

This was for a nightclub replacing Bar Flux, a large restaurant and offices, and the rejection was welcome. But the applicant probably needs give only one more little push, and the tower will yet rise. That is becoming a pattern. The story of how local democracy, the local council, found its decisions weakened like this is told in three chapters.

Chapter One was our local Development Plan (UDP) of 2005. The Government Office for London (GOL) and the Greater London Authority objected to its guidelines on local housing and, if Bromley had not given in, it could have been directed to make even more changes.

Chapter Two of Goodbye to Local Democracy was devised in the Greater London Act 2007. This gave extended powers of decision on local planning to the Mayor of London, rather than to Councillors answerable to residents living in wards like Copers Cope.

### ***The steer they can’t ignore***

Now to Chapter Three, the latest slide for local democracy. The Planning Act 2008, in force only from April 6<sup>th</sup> this year, includes measures to streamline the process of appeal against Council decisions. Appellants and local authorities now have to consider “conciliatory” measures like revised applications in a search for agreement rather than rejection.

Recently several appeals have been dismissed *but only just*. Then the application, changed only a little to take account of the Inspector’s report and any earlier concerns, becomes almost impossible for the Council to turn down because it has to treat an Inspector’s report as a material consideration.

So local people see the earlier decision reversed, but can’t see why, and hold Bromley Council, not the Government Department, responsible for an unpopular outcome it could not really prevent. Read on for some recent Beckenham examples of what we can expect.

### ***Casebook notes***

**194 Bromley Road** Appeal Inspector saw no objection in principle to form/density of a scheme for eight flats, rejecting it only for design. Re-application in September 2008, with minimal amendment to cover the design comments, approved on Chairman’s casting vote, as Inspector’s Report must be regarded as a material consideration.

**36a Albemarle Road** Development refused in 2008 as large and bulky but, in dismissing an appeal lodged in March 2009, the Inspector had no objection to the proposed density, and said flats would better accord with the nearby street scene. A re-application in July sought the same amount of development, but with minor amendments in line with the Inspector’s report, so the Plans committee could not justify another refusal.

**113 Foxgrove Road** The Council has just refused an application to provide accommodation in the roof space of a controversial block of flats proposed for this site. The refusal was against Planning officers' advice arising from Inspectors' reports on earlier appeals against refusals to allow the flats. One such report found Council concerns over access had been met. Now there may well be another appeal.

**The Lodge, Southend Road** Refused applications and dismissed appeals for this site were followed by a fresh application, refused by a narrow majority at Committee in October 2008. The decision on Appeal this year was based on a single issue – the impact of this bulk and site coverage on the character/appearance of the Conservation Area. The Inspector concluded that form, size and style would not be inconsistent with other buildings, then dismissed the Appeal on grounds of the harsh juxtaposition of buildings and parking. Next time, changes to this aspect could be regarded as a material consideration for consent?

**1-4 Station Buildings, Southend Road (Bar Flux)** Application lodged December 2008 for a three-to-four storey building with nightclub, restaurant, offices, plant, lift and machine room. Inspector's Report July 2009 concluded no substantive evidence for concern regarding parking, potential for criminal activity or disturbance to neighbours, but dismissed the appeal on issues of design. Once again, watch this space!

*Julie North*

## **BOTTLES, BARS AND BOBBIES**

Beckenham already has something like 47 premises selling alcohol – pubs, bars, clubs, restaurants, and now it often seems every little shop is asking for a licence. Since the 2003 Licensing Act (which brought in 24-hour licences) Beckenham has been flooded with applications for new ones or longer opening hours.

We wrote to our MP in June giving examples of the problems that residents of the town centre area have faced for years and asking for pressure to review the 2003 Act. There has been no reply so far, but there have been some recent successes through residents – and not only CCARA members -- helping to oppose new applications.

