

ISSUED BY THE KINGSWOOD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Association is to be held at the Village Hall on FRIDAY 27th March 2009, commencing at 8.00p.m. The formal Notice is posted on the Village Hall Notice Board and the Annual Report is published in this Newsletter. Resolutions to be proposed at the AGM must be given in writing to the Hon. Secretary not less than 14 days prior to the meeting. The 2008 audited Accounts will be made available at the meeting.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Kingswood Residents' Association (KRA) is a non-political voluntary organisation whose stated objectives are:

"...the promotion of the welfare of the Community through the good government of the district in relation to planning, environment, safety and conservation, so as to preserve and improve the amenities of the village of Kingswood".

The KRA should not be confused with the Kingswood Village Community Association (KVCA) and the individual road Frontagers Associations which also do other important work which contributes to our Community and also compliments the work of the KRA.

The KRA works closely with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council (RBBC) through our local Councillors to consult and influence good planning practices. The KRA also works with our County Councillor on Surrey County Council matters. The support of our local Councillors is invaluable and forms an important part of the work of the Association.

The KRA works for this community as a whole and all Kingswood Residents are welcome to come to our Annual General Meeting and join our discussions. If you aren't already a member then you are most welcome to attend and we hope that you might consider joining the Association to give us your support.

Kingswood is, in planning terms, a threatened community – from both without and within.

The threats from without are very clear – Government policy through the South East Plan is openly requiring Councils throughout the South-East of England to make available land for excessively large numbers of new houses and to increase the density. All this with inadequate investment in infrastructure. What is more, the Government is also changing local planning policy by forcing Councils to conditionally release Green Belt land and weakening the power of our local Council to be the arbiter for planning applications.

We are only separated from the edge of Greater London by a narrow strip of Green Belt, listed as agricultural land and designated as an Area of Outstanding Landscape Value located to the North of Kingswood; land which is held by offshore developers who are already pressing for the opportunity to start development. Initial proposals are subtle: e.g. a large development of houses and support facilities for a "care in the community" scheme and an eco-town, but the intent is there to exploit further. The KRA has joined forces with residents in Banstead, Tadworth and Burgh Heath to form a local group which, with guidance and help from planning specialists, our MP and local Councillors is seeking to do all in its power to legitimately challenge these plans to build on Green Belt. That is why we have written to every house in the neighbourhood asking you to add your voice. If numbers count, and we believe they must, then our collective voice must say 'no' in resounding tones.

However, we're not just threatened from outside. We're threatened from inside too, and this is more insidious – because here all of us play an active part. Flatted developments; people selling their houses for plot splits; felling trees before applying for planning permission; or extending their homes right to the edge of their boundaries. Many of us are sensitive to the so-called 'Arcadian'

character of the neighbourhood – where houses subtly blend into a tree dominated area and where houses are characterised by being different to those around; but others, very sadly, are not. Ever so slowly - house by house, tree by tree – the character and distinctiveness of Kingswood is gradually changing from within. The KRA has continued to work to comment on planning applications and to do our very best to keep development in line with the local character and the Village Plan.

Nearly 50% of residents of Kingswood are members of the KRA. By giving your practical and moral support you help us – through our own work and through the work of the Banstead and District Federation of Residents Associations – to continue to work to keep Kingswood a special place to live. However, we need more than money and moral support, we also need people to give relatively small amounts of time, to join us on the committee and to give active support in our work. You don't need to be an expert in planning, accountancy or IT to be able to be the person who helps to bring a KRA presence to your street; we need people who simply care about this community. If you have a desire to be further involved then we also need people who are willing to give some of their time to learn a little, and help to comment on planning applications and to help out with some of the Association's administrative tasks.

I am personally indebted to our President, Gary Whitney, who retired as the Association Chair this past year only to take on a more onerous and strategically significant role as he leads our delegation to the Federation of Residents Associations that I mentioned above. In concluding my remarks, I would wish to thank him publicly for his continued commitment and for all he has done as chair over the past ten years.

REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE BANSTEAD AND DISTRICT FEDERATION OF RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

About a year ago it was decided by the Federation to form a working party on local planning. This followed two very successful Planning Forums, actively supported by Cllr Joan Spiers and led by Gary Whitney and Trish Canham which highlighted the concerns of local residents about aspects of development control and planning in the North of the Borough.

The first major challenge facing this group was the response to the Council's consultation on the new Local Plan Policy Options. This very important policy document forms the major section of the new Local Development Framework, a planning document which will guide the way in which future new homes and businesses will fit into and compliment the local area for many years to come.

At the beginning of June a Seminar on the LDF was held at the Town Hall to help representatives of the local Residents Associations in their understanding of what is a very complex process; and then over the next six weeks the Federation planning group worked together and produced a very comprehensive response on behalf of the Federation and helped to guide local Residents Associations to produce their own responses.

Currently the Federation planning group is working on the consultation for the next stage of the Core Plan, the deadline for which is 7th March. The aim is to obtain the best possible result for our area. There is a demand for more homes, especially small houses for young families. Our main objective is to ensure that any development happens in the right place and fits into the character of the area, without compromising our precious green infrastructure.

The major government policy driving our local Borough's Development Framework is the draft South East Plan which is proposing a massive and unreasonable increase in housing in the SE region alongside dramatically increased economic growth; which we believe to be completely unsustainable and without adequate resources for related infrastructure. For Reigate & Banstead alone the local target was increased by the Secretary of State to a minimum of 11,240 new homes by 2026 and a total of well over 650,000 homes for the region. The government's consultation period for the changes to this plan followed quickly after the work on the local plan. Again the Federation planning group worked together to produce a wide-ranging response to the government's proposed changes.

In early October the Federation organised a public meeting, chaired by Gary Whitney, attended by our MP Crispin Blunt, the leader of our Council Cllr Joan Spiers, Cllr Mike Miller, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Chairman of the Surrey Branch of the Campaign for Rural England. The speakers fully endorsed our own concerns about the increased level of development proposed for the borough.

With the strong support of the Campaign for Rural England, the Federation associations distributed about 10,000 sets of SE Plan response forms to their members. The results of this consultation process are still being analysed by the Government Office of the South East (GOSE) and we await the outcome with interest.

One of the major questions is how the housing targets can be met in the current economic climate. The National Housing Policy Assessment Unit (NHPAU) calculates estimates of how many new homes are needed and in November two of the federation members attended a meeting with the government's chief statistician and urged him to re-examine the unit's forecasts.

Other regions share our grave concern at the level of new development imposed by central government. In January, Federation representatives attended a meeting at the House of Commons organised by MPs and residents associations from the South West region. Listening to the speakers it was clear that this region shares many of the same worries including over development and building on green belt land.

A major local concern in the north of our borough is the future of the Banstead Estate, the area of Green Belt land comprising 526 acres formerly owned by Legal & General. This area provides a vital separation of the three local communities and is threatened by the prospect of planning applications that would lead to the destruction of this beautiful area of countryside. The Federation has set up a working group with the specific responsibility of exploring ways to protect this land.

PLANNING

What a difference a year makes, especially with the change in financial circumstances! However, like the momentum of the proverbial tanker, new planning legislation and planning applications move on and threaten Kingswood and our surrounds to an even greater degree.

FORUM AND WORKING PARTIES

As reported last year and mentioned above, a working party was set up between various Residents' Associations in the north of the Borough and our respective Ward Councillors and County Councillors.

