

Newsletter

Baldwins Hill, Staples Road and York Hill Conservation Areas

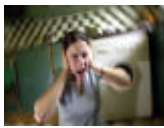
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Summer 2007

Have a thought for others...

Just in case the weather changes for the better, PLEASE



have a thought for others who do not want to hear your music, listen to your tv, be driven indoors by your bonfire —or be kept awake by glaring lights. And please keep roadside hedges trimmed - thank you.

And more inside...

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PLANNERS ON THE SPOT

The Hills Committee met with Epping Forest District Council's principal planning officer Nigel Richardson to discuss recent contentious decisions and their impact on the conservation areas.

During the meeting he heard that the Hills Amenity Society existed to maintain the character of the Hills areas despite inevitable evolution. Committee members explained that key aims included respecting the country lanes, footpaths, bridal paths, views and access to the forest, maintaining the 'ruralness' of the area,

as well as avoiding further top-heavy or out of

character development. **Report Page 2**

Walking to school is good for you...

Nine-year-old Staples Road pupils Laura Barritt (left) and Eve Dennehy in Victorian dress for a week-long experience including a visit to the Ragged School. Head Anne Davidson wants more pupils to walk to school. **Story Page 4**



'Stop Fort Knox culture...'

Wendy Fisher (right) is the new chairman of the Hills Amenity Society. Wendy has lived off Baldwins Hill with husband Peter since 1965 where they have raised their two children. A retired Lloyds Underwriter, "stopping the Fort Knox culture" is one of her priorities. **Page 6**



Hills Watch helps keep us all safe

At the Hills agm the 30 people present heard how Hills Watch was the best win-win way of keeping down crime AND entitling us all to claim reduced insurance costs. **Report: Page 2**

Bairstow Eyes
COUNTRYWIDE

...for something special

District Council Planners 'happy to work with Amenity Society' but...

Epping Forest District Council's principal planning officer Nigel Richardson had a very simple message for the Hills Amenity Society: "We are very happy to work with you but do be careful not to be seen to object to everything". Mr Richardson explained that the planning department had to work within strict guidelines. One of the most frequent objections (though not by your committee) that a proposed development would devalue neighbouring property was no valid reason for planners to turn down an application. Development that would be detrimental to an area, significant loss of light or privacy and loss of trees or vegetation were all valid objections for neighbours to raise in the Conservation Areas. Pressed on properties that were erected outside planning permission he said that the council had limited resources to monitor the thousands of applications which passed through their hands every year. However they would always respond where an objection was raised and then take a view on how to proceed depending upon the degree of the transgression. He said size of development was not a cause for objection in itself and there was no formula for the planners to apply. A large extension might be acceptable if in keeping with its plot and location. Planners had been conscious of the long history

and difficulties related to the development of 11 Woodbury and had learned from this in the development of Dryads Hall. Restrictions has been placed on access and tree work had been closely monitored. Committee members pointed out they only responded on a limited number of applications and had approved many. These included plans for Dryads Hall, subject to conditions during the development; changes at Staples Road School and final plans at Southbank. The committee felt it should write more often registering approval and work more closely with the planners to avoid being labelled a "nimby" group. Concern was registered

'No power to consider impact of a number of large projects'

about the over development of the conservation area, the loss of listed landmark properties, breaches of planning consent, impact on the environment during development and lack of consideration for the area. The committee stressed its commitment to upholding the aims of the conservation area and stressed the need for communication with neighbouring properties on plans and changes. However Mr Richardson said planners only had powers to look at applications on an individual basis and could not consider collective impact of a number of large schemes such as currently in the Woodbury Hill area.

Hills Watch helps keep us safe...



The Hills Watch report at the agm raised the comment that the Conservation Area is happily not a high crime area. But having an alert community is what helps to keep it that way. As many will have noticed, and as we reported in our last issue, the dreaded graffiti tykes are increasingly active in the High Road and migrating to the Hills area. Take a look down the end of Staples Road. Please be alert and report any crime in the Hills to the police, our coordinators or any member of the Hills Committee.

Crime Watch report

Going away? There are simple precautions we can take.....but most of us don't! Such as moving valuable items so they cannot be seen through a window. Amazingly, while only 34% of those asked said they took this preventative action, nearly half (48%) said finding someone to look after their pets was a bigger priority, according to the survey for RBS.

Watch out
for...