One was when the former sub-Post Office premises near M & S applied for a 24-hour licence, with all-night deliveries by motorbike. There was a tide of objections and it was refused. Another application was for a license for the tiny sandwich bar on the railway bridge. When they saw the objections, the applicants withdrew it, but then re-applied. Residents do have power, but must watch for applications and at least *write in* if they object.

As from August 31<sup>st</sup> people aged over 16 who commit criminal or disorderly acts under the influence of alcohol can be banned for up to two years – a kind of ASBO. Maybe these will give the police more power to stop drunks damaging residents' property, but first the police have to be in the right place at the right time. Better to drop the 2003 Act.

Talking of police in the right place, Beckenham once had a full-blown police station. You could go in and talk to a police officer. Then for the last few years, volunteers manned the front desk. Two years ago the station in the High Street was closed and replaced by an office in Albemarle Road. They put up a sign to say where it was, but sometimes when residents tried to report crimes there, they were given a phone number instead.

As from September 1, the front counter has been closed completely. If you need human contact, for example to hand in documents, you have to go to Bromley Police Station. There is still a local phone number for inquiries – 020 8721 2772 – but it is not for reporting crimes.

Use 999 for that, but only if the crime is actually under way or someone is in immediate danger. For non-emergency matters, call the new information centre any day or time, on 0300 123 1212. Use it to report all anti-social incidents, because they will then get into the crime statistics and could lead to the police targeting an area under attack.

Melanie Bolt, one of the Copers Cope PCSOs many of you may know, has now left to train as a fully-fledged police officer. Good luck to her, and thanks to all those former front desk volunteers.

*Roger Leach*

## **SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS PANEL**

Licensing and crime problems are regularly discussed with the Copers Cope ward police at the Safer Neighbourhoods panel, which Roger Leach and I attend. At its last session, ward priorities were listed as: problems in Calverley Close, thefts from cars, and burglaries from flats.

Flat-dwellers were reminded they are as much at risk as in ground-floor homes, and UPVC front doors must be double-locked, otherwise burglars know how to open them. Thefts from cars are up, particularly of number-plates, for which tamper-proof screws are being investigated.

Problems in Calverley Close, involving drugs and dogs, were discussed. Sadly, a planned play area there, for which money was made available, has not come to fruition, for lack of co-operation from residents. A police office on this estate would be welcome.

There is serious concern about access to alcohol, creating considerable disturbance and worry for those who live in the vicinity of the High Street. The Council licensing committee's decisions have twice been overturned on appeal by magistrates who do not know Beckenham and are not competent to decide.

The Council has a policy to restrain the cumulative impact of extending licenses, but some feel it may need strengthening. Our ward has reached saturation point, and the result is anti-social behaviour in the small hours.

*Beth Cooper*

## **THIS & THAT**

The CCARA will join the parade and lay a wreath at the Annual Remembrance Day Service at Beckenham War Memorial at 10.50 a.m. on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November. If you would like to join in the Poppy Appeal, from October 24 to November 11, please call John Bennett 020 8402 5791

The new controlled parking scheme in the area from Copers Cope Road to Southend Road is to be open for public review in October. Reductions in the numbers of parked cars have been noted though the scheme has not been fully signposted. An important consultative meeting on road safety matters was arranged to be held at St. Pauls on October 8<sup>th</sup>.

# SUBSCRIPTIONS

We have a list of names of about 20 members who have paid their subscriptions but whose addresses are missing. If you know any subscribing members who have not received this newsletter, please ask them to contact the acting Membership Secretary [rogerleach@coperscope.org.uk](mailto:rogerleach@coperscope.org.uk)

You can pay your £1 per family annual subscription to the CCARA by cheque but the easiest way is to complete and sign the Standing Order below. Send the form or cheque to the Treasurer, J. Wynter, at 15 Copperfields, 48 The Avenue, BR3 5ER, and reachable at [treasurer@ccara.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@ccara.org.uk)

The Chairman of the Association is Maurice Hudson, who can be reached at [chair@ccara.org.uk](mailto:chair@ccara.org.uk). The posts of vice chairman and secretary are both vacant.

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