



# BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 14 (February 2002)

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## Editorial

*This issue contains mainly local news. The first article is an important call to action on the proposed Aquila development in Bickley - please provide all the support you can to stop this further degradation of Bromley road infrastructure.*

*Other articles cover developments in Orpington on the parking front, which are likely to lead to a further reduction in the vitality of that area..*

*There is some interesting data on the Blackbrook Lane Traffic Calming scheme where B.B.R.A.G. had some hand in achieving the existing compromise solution.*

*Finally, don't forget to look at the new B.B.R.A.G. web site mentioned in the penultimate article (your editor's first attempt at web site development - yes we all have to go back to school occasionally to get up to speed with new technology).*

Roger Lawson, Editor

## Aquila Site Redevelopment - Urgent Objections Required!

A previous newsletter covered the proposed redevelopment of the ex-M.O.D. site known as Aquila in Golf Road, Bickley. An outline planning application has now been submitted for 280 homes, 4 tennis courts and other facilities. B.B.R.A.G. will certainly be submitting an objection to this development on the grounds of the additional traffic congestion that this will create, in an area that already suffers badly from pollution and noise from queuing traffic. We would urge all of our members to submit personal objections to this development. Send them to Stuart Macmillan, Chief Planner, Bromley Council, Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH, quoting reference 01.04089. The deadline is the 8<sup>th</sup> February so don't delay. It would also help to write to your local councillors asking them to support your objections.

Note that traffic from the site will apparently exit via Barfield Road onto Blackbrook Lane, at a junction (picture below) which is already severely congested during rush hours.



Junction of Barfield Road and Blackbrook Lane

It is proposed to install three way traffic lights at the junction of Blackbrook Lane and Bickley Park Road but it is doubtful whether that will assist traffic flow and the extra weight of traffic on the Summer Hill, Bickley Park Road route will worsen congestion significantly.

Local residents are very much opposed to this development. Their other concerns are extra pressure on local facilities such as schools, increased on-street parking around the station which is already a problem, and the fact that this site was originally part of the green belt zone - it was promised that it would be returned to green belt when the MOD no longer needed it.

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### **Orpington Permit Parking Scheme**

Bromley Council consider that the permit parking scheme that now extends over a wide area around Bromley town centre has been so successful that they wish to install similar schemes in Orpington and West Wickham.

A wide area of Orpington and Chelsfield has been sent a consultation leaflet asking for views on this matter. The way permit parking schemes operate is that only residents who have paid £20 per year (or £40 for some areas), can park in the roads during a limited period of time (between 12.0 and 2.0 in Bromley). This stops all day parking by visitors and hence can be used to deter office/shop workers or commuters who park near stations. It also means that residents can usually find a space near their own home and is therefore helpful to them where they have no off-street parking, for example where there are terraced houses with no driveways.

B.B.R.A.G. has objected to these proposals on the following grounds:

1. We do not believe there are significant parking problems in Orpington, and where there are minor problems this could be handled by simple parking restrictions (as already applies around Orpington station for example).

B.B.R.A.G. members resident in Orpington certainly agree with this view on the whole.

2. The cost of the scheme is a waste of money. For example the likely cost to implement it in both Orpington and West Wickham is £235,000,

with over £5,000 just for the consultation exercise in Orpington alone. Revenue from such schemes mainly gets wasted on operating costs.

3. Such schemes usually result in under utilisation of available on-street parking spaces to the inconvenience of many people. An example of this is shown below which shows empty permit parking spaces at 1.0 pm, when nearby unrestricted spaces were totally full. Permit parking schemes are also extremely inconvenient for visitors to the area who are not aware of the existence of the scheme, where there is no suitable off-street parking available (ie. suitable meaning within reasonable distance of the destination). The scheme in Bromley now covers such a wide area, that there are many locations that are over a mile from the town centre car parks and where there is no off-street parking available within the prohibited time zone.



