



# THE BEDFORD PARK SOCIETY

For the protection of the amenities of the earliest Garden Suburb

Patron: Donald Insall CBE FRIBA

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Bedford Park Society's executive committee had a busy time in 2010, as summarised in this annual report and the Society's newsletters.

For the first time our Betjeman lecture was given on location; it was a conducted tour around the recently-restored grounds of Chiswick House.

Hounslow Council was shamed at last into repairing the dangerous footpath from Bath Road to Woodstock Road by the church.

We have sought full restoration of Acton Green Common with action to improve drainage, and hope the work might be better funded now. However, Ealing Council is cutting the number of Park Rangers, who care for the borough's green spaces.

There are projects for which progress with both boroughs and with Transport for London is slow. We will continue to press for improvements to the railings at Bedford Corner, to the walkway on the west side between Bedford Corner and the embankment, to noisy rail track and to the appearance of the rail bridges and walls by the station.

Queries through our new web-site and by letter to our registered address at 31 Priory Avenue have increased. This follows the Society's response to our survey which indicated we needed improvements in how home owners can make contact and get advice. Residents are encouraged to seek our planning experts' views on changes they would like to make to their properties, so that problems and costs can be avoided at an early stage.

It is with great regret that your committee sees some home owners alter buildings, install satellite dishes and build in their back gardens without permission. The Government intends to strengthen planning enforcement and penalties as part of its Localism Bill, so we always advise speaking to a council conservation officer or a committee member to check what needs planning permission. In a conservation area like ours that covers most developments or tree works householders would like to make; this may seem onerous, but it is how we protect our architectural heritage and ensure Bedford Park continues to be a pleasant place to live.

The Society is working through the London Forum, which represents civic and amenity societies in the capital, to influence the policies of the Planning and Local Government Minister for localism, devolution and protection of historic assets. Some improvements have been achieved on the latter, but the legislation will not be clear until later this year.

Consideration is being given to restoration of the grave of Maurice Adams, one of Bedford Park's early architects, who lived here for many years. He is buried in the graveyard of St Nicholas church, Chiswick.

The Government's decisions to stop planning for a third runway at Heathrow and to maintain runway alternation are welcomed. There is likely to be a consultation on future airport capacity and usage in South East England and the Society will be interested in the noise and pollution implications of future use of Northolt airport, of night flights and of the air traffic controlled movements of aircraft over West London.

*Peter Eversden*  
Chairman

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

This was a busy year on the communications front.

The Society redesigned its web-site to make it more informative and easier to update. We were assisted in this project by Mike Roden of The Battersea Society. As a result of Mike's excellent work, the site now includes a comprehensive selection of images and photographs of Bedford Park, its history and background, technical notes and a complete selection of the BPS newsletters since the founding of the Society. Committee members are now able to insert news items without requiring massive technical expertise. The whole design is clear and easy to navigate. View the new web-site at [www.bedfordpark.org.uk](http://www.bedfordpark.org.uk).

We also published an update of Tom Greeves's seminal book *Bedford Park – the first garden suburb*. With splendid new full colour photos by local resident Ellen Rooney (a leading travel photographer) and additional text by the Hon Sec, the revised volume was launched at Green Day, where it was an instant best seller. The book is on sale in Waterstones and Fosters book shops in Chiswick High Road as well as being available from the BPS web-site, price £18.95.

Last year's Betjeman Lecture took the form of a tour of the grounds of Chiswick House led by John Watkins, the head of landscaping at English Heritage. Despite the freezing weather there was an excellent turnout, raising £100 for Cure Parkinson's Trust plus £85 for Chiswick House Friends .

The Newsletter was published three times during the year and thanks, again, are due to Sandra Grant for her sterling work in putting it together. Indeed, there is so much news that we will be publishing four times a year in the future!

*Peter Murray*  
Hon Secretary

## PLANNING

*The Society's planning sub-committee consists of two architects and an interior designer, all of whom have a love of Bedford Park, and consider that we, with you, are guardians of this special place for future generations.*

In Ealing the Conservation Area Advisory Panel for Bedford Park is appointed by the council to advise the officers and planning committee on all planning and listed building applications. The panel is independent of the Society, and while on most occasions agreeing with the views of the Society's executive committee it has in the past held differing opinions. Although not always directly consulted by Ealing, the Society's sub-committee does ensure that its views are also known. In Hounslow the Society is consulted about all planning and listed building applications, along with adjacent and nearby neighbours. With a few exceptions this past year the recommendations of the officers of both boroughs have agreed with our comments.