*Please display your
Crime Watch sticker*

Smoking of marijuana and after hours disturbances... Call Western Police 01279 641212
Obstruction of the pavement....
Drinking on the public greens...
Keying or broken windows of cars...
Report nuisance to your Hills Watch coordinator or any member of the Hills Committee.

The Hills Watch Coordinators

Key Coordinator and York Hill, Wallers Hopbit and Potters Close: Susan Mushtaq, hillswatch@mywebspaces.co.uk 020 8502 2665

York Hill: Andrew Reid, areid@waltham.ac.uk

Staples Road: Mary Erwin, hillswatch@hotmail.co.uk 0795 154169

Steeds Way: Martyn Soul-Gray, martynsoulgray@hotmail.com 078751 32058

Baldwins Hill (Foresters to Goldings Hill)

Whitakers Way and The Lanterns Grahame Williams, grahamyra@aol.com 020 8508 6204 **Baldwins Hill (up to Foresters), Ashfields and St John's Road:** Norman Hall, norman.hall3@ntlworld.com 020 8281 1890

If you would like to be a coordinator for Queens Road, The Summit, Stony Path or Wroths Path, Woodbury Hill and King's Hill, Forest Way contact Susan Mushtaq, hillswatch@mywebspaces.co.uk 020 8502 2665

Hell in 'white van city'...

When the new owners of Ash Green decided to drive their own road through the forest to

form access for heavy vehicles, it was the last straw for residents around Woodbury Hill.

Already having to put up with major projects at no 11, Dryad's Hall and the Woodbury Hollow Cottages they knew all about mud, pitted roads, crushed verges and parking of vans, lorries and site workers' cars.

Forest Conservators were quick to intervene and demand reinstatement works for the unauthorised changes made to forest land.

Said one victim of the Woodbury Hill "development hell": "One day I counted 11 white vans parked anywhere and everywhere, not to mention two fork lift trucks and an Earth Mover left for the whole day on the public highway with their engines running. The noise and pollution meant that we could never have a window open during the day whatever the temperature. The fact that we haven't been able to enjoy our garden for two years, deliveries of building materials at 6am just to mention a few problems.

"When they consider application do they take into account applications that have all ready been approved and where work is in progress? As an example, Woodbury Hill itself cannot take any more construction traffic until the existing developments are finished." (Answer: they are not allowed to). Rumours are the road is to be resurfaced...while all this is still going on.



Above: new road driven into forest to reach Ash Green. Right: re-cenvlopment of Woodbury Hollow Cottages. Below right: Major re-building project at Dryad's Hall



Planning Update...



3 Staples Road, Shaftesbury Retreat, has had plans rejected for a single storey front extension and two dorma windows because of incorrect plans.

19 York Hill, (adjacent Wheatsheaf public house) wicket fence removed and hard standing created for car without permission. Recommended that fence be replaced and garden reinstated.

76 Queens Road, plans for loft conversion, rear dormer and increased ridge height plus two storey front extension refused.

2 Forest Way, Rear dormer approved
5 Forest Way – Retrospective application for reduced alterations to front decking, erection of a screen fence and erection of front canopy. Recommended for approval.

1 Baldwins Hill, two storey extensions on both sides of the property.

3 Potters Close, amended extensions.

9 Stony Path - Form rear dormer.

2a The Uplands, permission sought to demolish property after permission to convert bungalow to three apartments

6 Pump Hill, Extension to dormer approved

134 Church Hill – Appeal against refusal of permission for forecourt car parking.

2 Queens Road /York Hill, retrospective application for garage/two sheds and major tree work. Recommended fence and gate be replaced and trees replanted.

1 Church Hill – Appeal lodged and has yet to be heard against refusal of permission for revised application to demolish existing building and erect eight two bedroom apartments in two blocks with associated parking and landscaping.

15 Stony Path Two storey side extension and loft conversion with front and rear dormer window. Permission with conditions).

23 Forest Way - Major work to trees recommended for approval.



'Inspiring' new Staples Road School canteen building takes shape

Plans for the new building at Staples Road School, described as "inspiring" by the Hills committee, are rapidly taking shape.

The new building will provide eating and recreational facilities for the school.



'Walking to school good for you' - Staples Road Head

Anne Davidson, headteacher, writes:

Staples Road Infant and Junior Schools were built over 100 years ago, when car travel was a rarity and children would have certainly walked to school.

Today, Staples Road and neighbouring streets are congested with cars and driving children to school causes hazards, delays and pollution. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone walked once more, or if walking is not an option, then "parked and walked" from less congested areas?

