

# Bromley Civic Society Newsletter - Spring 2012

Members of: Civic Voice, The London Forum, The Federation of Bromley Residents Associations

Love Bromley

2012 brings mixture of good and bad news for the Town Centre. The plan by the Glades to build part of Queens Garden for restaurant development was thrown out by Development Control Committee but only by a slim majority vote. Now there is a new application so we are back to square one. Residents have now acquired a copy of the Queens Garden covenant via Freedom of Information. This raises deep concerns over the way the original Glades development was planned and the Area Action Plan devised in relation to the Garden. At Bromley South the Council's permission for its own co-development with the Cathedral Group's of the Westmoreland Road car park may be great news for the Council but a bleak prospect for adjacent residents who will face having a 22 story block of flats overlooking their gardens, windows and blocking daylight. The recent publication by the Council's of the Bromley North Heritage trail leaflet and website entry is very welcome and at last officially recognises that Bromley is more than just a shopping centre. Good news too for the Thyme Out project which maintains the Civic Centre grounds which has a further three years of funding. Have a good summer . Tony Banfield - Chairman

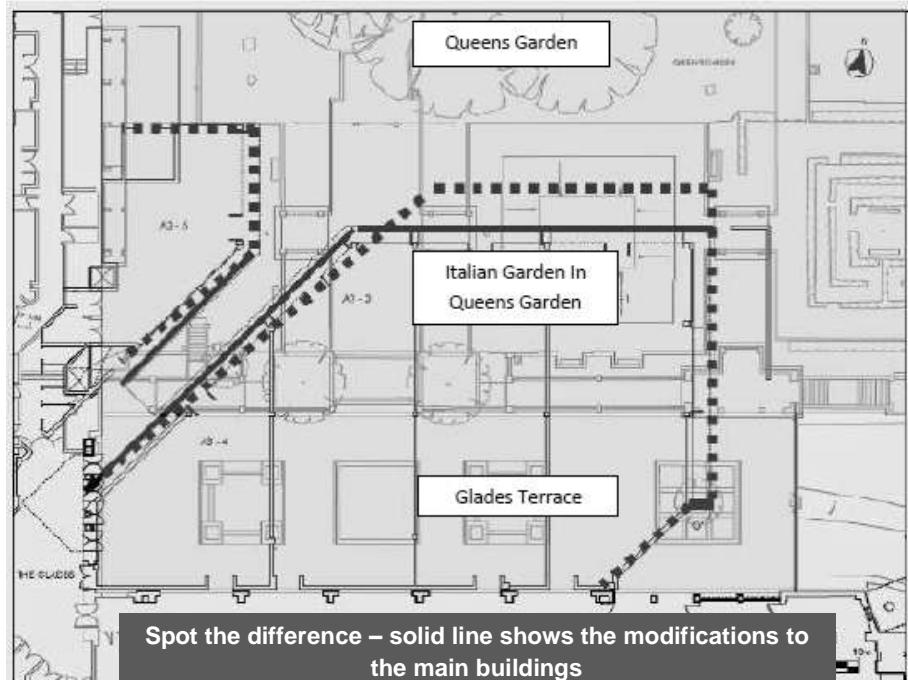
## Queens Garden development - New planning Application

The Glades proposed restaurant development which would have meant the loss of the open spaces of the Glades Terrace. Italian Garden which is part of Queens Garden defeated at the Council's Development Control Committee meeting in March but only by a slim majority. Despite the refusal the Glades have already come up with a new proposal almost no different to that refused.

### The revised scheme

On the 16th April myself and Jeff Royce from the Friends of the Parks were called to a meeting with the Manager of the Glades, a representative of their planning consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Dominic Pendry from Edleman's, the Public Relations Consultant for Capital Shopping Centres. The meeting was said to be a consultation but we were then told the company had already put in the revised planning application and so it was evident nothing we had to say would be taken into account.