Other working parties have become necessary too. Firstly to liaise with Octagon who have contracted to purchase the BBC Kingswood Warren site. Meetings with Octagon are ongoing with the intent of influencing an acceptable planning application suitable for the site and area. Also, on behalf of the Banstead and District Federation of Resident Associations, a working party has been set up to examine all aspects of the former Legal and General land known as the Banstead Estate. It is known that surveyors have been on the Estate and an inquiry has been made to the Council regarding a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) in some 27 acres of the Estate in fields just north of Copt Hill Lane. The proposed CCRC is outlined to consist of a 60 bed nursing home, 60 close care suites and 140 close care units plus restaurant, café, coffee shop, "village shop", bowling green, spa library, worker accommodation etc.

The Council have deemed for the time being that an Environmental Impact Assessment is required and that approval is unlikely under current planning legislation as the land is not only classified Green Belt but also an Area of Great Landscape Value. (Details may be seen by entering P/08/01451/? on the Council website under 'Planning Search'). It is also known that the owners of the Banstead Estate (Whitecote Ltd) have promoted the whole area of 520 acres as a possible Eco-Town site. With changing legislation this is likely to become a serious issue.

SOUTH EAST PLAN AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The developing planning legislation is complex and may look confusing. The South East England Regional Authority (SEERA) has developed the South East Plan since 2003. In October last year all residents had a paper drop from the KRA encouraging comments to be made to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE). The implications of this document include considerably higher housing numbers for the next 20 years and a review of the Green Belt. In the changed financial climate Margaret Beckett (Housing Minister) has called for a review of housing numbers but this will only delay the inevitable. Final government revisions and adoption are expected this year.

Guided by, and in parallel with the above, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council is currently finalising the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF identifies the broad locations, scale and type of development and supporting infrastructure that will take place in the Borough; it also covers community issues including the quality of life, environment, housing, education, community safety, the economy and regeneration. It will be submitted to the Government in the spring. The LDF along with other associated documents will replace the current planning guidance of the Borough Local Plan.

LOCAL PLANNING APPLICATIONS

There appears to be little change in the number of planning applications so far for our area. However some approved plans have been delayed (e.g. 24 dwellings in St Monica's Road), a few others may be on hold and it is believed a few developers are in financial difficulties. Nevertheless, at the time of writing, planning applications are expected for the aforementioned BBC Kingswood Warren and possibly the Continuing Care Retirement Community, the latter being a very real threat.

Once applications have been received by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, their website under 'Planning Search' is a very good source of information, searching by 'application reference' or 'keyword' for individual applications. The KRA Secretary, Vicky Askew, sends a fortnightly updated Kingswood Planning List to all Road Representatives who should be contacted in the first instance by residents with any application concerns.

THE BBC AND KINGSWOOD WARREN

We reported last year that the BBC is leaving Kingswood Warren – deploying staff to other sites, notably to Salford in Manchester where a major new broadcasting centre is being developed; and in March 2010 the sale of the 18.7 acre Kingswood Warren site to Octagon completes.

The site has a Tree Preservation Order in force and part of the site, the so-called 'Aerial Field', is designated as Urban Open Land – with a presupposition against development. There is also a section 106 agreement, a covenant protecting this portion of the land further. The building itself is locally listed, but sadly English Heritage decided against national listing as a grade II building.

A meeting was held by Octagon in the summer of 2008, to which our Councillors, planners and members of the KRA and representatives of all concerned Frontagers Associations were invited. At this meeting, Octagon presented a first view of the sort of development they had in mind, clearly showing that they intended to build homes on the Aerial Field. This was challenged robustly by our Councillors and by the KRA.

At the request of Octagon, a small Liaison Group was set up - comprising members of the KRA, planning experts, and adjacent Frontagers Associations – to work with Octagon to help them to arrive at plans for their development, access and implementation that would be most likely to satisfy residents prior to these being submitted as a formal application. In this process, the Liaison Group held firm to the key requirement that the Aerial Field's undeveloped status must be preserved. By the end of 2008 it looked as though this and largely all of the Liaison Group's requirements had been met and Octagon went away to formally draw up plans ready for submission to the Council.