Empty Permit Parking Spaces in Upper Park Road  
(near Widmore Road, Bromley)

4. It is unjust that very little attempt is made to take into account the views of people affected by these schemes, other than local residents. The merits, or otherwise, of such schemes are relevant to the whole community and not just the people who live in the streets included in the scheme. Instead of taking the often selfish views that people have about the street space outside their own residence, the council should be acting for the benefit of the community as a whole.

5. Clearly one of the objectives of this kind of scheme is to discourage or restrict parking in general. There is a clear policy in Bromley to reduce parking provision so as to reduce car use, which B.B.R.A.G. believes is very misguided - more on this in the article below on the Station Road car park. If any councillor actually

stood on such a platform, it would almost certainly be a vote loser, but unfortunately it is a policy that is not widely publicised.

If you agree that this scheme is a bad idea, is a waste of money, or simply unnecessary then write to Colin Doorne, Parking Design Manager, Bromley Council, Stockwell Close, Bromley, BR1 3UH, quoting reference ADE(TP)/CD/H12/65. Deadline for comments is the 1<sup>st</sup> March.

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## Council Funding

You may find it argued that such schemes as the Orpington Permit Parking Scheme, and the traffic calming scheme for Birkbeck Road, Beckenham mentioned below, are funded by Transport for London, part of the GLA. So that's alright then as it doesn't come out of Bromley Council budgets and from your council taxes? Wrong! Transport for London, and the GLA, are partly funded by a precept from all London local councils. In other words a major part of your council taxes now go immediately to fund GLA activities such as roads, police, fire service and other matters. So you are paying indirectly anyway. Your elected councillors have actually very little say in the size of this "precept" which is why the new conservative rulers of Bromley Council may not find it easy to control rises in your council taxes. In fact, the draft GLA budget will cost the average resident another £52 per year and most of this will go on funding increases in the Transport for London budget (including improvements in public transport) and on more police funding - although Bromley is still likely to see a fall in local police numbers.

Bromley Council has recently been given £2 million from Transport for London for projects such as road safety and maintenance, out of a total budget of £59.6m allocated to all 33 London councils. Another £60m will likely be allocated later for green issues such as priority bus lanes, cycling paths and town centre initiatives. *(Editor: so now you know where your money goes).*

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## Station Road Car Park, Orpington

For the last 20 years, Orpington has never been a particularly healthy shopping venue or business centre. It suffers from the superior shopping facilities in Bromley, and more latterly from venues such as Bluewater and Lakeside. Policies such as the permit parking scheme described above are likely to encourage the downward trend by making it more difficult for visitors or employees of local businesses to find suitable places to park. In the view of B.B.R.A.G. this will simply encourage shoppers to go elsewhere, and businesses will also relocate outside the borough in due course. The end result will be a reduction in the financial viability of Orpington town centre, lower revenues to Bromley Council and general impoverishment of the financial health of the borough.

Another nail in the coffin of Orpington is likely to be the recent proposal to demolish the multi-story Station Road car park. The existing building and site is owned by the council. They have issued a planning brief inviting developers to put forward proposals to redevelop the site with alternative facilities (e.g. retail or leisure) and with much reduced car parking capacity.



Station Road Car Park, Orpington

The existing usage of the car park is mainly by employees who work in the adjacent office blocks, by local shop workers, and by shoppers. Some of the space is actually leased to businesses in the adjacent office building.

At present there is capacity for 833 cars, although only about 580 are public spaces. However the proposal is to reduce the latter to possibly no more than 350 spaces, and with no guarantee of any leased spaces.

Bromley Council claim the existing space is underutilised (*Editors note: from personal experience, there is not always spare capacity*). Existing public usage during a normal weekday is about 390 so to suggest that 350 spaces is adequate seems bizarre - and that doesn't even take into account the potential loss of the 250 leased spaces, the increased demand for off street car parking that may arise if the permit parking scheme is introduced and the possible loss of 34 spaces in the adjacent road. In reality there will be inadequate space for office/shop workers, and as they will fill up all the available space, there will be none at all left for shoppers.