Over the year since March 2010 the Ealing Conservation Area Advisory Panel has considered and commented on some 45 planning and listed building applications in Ealing while the Society has dealt with 44 in Hounslow for works to houses within the Conservation Area. The Society has also advised some applicants prior to formal planning or listed building applications, often via the web-site. The number of applications in both boroughs compares with a total of 73 last year (109 in 2009 and 145 in 2008), while more applications were made to non-listed houses south of Bath Road. As in previous years approximately 65% of the total were approved at the initial submission, while 25% were refused, some of these being re-submitted after negotiations with the local authorities, while 10% are either withdrawn or are the subject of an appeal to the Secretary of State via the Planning Inspectorate. There have been six appeals against Ealing Council's decisions, and two in Hounslow. In Ealing three were refused, one approved and two split (ie parts were refused while other parts were allowed). Of the two in Hounslow one was split and the other is still not determined. The small rise in the overall number of applications has allowed case officers time to negotiate with applicants and modify some proposals.

The exceptions have mainly been in situations where an owner has applied to replace something "like for like" which was not original, or does not conform to the likely original detail (for example a replacement fence, joinery or roof tiles), and the council cannot put a reasonable argument to refuse, since it is assumed that it had previously approved what is about to be replaced. In this event the Society would ask that the applicant be required to make the

replacement correct and not repeat a previous mistake. We therefore urge likely applicants, and their agents, who may be uncertain about a particular detail, to consult the Technical Notes in the Log Book, given to every owner of a listed house for safe keeping (and to be passed on to the next owner).

We are pleased that at long last the new street lighting in the Ealing section of the conservation area is complete. We appreciate that it has been a long haul, and the process temporarily inconvenient to some, but the officers at Ealing have been diligent in pursuing the right individual elements which form the assembled lamp-post and its light fitting. We know there are three areas where we consider there has been a loss of quality; the Panel continues to pursue these cases and seek remedial action.

Some changes involving “green” issues have been welcomed. There have been no further applications for solar panels, but quite a few, when re-roofing, to add insulation. A few applications for sensitively designed double glazing to non-listed houses have been granted, while refurbishment and draught-proofing to windows in listed houses have been allowed. Green planted roofs have been allowed on bin stores and one roof/balcony in Hounslow.

As we have mentioned in previous years, it is the nature of living in a conservation area, and especially in a listed building, that our responses to applications are more “conservative” – while we do try to be “liberal” and bear in mind that life has changed considerably in the past 130 years or so. I quote from last year’s report:

*It is important to reiterate that our main concern is that the original plan of a listed house is not compromised. Modern bathrooms and kitchens are welcomed when integrated sympathetically into the plan. Internal walls can have large openings so that spaces become, and be used as, one. External walls should remain intact as far as possible: they are nearly always structural and always listed.*

*The definition of a Conservation Area by English Heritage is :*

***“An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”***

*When we consider planning applications which you have made this has to be our first consideration. If we criticise a proposal it is always with the thought that it does not meet these criteria. Luckily there are many cases when such criticism is unnecessary.*

## TREES AND THE TRIANGLE

A major concern over the past 12 months has been the proposal by Hounslow to place all highway maintenance, including pavements and street trees, under a 25-year PFI contract which will start in 2013. The contract documentation is voluminous but not as clear as we would like over regularity of pruning or planting new trees of appropriate species. Discussions are continuing with Hounslow as we must ensure that we don’t get locked into a very long contract which provides a lower standard of service than at present, ie pruning limes and planes every three years and all other trees inspected every three years, with pruning as required.

The pavement across The Triangle at the western end of St Michael and All Angels Church has at long last been repaired by Hounslow after much pressure by the Society. We hope that the health of the roses along the border with The Avenue improves; but if not we will have to consider another scheme of planting. We are grateful to the volunteers who keep the border weeded and to Bud Murry Weather for pruning the roses.

The Committee is considering whether it would be desirable to try to open up the view of St Michael’s from Acton Green given that it is heavily obscured by a number of now fully grown trees.

There have been a few plantings in streets round the conservation area during the year: about half a dozen in Hounslow and four in Ealing.

There is concern that a few residents seem unaware that trees in the Bedford Park conservation area cannot be pruned or removed unless notice has been given to the relevant council and they have confirmed that work to the tree can be undertaken. Failure to observe this requirement can lead to a court injunction or prosecution.

*Simon Hillyard*

Committee member with responsibility for trees and open spaces