However, at the time of writing it has become apparent that Octagon is challenging the validity of the section 106 agreement, and has expressed a desire to meet with the Liaison Group to present plans that develop parts of this portion of land too – albeit at a low density. Whilst a casual glance at a small scale version of these revised plans indicates likely conformance with many of the requirements established by the Liaison Group, the fundamental issue of the challenge to the status of this key piece of land is one that we cannot support or be even implied to be supporting. Therefore, the Liaison Group has declined the invitation to meet with Octagon until such time that this issue is resolved, as it should be, with the Council and its officers. Clearly this is a topical and developing issue, and it is likely that we will be able report further news at the AGM.

A MESSAGE FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR MICHAEL GOSLING

I have been the Executive Member for Resources since May 2008. My responsibilities include procurement, audit, risk and budget monitoring. Through this I come into contact with all the matters at County Council first from a financial perspective. Then as an Executive Member in all matters on which decisions have to be made.

In the middle of February we set the council tax with a 2.9% increase which is below the level of inflation. This was after much work and consideration in view of the pressures on everybody's finances at the present time.

Locally the efforts of the Highways Team is directed at remedial work following the snow and ice but you will be pleased to hear that in the next financial year the embankment bordering Outwood Lane will be rebuilt. I will inform the KRA when the work is due to take place as it may well entail the road being closed during part of the works.

Waterhouse Lane through the village to the A217 is being evaluated for inclusion on the resurfacing list for the next financial year but I will only be able to confirm this by the end of March.

I look forward to meeting you at the AGM in the Village Hall.

A MESSAGE FROM COUNCILLOR Mrs. JOAN SPIERS

This year is going to be difficult for us all, including the Council. Just as you have to economise, we at the Council will have to do more for less.

We are having to look carefully at all of our plans. This year we shall finish many things which we have started within our budget, just as we did last year. We completed the Priory Park mainly paid for by a lottery grant and kind donations from Cannon, Legal & General, Watson Wyatt Worldwide, and other smaller donations, for which we are most grateful. The new Redhill bus station was paid for by New Growth Point money from the Government, and we have just succeeded in obtaining another £5.3 million to improve our Borough.

This year we are going to begin to fulfil another pledge, this time to Horley residents. They had the pain of 2600 extra dwellings foisted upon them, and I promised that there must be gain as well as pain. To that end we are working in partnership with Surrey County Council to secure the purchase of land in Horley that will allow us to build the Leisure Centre and Pool, and other benefits that were promised to those residents.

The horrendous fire at the Banstead branch of Waitrose just before Christmas was a blow to traders and shoppers alike. My officers are working very closely with Waitrose and a planning application is almost ready for councillors to consider. We shall do all we can to get Waitrose up and trading as soon as we can, and in the meantime they have moved into the old Woolworths store. Special thanks are due to Fire, Police and Reigate and Banstead officers who did so much on that fateful night and after to get the High Street up and running again.

The Council is not exempt from financial hardship, it costs over £55million to provide our services, and we receive just £6.8 million in Government grant. We rely on fees and charges and investment income to make up the shortfall, and like all of us the Council has seen its investment income plummet to the lowest ever since banking records began. Reigate and Banstead keeps just 13p

from every pound of Council Tax you pay. The rest goes to Surrey County Council and the Police. Both of these bodies have suffered severe cuts and under-provision from Government for some nine years.

My Executive and Senior Officers are working hard to find other ways to deliver services and to save your money. My pledge to you is that we shall continue to provide quality services to keep this Borough 'Clean, Green and Safe'. 'Clean and Green' we can do alone, and 'Safe' in close partnership with the Police, a relationship which I value and nurture. I further promise that every penny of your money will be spent wisely and carefully. We are well versed in that, having just shaved £1.9million off our budget.

Things will improve, life will get easier. Let us be grateful that we live in such a wonderful place, and do all we can to keep it that way.

Cllr Mrs Joan Spiers is our member for Kingswood with Burgh Heath and executive member for Planning. She can be contacted by e-mail at cllr.spiers@reigate-bansted.gov.uk or Joanspiers@aol.com.