B.B.R.A.G. has therefore objected to these proposals (although we don't object in principle to redevelopment of the site as the car park is clearly an eyesore and expensive to maintain). To make your views known also, we suggest you write to Stuart MacMillan, Chief Planner, Bromley Council, Stockwell Close, Bromley, BR1 3UH.

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### **Blackbrook Lane Update**

As you may know, B.B.R.A.G. campaigned strongly against the original proposals for a traffic calming scheme in Blackbrook Lane (which consisted of both speed tables and a series of humps). We felt that as a major distribution route including use by heavier vehicles and PSVs, the road was unsuitable for such severe treatment, and would also result in diversion of traffic to Southborough Road which was probably even more dangerous - in fact many local residents felt that Southborough Road should have been treated first. Thankfully our complaints and those of local residents caused the scheme to be revised and the amended scheme was installed in April 2000. The council has now undertaken a review of the new scheme, with the following results.

Firstly, there has been a major reduction in traffic speed in Blackbrook Lane. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed (ie. 85% of vehicles are slower

than this) is down from 41.5 mph to 34 mph which is not untypical for a 30 mph zone and shows that most people are now adhering to the speed limit. Apparently vehicle speeds in the surrounding roads have also fallen.

Traffic volumes in Blackbrook Lane have apparently increased and those in Southborough Road have decreased (at least when the counts were taken) so traffic diversion does not appear to be a problem (*Editors Comment: the humps are not severe enough to cause most people to bother diverting*).

About 2000 local residents were surveyed for their views on the new scheme, with the usual low response rate of 24%. Of those replying, the majority felt that safety had improved. A number did comment that they thought the speed tables had not worked, had not slowed traffic, or were not high enough, but there were more comments in favour of the scheme.

The council committee decision was therefore to declare it a success and to leave the scheme as it is. A scheme for the parallel Southborough Road will now be given consideration.

Note that in terms of actual "speed related" accidents, there have actually been 3 in the last 15 months since the scheme was introduced, which is slightly higher than the previous rate. However with such low numbers, that is certainly not statistically significant. (*Editors Comment: but it does show that you shouldn't expect instant results from any traffic calming scheme. Those that do show such an impact are usually simply the results of major traffic diversion which does not solve the problem*).

If any of our readers have any comments on the result of this traffic calming scheme, then please let the Editor know. (*Editors Note: it does at least show that to reduce traffic speeds significantly you don't need a whole string of 75 cm humps as has been put in elsewhere in the borough, to the annoyance of many road users. Hopefully the council and the consultants they regularly use will learn from this. However many B.B.R.A.G. members probably still think that this road was not a suitable road for such treatment and that the cost involved does not justify the benefits obtained.*).

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## Latest Bromley Accident Statistics

Figures for the first ten months of 2001, continue to show a fall in personal injury road accidents in the borough - down from 944 to 788. However the number killed or seriously injured was unchanged. An exception to the general trend was the increase in injuries to motorcyclists, particularly young scooter riders.

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## Speed Campaign in Jail Lane

Jail Lane in Biggin Hill (which includes Cudham Primary School) is to be targeted in an effort to reduce road traffic speed in partnership with the police. This is despite the fact that mean traffic speed was found to be less than 27 mph during school arrival and dispersal times which is well within the existing speed limit - there was a proposal to reduce the limit to 20 but this was turned down. *(Editors Comment: Although there have been a number of accidents over the years in Jail Lane, most were not outside the school and no pedestrians were involved so there is no evidence that there was any exceptional or significant risk in this location. More "gesture" politics with little justification).*

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## Reduced Speed Limit Raises Accidents

A number of country lanes in the borough of Bromley had the speed limit reduced from 60 mph to 40 mph in 1999, at considerable expense. B.B.R.A.G. objected on the basis that it was a waste of money.

The former is the normal national limit for single carriageway roads, so no signage is required, but a 40 mph limit requires regular repeater signs.



Many of the roads affected are very narrow lanes, and roads such as Nash Lane and North Pole Lane in Keston are single track roads with passing places, so both 60 or 40 were probably unrealistic and unsafe speeds. In fact there is a suggestion that putting up 40 mph signs indicates to some drivers that it may be OK to drive at that speed, despite what the highway code says.