The, so called, 'revisions' are that the height of the building being reduced by a miserable 40 cm (1 ft 4 inches) and there is a slight set back as can be



seen on the diagram produced from the application drawings. Needless to say we said we would continue to oppose the development. We said, once again, that if the Company wished to have restaurants fronting onto Queens Garden they should do what the Area Action Plan Inspector said and use their own building which has a massive blank frontage to Queens Garden and not commandeer any more precious public open space having already been allowed to take a large part of the land where the Garden once met Market Square and where the Listed ornamental gates were located.

**Relocation of the Gates.** The developers previously wished to move the gates near to the Market Square entrance to the Glades but now they propose a site close to the Kentish Way entrance where they will have to be spaced nonsensically much wider apart than the actual width when closed to allow fire engines and other emergency vehicles access. This also means they will be at risk from damage by parks Services vehicles and Fire engines in the event of an emergency at the Glades. There is actually no reason why they can't be left where they are even if the development were to go ahead.

## Conservation Area considerations :

The DC Committee's decision was "*The proposal would be an over-intensive development of the site, detrimental to the character and appearance of the Bromley Town Centre Conservation Area by reason of its size, site coverage, design and the loss of openness and public amenity to Queens Gardens, contrary to Policy BE11 of the Unitary Development Plan, Policy OSM of the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan and the Conservation Area Statement*".

### 1. The duty to preserve and enhance the CA

The Council's Conservation Area Statement, which was adopted last year, is the official interpretation of how the Council carries out its statutory duty to 'preserve and enhance the character and appearance of a conservation area'. The statement reads "New building in a CA will normally only be considered provided it is :

- On a site created through demolition of an existing building
- On a currently vacant plot
- As an additional building on a plot presently accommodating a building

**None of the above apply** and the DCC objection "*detrimental to the character and appearance of the Bromley Town Centre Conservation Area ... contrary to the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan and the Conservation Area Statement*" is still the case.

### 2. Views into and out of a CA - Council policy BE 13 says: "**the Council will oppose development which would harm views into or out of a conservation area**" but.....



Above: shows the harm to the view into the conservation area from the upper walkway of the Glades before and after the proposed development.



Dotted line shows the Conservation Area. Solid line shows the development site **DCC objection is still the case.**: "*detrimental to the character and appearance of the Bromley Town Centre Conservation Area by reason of its size, site coverage, design and the loss of openness and public amenity to Queens Gardens*

# Once again please help save this public open space

Address your comments to: **The Chief Planner**

*By letter to: Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley, BR1 3UH*

*By email to: [planning@bromley.gov.uk](mailto:planning@bromley.gov.uk) ( must include your name and postal address)*

*Quote Planning numbers:*

**12/01339 - Queens Garden Development**

**12/01340 LBC - Relocation of the Listed Gates**

The application can be seen online at [www.bromley.gov.uk](http://www.bromley.gov.uk) under 'search planning applications' or in person by arrangement phoning the planning department 020 8464 3000. A copy of your objection would be welcome so we can gauge public feeling and if you need any help in making a representation please contact : Tony Banfield 8 Pixfield Court, Beckenham Lane, Bromley, BR2 0DG - [Tel:020 8464 3181](tel:02084643181) or email [chair@bromleycivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:chair@bromleycivicsociety.org.uk)

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**The Council as site owner and co-developer.** Protecting our heritage and open spaces in Bromley against this massive commercial empire and a Council which is so deeply involved in the development is a David and Goliath struggle but we must do what we can despite the odds. The Council's Executive Committee have already approved the sale of the Italian Garden to Aviva Pensions (part owner of the Glades) for an undisclosed sum subject to a planning application being approved by the Development Control Committee.

The following data, according to Wikipedia, gives some idea of the nature of the corporate machine we are dealing with. Our Council is the owner of the Italian Garden, freeholder of the Glades Terrace and co-developers of the proposed scheme. The Glades itself is 15% owned by Bromley Council; run by and 63.5% owned by Capital Shopping Centres; 21% is owned by Aviva Pensions. CSC also operate 10 other shopping centre around the country as set out below and the company's investment properties are valued at £7.0 billion. These are : Braehead-Renfrewshire; Chelfield-Norwich; The Chimes- Uxbridge; Eldon Square- Newcastle upon Tyne; The Glades-Bromley; The Harlequin- Watford; Lakeside Shopping Centre- West Thurrock; The Mall at Cribbs Causeway- Bristol; Manchester Arndale Centre- Manchester; MetroCentre- Gateshead; The Potteries- Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent; St. David's Centre- Cardiff; The Trafford Centre- Greater Manchester; Victoria Centre- Nottingham. Its United States-based subsidiary, Equity One, owns a portfolio of shopping centres and office property in California. () .