POLICING AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME IN KINGSWOOD

The KRA continues to encourage Neighbourhood Watch schemes and residents are encouraged to participate and help establish active schemes to cover all of our area. Please let Peter Allen have your feedback on security and policing matters and he will pass this information along to the Surrey Police.

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KRA WEBSITE

The KRA website www.kingswoodmatters.co.uk is now being regularly updated with KRA news. Other local organisations can make use of this site or as a link. Please contact Peter Skelton for further information.

MEMBERSHIP

We need our membership level of around 50% to rise in order for us to better represent the community. We would ask that those of you that feel the KRA does an important job for Kingswood to please show your support by becoming a member of the Association. The cost is very low, the benefit to us all is high. Please contact the Membership Secretary – Lynne Sinclair on 01737 832762

KINGSWOOD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held in the Village Hall, Waterhouse Lane, Kingswood on FRIDAY 27th March 2009, commencing at 8.00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Approval of the Minutes of last AGM
2. Chairman's Report
3. Hon. Treasurer's Report
4. Election of Hon. Auditor
5. Election of Chairman, Officers and Committee for 2008-09
6. Open discussion and questions on matters of local interest and advice from our County and Local Councillors
7. Any other business

All Kingswood residents are invited to attend the meeting and join in the discussions, but please note we ask that only members of the Association vote on formal Association business. Not less than fourteen days notice of any resolution to be moved at the AGM shall be given in writing to the Hon. Secretary. Subscriptions may be paid to the Hon. Treasurer or Hon. Membership Secretary prior to or after the meeting.

Nominations for any Officers, or a seat on the Committee, must be in the hands of the Hon. Secretary not less than seven days before the meeting.

COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS AT 10th February 2009

President Mr. Gary Whitney	830512	Hon. Treasurer Mr. John Phipps	359009
Assoc. Chair (Acting) Mr. Simon Parnall	830888	Hon. Membership Sec. Mrs. Lynne Sinclair	832762
Chair of Planning Sub-Committee	Vacancy	Chair of Roads & Transport Sub-Committee	Vacancy
Communications Secretary	Vacancy		
Federation representatives: Mr. Gary Whitney	830512	and Mr. Barry Miles	358189
Hon. Secretary: Ms. Vicky Askew	8 The Ridings, Kingswood, KT20 6HJ or vickyaskew@tiscali.co.uk		352088

Committee/ Road Stewards

Birch Grove	Mrs. Valerie Smith	833041	Waterhouse Lane	Mr. Michael Sutcliffe	832532
Copt Hill Lane	Mr. John Phipps	359009	The Glade	Mrs. Lynne Sinclair	832762
The Chase	Mr. Colin East	832416	Furze Hill	Mr. Guy Kingsbury	373335
Forest Drive	Mr. Peter Skelton	832157	Warren Drive	Mr. John Lang	832105
St. Monica's Road	Mrs. Mary Staples	216345	Hill Lane	Mr. Mike Gibson	351682
Sandy Lane	Mr. Desmond Camblin	833823	Doric Drive	Mr. Barry Miles	358189
The Warren	Mrs. Adrienne Light	832133	Lilley Drive	Mr. Dennis Cox	830860
Warren Lodge Drive	Mr. Gary Whitney	830512	Alcocks Lane	Mr. David Broaden	352815
Beech Drive	Mr. Simon Parnall	830888	Woodland Way	Mr. Peter Allen	832123
Hamilton Place	Mrs. Ruth Hirst	830144	Eyhurst Close	Mrs. Christine Humphreys	831218

The appropriate road steward also represents the roads that branch off the above "primary" roads.

Vacancies will exist for Association Chair, Treasurer, Communications Secretary, Chair of Roads and Transport sub-committee, Chair of Planning sub-committee and Committee Members. Volunteers are urgently needed and should please contact the Hon. Secretary so that they can be proposed at the meeting.