A resident of Nash Lane has now requested a further reduction to 30 or even 20 mph on the basis that the number of accidents has not been cut. In fact, although the numbers are so low as to not be statistically significant, there were 2 accidents since the new speed limit went into effect, which is more than would be expected from previous data. Despite the support of local ward councillors, the Environmental Services (Ops) committee rejected the proposal on the grounds of cost *(Editor: and quite rightly, but it certainly shows how pointless the original policy was).*

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## Birkbeck Road, Beckenham

The latest traffic calming scheme to be proposed is for Birkbeck Road, Ravenscroft Road and Mackenzie Road in the Churchfields area of Beckenham. This will consist of a series of speed bumps and a 20 mph speed limit over the whole zone.

This is in addition to the existing scheme which consisted of speed humps in Ash Grove and a series of speed tables, one way roads and mini roundabouts. However, apparently the existing scheme resulted in additional traffic in Birkbeck Road which in fact almost doubled *(Editor: Yes speed bumps do cause major traffic diversion as everyone hates them)*. Local residents raised a petition to put in additional traffic calming measures as a result and purely on the accident statistics, Birkbeck Road rates highly for treatment. The proposed scheme will cost £40,000 and will now go out to consultation. For more details of the scheme, or to advise comments, please contact the Editor.

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## New B.B.R.A.G. Web Site

We now have our own internet web site. The address is: <http://home.btclick.com/roger.lawson> This is a temporary address which will probably be changed later to be more suitable. The site contains some basic information on B.B.R.A.G. and enables people to contact us if required.

It also includes articles from our previous newsletters, or allows you to order back copies. Although the site is still under development, please take the opportunity to visit it and let us have your comments. Any suggestions for additional content would be welcomed.

## Car “Dependency”

Are you suffering from “car dependency”? Are you hooked on the convenience on your car? Do you prefer a private, comfortable, air conditioned transport device that will go wherever you want, when you want, at your whim? To quote from Bromley’s Integrated Transport Strategy “car dependency is a term which has been used to describe the culture that has grown up around the convenience of car journeys and the growth of car ownership”. A number of people, including Bromley Council, Ken Livingstone, and others, plan to cure you of this irrational addiction.

Your editor used to suffer from “train dependency”. He was unable to escape a twice a day “fix” of a trip into London (otherwise known as commuting). Despite the uncomfortable conditions, the unreliable service and the high costs, he continued to use the service. Was this rational one asks? Fortunately he eventually escaped from this nightmare by totally changing his lifestyle by securing a job locally.

Other people seem to suffer from “foot dependency”, ie. an irrational desire to use the slowest means of transport irrespective of the circumstances. In fact, it appears that some people actually enjoy the “high” they get from energetic exercise of this nature. Even your editor has occasionally been known to suffer this ailment.

If you hear politicians talk of car dependency, BBAG suggests you point out to them that using emotive terms does not contribute to a rational decision making process on transport matters.



## BBAG Background Information

The Bromley Borough Roads Action Group (B.B.R.A.G.) stands for a more democratic and more rational approach to the traffic management problems of the London Borough of Bromley. Our initial formation some years ago was based on opposition to the kind of traffic calming scheme that was being introduced in the borough that simply caused more traffic congestion, and general inconvenience to road users, without any significant benefit in terms of road accident reductions. In fact, the money wasted on such schemes could have been much better spent on actual improvements to road safety in other areas. We now take a more general interest in all transport and associated environmental issues in the borough of Bromley and the greater London area. This includes traffic management schemes, public transport, road safety, parking policies, air pollution, other transport environmental issues such as noise, and associated local and central government policies. Our prime objective is to promote improvements in the transport infrastructure while stopping wasted expenditure on unpopular, ineffective or inappropriate policies.

## Contact Information

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Our internet web address is:

<http://home.btclick.com/roger.lawson/index.htm>

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