## Town Green Application for Queens Garden

Because of the Executive Committee's commitment to selling off this land BCS and the Friends of Bromley Town Parks we have made a joint application under the 2006 Act to have the Italian Garden and Glades Terrace designated a **Town Green**. This would give the public continued right of use and prevent building development complimenting the covenant which covers the original footprint of Queens Garden. Public notices have gone out in the week of the 16<sup>th</sup> April inviting objection from any land owner. There are only two - Capital Shopping Centres who lease the Glades Terrace and Bromley Council who are the freeholders of this and the Italian Garden. Because of this ownership the Council cannot determine the Town Green application themselves and it will be referred to the Planning Inspectorate for an independent inquiry and decision in due course. Any decision is entirely based upon legal matters. If it is found that the areas meet the criteria as set out in the Act then designation must take place.

It really comes to something when residents have to seek such action to protect our public open spaces from the commercial wheeling and dealing of our own Local Authority.

## Queens Garden Covenant

It was always known that Queens Garden was subject to a legal agreement or covenant in 1897 between the Lord of the Manor, Coles Child, and the Urban District Council reserving the land for use as a Public Garden. When the Glades was being planned in the mid 1980s the Chair of HOBRA (now BCS) asked to see the covenant but this was refused by the Council. The concern was the proposed loss of the open land between the main Garden and Market Square. One of our members applied for a copy under the Freedom of Information Act last year. This document gives the sites into the trust of the Urban District Council or their successors “*for the purposes only of a Garden and Pleasure Ground for the inhabitants of Bromley*”. It instructs the Council or their successors that they “*will not erect or permit to be erected on the said land or any part hereof any buildings whatsoever other than and except (if so desired by the Council) a Caretakers Lodge rustic summer houses or implement sheds or other erections for the convenience of the public to be used exclusively in connection with the said premises as a Public Garden and Pleasure Ground without the previous consent in writing of the said Coles Child or other the owner or owners of the Bromley Palace Estates.*

This clause raises questions about the Council’s original permission for the Glades which meant the loss of the north west part of the covenanted land as well as the planning of the Area Action Plan which allocated two sites for restaurant development on the covenanted land.

We are seeking information as to whether it was ever made known to Councillors responsible for approving the AAP proposals that the land was covenanted or that the proposals were in contravention of the terms of the covenant which entrusted the land to their care on behalf of the ‘*inhabitants of Bromley and general public*’.

It may be co-incidence but it has to be noted that since a copy of the Covenant was requested by our member for public information the siting of restaurant proposals in the adopted AAP which were on the covenanted land were changed to that we now see which is now studiously outside the covenanted area. As a consequence it is also on land never identified in the AAP consultations or approved by Councillors in the adopted plan or discussed with the AAP Inspector for his approval. Whatever the reasons for the change of location it shows little respect for the 4 year long AAP public consultation procedures.

## Site K – Westmoreland Road car park development

The Site K development is another example of how the interests of the town and its residents are compromised by the Council’s relationship with corporate developers. The scheme was approved recently by Development Control Committee in the belief that it is of overwhelming benefit.

The reality is quite the contrary. The main feature, the 24 storey block of flats which benefits no one other than those privileged people who will live there with their penthouse views overlooking the other residents of the Shortlands Valley.

We were led to believe this would be a top of the range development but it has been announced that the hotel element will be a Premier Inn – very much in the low budget range and replicating the Travelodge now being built in the north end of town.