Walking to school has so many benefits, including creating quieter and safer roads, giving children exercise, as well as the opportunity to converse

'Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone walked once more'

with others and to look at the world around us! Whilst our new hall and kitchen is being built, we appreciate that there are difficulties for local residents and so we have asked parents not to bring their cars into the road and many members of staff are parking elsewhere and walking.

AGM hears of busy year...

Some 30 members attended the Hills annual meeting at The Gardeners Arms public house. In her report to the chairman, Wendy Fisher, said:

"Your committee is concerned that the planning laws generally continue to relax. We are trying to preserve our unique area as much as possible and ask that local residents consider this before they put in planning applications. Another concern is that people moving into the area are not always aware of the restrictions on living in a conservation area as well as not having a commitment towards the concept. However, a local resident who has just moved into the area was advised about his responsibility towards conserving the area by his solicitor.

In discussion it was suggested that the committee should attend district council planning meetings. A list of standard objections would be prepared.

The chairman thanked Birstow Eves for sponsoring our newsletter, now produced in colour and distributed by them. The Committee has also provided local estate agents with notes to hand to prospective buyers on what is allowed and what the boundaries are. Peter Tidmarsh welcomed the improvement in the quality of newsletter.

The main planning applications commented on in the last year were:

26 Stony Path (actually in Wroth's Path) – After the plans being turned down several times by EFDC and then going to appeal, planning has been granted for two new semi detached houses alongside the existing house. The original house is now up for sale with permission included.

1 Church Hill (Montessori Nursery) - The proposed 8 flats were refused by EFDC and a further appeal was refused but a further application has been made.

10-12 Pump Hill – proposal to demolish and build 2 houses in place of the existing dwelling has been refused twice. An appeal was also refused.

Woodbury House – planning for 3 sheds to replace 2 sheds and a two storey high extension was refused.

Woodbury Hollow cottages (Grade II listed) – application for two storey extension originally granted 20 years ago passed despite strong objections.

Dryads Hall - The Committee studied the plans at length and felt they looked reasonable. The committee wrote to the Council requesting monitoring of the felling of trees and to ensure that the Bridal Path was protected at all stages. The **Treasurer's report** from Amanda Gotham showed £2,596 in the account at the year end.

Talkback

What you like about living in The Hills



Many of you have included comments about the Hills with your subscriptions. Comments like:

'Thank you to the Hills committee for all the work you do on our behalf'....

"Always enjoy reading your newsletter" wrote a member from Ashfields .

Another, from Staples Road, said: "The community of the Hills is so friendly and a pleasure to live in."

A couple from Queens Road remarked: "We love the Hills. We have just moved here from Buckhurst Hill which we felt was going down a bit" (!)

And some things you don't like:

General rubbish around the Wheatsheaf pub...

Graffiti appearing in several locations around the Hills...

Youngsters up in the forest late at night—mentioned by several Staples Road members—starting bonfires, making an unreasonable amount of noise and leaving a large amount of rubbish, some of it very unpleasant.

Another issue raised by those in Staples Road whose homes have been flooded, is the need for Thames Water to replace the water main that keeps bursting. Please consider emailing your support for a new main to: cus-tomer.feedback@thameswater.co.uk or to Thames Water Utilities Ltd, PO Box 436, Swindon, SN38 hillsamenityociety.co.uk

Comment

Sadly it's hell...

The meeting with Principal Planner Nigel Richardson—and we are very grateful to him for joining our committee meeting—was revealing in many ways: how the planning team approaches applications, how groups such as ours are (or are not) listened to, and where the planners are powerless...

As we feature on Page 3, it is currently hell for those living in the heart of the York Hill conservation area with so many huge projects taking place at once. "White Van City", was how one resident described it. But according to Mr Richardson (and he should know) planners have no power to consider the impact of a number of developments taking place in one tiny, tightly restricted area all at the same time.

Time for us to write to our MP to demand a law change then...

Property update

in association with



Ten properties changed hands in York Hill during the first four months of the year. Others noted between January and April 2007 are:
(n/r=nothing recorded):

Ashfields-n/r

Baldwins Hill

33 - £377,500 terraced freehold, February
37 - £365,000 semi-detached freehold, January

Forest Way—n/r

Grassmere Close- n/r

Potters Close—nothing recorded

Pump Hill—n/r

Queens Road—n/r

St John's Road

12 - £499,995 detached freehold, January
22 - £685,000 detached freehold, January

Staples Road- n/r

Steeds Way

1 - £485,000 detached freehold, March
Loughton Lodge, semi-det. freehold £1,180,000 Feb.