The much vaunted Cinema will have nine screens but, it now transpires, in smaller auditoriums than the existing Empire. Compare the largest at 324 seats and 159 seats with the Empire’s equivalent of 386 and 276. 3 will have less than 60 seats each. There is nothing here that the Empire can’t do better and indeed when the group bought the cinema from the Odeon chain they intended extending to 9 screens unaware of the Council’s own proposals at Bromley South in the emerging AAP. When they found out about it they halted all investment and informed the AAP Inspector that ,unable to compete with the better transport facilities of Bromley South and belief that Bromley cannot support 2 cinemas, they will be forced to close. The Empire brings a footfall of 2-3000 people into the Upper High Street every week. Closure and loss of this footfall will spell disaster for the already struggling Upper High Street just at a time when the Mayor of London is investing large sums of money in environmental improvements for the area.

The AAP also promised “retention of existing leisure facilities” and “extending of the range” of facilities. Instead all we get is one cinema replacing another – no gain there. The same is true at the Pavilion Leisure Centre where the Sports

Halls have been scrapped and replaced by Ten Pin Bowling. No gain there either, only one facility replacing another. As each AAP Opportunity Site proposals come on stream one after another they show how much the public are being short changed in the rush for commercial development.

## Opportunity Site G

The Council continue to seek a co-developer for this site which extends from the Churchill Theatre down as far as the railway. It means demolition of everything on site including the 40 homes in Ethelbert Close and more in Ethelbert, Ravensbourne and Ringers Road as well as all the High Street buildings some of which are important in the Conservation Area. The site is in 126 ownerships and the Council will require compulsory purchase orders if owners are unwilling to sell.

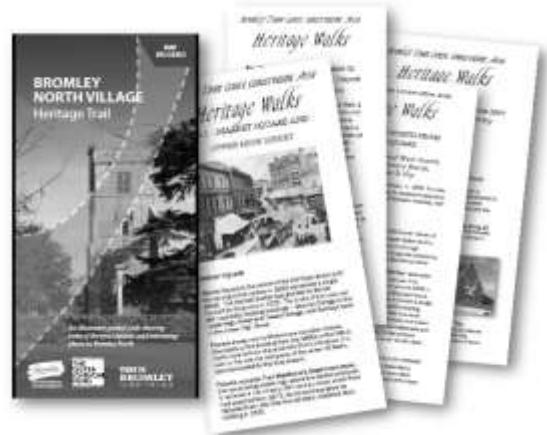
The experience of the Glades site was that the Council began buying up houses piecemeal, boarding them up and creating an area of blight which demoralised residents and so many more sold up rather than live like this for years while the remainder were eventually compulsorily purchased. This is what happens when a local authority turn property developer - democracy takes a dive and residents are essentially disenfranchised. The AAP also contains target figures for development content of each site which the Development Control, Committee, when asked to approve the AAP said would lead to harmful overdevelopment. Marc Hume, the council officer in charge of redevelopment insisted saying without these target figures developers would not be interested. Despite this DCC members still rejected the use of target figures but were overruled by the Leader of the Council and his Executive Committee !

## Opportunity site A

The site is the car park rear of Bromley North Station allocated in the AAP as suitable for 450 homes with multi storey car park and other peripheral uses. Developers, Linden Homes, challenged the allocation in the High Court last year which ruled that the AAP Inspector acted incorrectly in accepting the allocation and now it is going back to the High Court to get the AAP essentially rewritten.

## Heritage Trail

In the 1980's the Council's heritage and Urban design section produced an excellent booklet entitled A Walk Around Bromley Town Centre as part of a Borough wide series. Together with a map guide this highlighted the man historic buildings in the Town (ironically it had to be re-issued minus the entry for the Council owned locally Listed parish school which the Council allowed to be demolished to relocate the Methodist Church from the Glades site!). As we are all too aware the Council's interest in town Centre Heritage such matter has always been overshadowed by their interests as a property owing developer particularly in the form of the current Area Action Plan. In an attempt to put heritage back in the picture BCS devised, last year, a shop window display heritage trail under the banner 'Trading on Heritage' which will be implemented sometime this year. With the announcement of funding by the Mayor of London for Bromley North improvements I was surprised to be approached by the Council to come up with some more heritage proposals which might be financed by the MoL fund. Along with our own shop window trail I proposed a programme of eight other complimentary projects including heritage interpretation display boards in the High Street and a revival of the Council's booklet which had been out of print for some years. In the meantime we produced four town centre heritage walks leaflets for the Council's 'Day of Sports' and these are now available on our website for anyone to download. Although limited in its coverage the Council booklet is in colour and an excellent starting point for anyone curious about the history of the town. It is available for free download on the Council website. For those wishing to find out more including the heritage of the open spaces our own leaflets compliment the Council booklet with more detailed information.



The publication, "Bromley North Village Heritage Trail" was marked by a Heritage Day event organised by the Town Centre Manager, Lorraine McQuillan. Highlights were the street entertainers dressed as historic characters not least Miss Elizabeth Bennett from Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice' outside the Royal Bell having been told ( in the

novel) by lady Catherine de Burgh to change horses at the Bell in Bromley on her way home from Rosings Park. Our own committee member Marc Timlin, who is a former conservation officer at Bromley, agreed to conduct two free walks around the area on the day which were well attended and much appreciated.

## Thyme Out Project

Good news from the Civic Centre is that the Thyme Out project has been given a further three years of funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project gives horticultural training to people with learning difficulties based at the Civic Centre where they maintain the grounds. The following press release from the council gives the full story.

*The Thyme Out Too project will be managed by the council, in partnership with Bromley Mencap, Jobmatch and Capel Manor College . Training and work will take place in the Bromley Palace Park and Crystal Palace Park . The project plans to run a variety of community events including growing sessions, walks and talks, community bulb planting days and composting schemes. The scheme is currently recruiting adults with learning disabilities to take part in the free gardening and life skills training programme, which will take place from May 2012 until March 2013. A taster day will be held in Bromley Civic Centre on Tuesday 17 April. For more information, or to book a place, call 020 8313 4057.*

*The project aims to help volunteers with learning disabilities to participate in activities to gain practical experience which will lead to increased independence and job opportunities. The volunteers gain gardening, conservation and life skills training with dedicated staff. They learn techniques including soil preparation, plant and pond maintenance, pruning, mowing, plant identification and safe working. Up to 90 people with learning disabilities will undertake City and Guilds accredited horticultural and life skills training. Bromley Mencap and Jobmatch, will provide job coaching and work experience placements.*

*Last year's volunteers managed the improvements and day to day running of Bromley Palace Park in the Civic Centre grounds, which resulted in a Green Flag award for the site. Other projects have included bulb planting, designing and replanting 5 borders, creating a sustainable composting area and planting native hedging. Working in conjunction with Friends of Bromley Town and Parks and Gardens, the volunteers have also run events including plant sales and providing demonstrations, tours and open days for members of the public. The majority of the Thyme Out volunteers have moved on to other projects following their training, including voluntary work and paid job opportunities.*

## Bromley North Environmental Improvements

We have always welcomed and campaigned for improvements to what is the core of the Town Centre Conservation Area. In our last newsletter we discussed the proposals by designers Egret West funded by money from the Mayor of London. We put in a detailed response which can be seen on our website. There were concerns about the extensive use of yellow paving, saturation tree planting when a more carefully planned strategic placing would better enhance the street scene and some very inappropriate street lamps and concrete planters. English heritage expressed some of the same concerns which also agree with those of the Bromley North Traders Association. The proposals went to Committee 27<sup>th</sup> March with some modifications. Further revisions will be made and reported later in the year.

## Martins Hill Lodge

The historic Park Keeper's Lodge at the Church Road entrance to Martins Hill still remains vacant and vulnerable. The owner produced plans for extending the residential accommodation to include the former toilet block to the rear. Conservation officers they were unhappy with a design and requested modifications to preserve the sense of separation of the two buildings and visibility of the characteristic roofline and end elevation of the toilet block. The owners have now come up with a revised design which with a little modification could be very suitable. The photo dates from around 1900 before the drinking fountain was relocated to its present position on Queens Mead to make way for the fine, Grade II listed War Memorial in 1926.



**AGM & Get together-** Members on email should have received an invitation to the AGM at the Parish Rooms, Parish Church, Church Road, Bromley (behind Primark) 7<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30. Members not on email should find the invitation enclosed with this newsletter. We hope you can come along and will continue to support us – Membership subscriptions are also now due !