Stoney Path- n/r

The Heights

£485,000 detached freehold, March

York Hill

113 - £360,000 terraced freehold, April
109 - £482,500 terraced freehold, April
93 - £385,000 semi-detached freehold, January
91 - £360,000 semi-detached freehold, March
85 - £400,000 semi-detached freehold, April
75 - £400,000 semi-detached freehold, March
55 - £262,000 terraced freehold, February
24 - £210,000 leasehold flat, February

Woodbury Hill/Hollow—n/r

Hills Committee jottings

Hon Treasurer Amanda Gotham writes:

"Thank you very much to all our members who responded promptly to my letter in our last newsletter requesting payment of the annual subs of £4. A large number of you used the envelope provided to send your subs to my house and this is much appreciated as it saves committee members having to knock on doors. If you haven't paid your sub yet, it's not too late! Please put it through the door of any committee member with a note of your name and address. Quite soon friendly committee members will be starting to knock on doors chasing the last subs. These subs are our only income and we depend on them for our survival. Our social events – like the forthcoming Autumn Lunch – are run on a non-profit-making basis. Thank you everyone for your support. See you at the Autumn Lunch.

Amanda Gotham, Treasurer.

Help wanted

The Hills Committee is always looking for people prepared to spend a little time helping with collection of subscriptions and the work of the committee generally. Please contact any member of the committee.

Tell us what you think

The Hills Amenity Society would like to know what you think about the area in which you live, what are the things you would most like to change—and how you believe The Hills Amenity Society might help. Also, would you be prepared to lend a hand?

Is the environment of The Hills:	Do you feel the Hills Amenity Society	Comments:
<input type="checkbox"/> Improving	<input type="checkbox"/> Gets it about right	
<input type="checkbox"/> About the same	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do more	
<input type="checkbox"/> Getting worse	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	

Are you aware of the of The Hills Amenity Society	Would you be prepared to lend a hand
<input type="checkbox"/> Fully aware	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivering newsletters
<input type="checkbox"/> Just about aware	<input type="checkbox"/> Attending events
<input type="checkbox"/> Not previously aware	<input type="checkbox"/> On the Committee

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

HILLS AMENITY SOCIETY

Working to protect and enhance the Conservation Areas in which we live
Find out about us at
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Hills Amenity Society Committee

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Sue Mushtaq, Hills Watch, 8502 2665. sue@mywebspace.co.uk



A sunny Sunday morning view from the heart of the Hills over to Canary Wharf, obscured in the mist.

Now over 30 years old, the Hills Amenity Society, which is affiliated to the Civic Trust, was formed in 1972 as a result of the interest shown by local residents in their environment. Its aims are to preserve, protect, develop and improve features of both historic and public interest, and to promote higher standards of planning and design, in keeping with existing amenities and the rural character of the area. The Hills' unique blend of building styles and materials, set in narrow lanes hedged with hawthorn and holly, and enjoying spectacular views across the Thames valley to the Kent hills, was further recognised in 1977 when Epping Forest District Council created the York Hill conservation area.

Parish notices

Resist the "Fort Knox" urbanisation in rural charm

New Hills chairman Wendy Fisher has declared war on the "Fort Knox" culture she sees creeping into the Hills conservation areas. "We consider that private boundaries should not look like 'Fort Knox' and high wrought iron gates and railings and conspicuous 'keep out' notices are helping to urbanise the area and should not be encouraged. The area has not been noted for its high holly hedges for nothing; virtually nothing will penetrate a thick well maintained holly hedge!" says Wendy.

Hills Autumn Lunch

Make a date:

Saturday 3 November

Please clear up after your pet! Dog owners who do not do so risk a fine.



If you wish to contact Hills Amenity Society please do so through any member of the committee or email

info@hillsamenitysociety.co.uk

Time to cut hedges

One of the noticeable features of this summer is the way the hedges which line many roads in the Hills Conservation Area have GROWN!. Please ensure that hedges along roads are kept trimmed.



Still get permission for ALL changes

Well publicised changes in the planning laws proposed by the government to take smaller changes out of the requirements for detailed planning consent **will NOT apply in conservation areas**. Please assume you need permission for ALL changes to property, fences and frontages.

Subscriptions are due for 2006—new members welcome

Membership of The Hills Amenity Society costs just £4 per household a year. Subscriptions are now due. If you have not already done so, please pay promptly. New members always welcome.



Join up now

Hills Amenity Society