



BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 29 (August 2004)

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Editorial

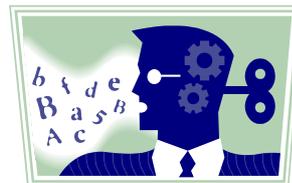
With hot summer weather coming up (one hopes), this seemed an opportune time to cover some environmental issues that have hit the headlines in the national press recently. So our lead article is on atmospheric pollution and other similar issues.

Another important article covers the latest news on the Orpington Station Road Car Park, and the formation of OPCAG to oppose the Tesco plans. There is also a leaflet from OPCAG enclosed with this newsletter asking for some fighting funds, so please donate as much as you can spare to this good cause. It's one of the few ways you can oppose the growth of traffic congestion in Bromley caused by nonsensical planning policies.

Other articles cover the impact on buses of speed humps and the latest road accident statistics.

Roger Lawson, Editor

Winds of Death, or Hot Air? (and Other Environmental Issues)



The local Chislehurst Times recently ran a front page headline of "Winds of Death" which covered a report by Dr Roy

Colville of Imperial College on air quality in London. Apparently a similar report also appeared in the Evening Standard, and Colville is quoted as saying "lifespan can be reduced by 10 years by pollution" which the Chislehurst Times suggested referred to Bromley residents.

In fact what Dr Colville said was "In extreme cases, lifespan can be reduced....." and much of London is very much more polluted than Bromley so even if there was such an effect you are likely to see it elsewhere rather than in Bromley.

There is an increase in death rates on high pollution days, but such days tend to coincide with extremes of weather. Particularly in very hot weather, of which there was a long stretch in 2003, more people tend to die who are on their last legs. As to whether this is caused by the "heat stress" or air pollution is very debatable.

According to a preliminary report on London air quality for 2003, this was one of the worst recent years for pollution by Ozone which can cause health problems. Ozone is known to increase in hot weather conditions. However, it is well known that Ozone levels rise when other pollutants such as NO and NO₂ fall (ie. high traffic congestion levels tend to reduce the Ozone level). So you would expect that Bromley, which is naturally cleaner than other parts of London, would show high Ozone levels. But there is no evidence that even last year's levels were a serious health threat in Bromley.

Very hot weather does increase the Ozone levels but this is a purely natural phenomenon.

Ken Livingstone Claims Reduced Pollution

Ken Livingstone in his election campaign and in a report to a Commons Committee claimed that the Congestion Charge has reduced pollution in London, which is somewhat unexpected. Selectively quoting data, he said Carbon Monoxide (CO) had fallen by a fifth and NO₂ by 12 per cent. Unfortunately he has not yet published the full report, and making sense of pollution data based on a few unique figures is impossible. Trends are what matter, and these are not yet clear because of the unusual weather conditions in London last year.

(Editor's Comments: As usual, there is too much hot air and not enough reporting of the facts with politicians and journalists picking out the data to suit their preconceived stories. Note also that much of the pollution is not transport related - one of the worst days in 2003 was November 5th for obvious reasons. Refer to past articles in our Newsletter for more information on pollution issues).

Trains are the Worst Polluting Transport



Another recent report on transport pollution was that of a study by Professor Roger Kemp of

Lancaster University. It shows that long distance rail travel in the UK is actually one of the worst polluting transport modes, and has actually been getting worse. Heavier rolling stock and higher speeds have been degrading the amount of fuel they use.

For example, they calculate a modern London to Edinburgh express train would use more fuel per seat than a modern diesel car, at 11.5 litres. They also apparently use more fuel than a short haul aircraft. Professor Kemp said the rail industry had "taken its eye off the ball" environmentally.

Incidentally if you think that the above data needs to be adjusted for the fact that most cars only have one occupant, then you need to think again. The average loading (ie. percentage of seats occupied) on long-haul trains is about 20% and London buses are only 16% so it would be wrong to assume that public transport seats are any more occupied than those in private cars.

Other studies in the US and Germany have shown the same thing - namely that public transport is not necessarily less polluting or more energy efficient than private transport. This undermines a lot of the government's rhetoric on national transport policies.

London Environmental Issues

The Office of National Statistics recently reported that the population of Greater London grew by 8 per cent in the 10 years to 2001. This made it one of the fastest growing areas in the United Kingdom. It is probably needless to point out that the capacity of the transport network, whether it be road or rail, has hardly gone up at all in that period which is why we see overcrowded trains and worse traffic congestion. But Ken Livingstone seems to think that expanding his empire still further by promoting the growth of London is a good idea.



A telling piece of information on the environmental problems caused by over expansion of London was the recent news that Thames Water is to apply to build a desalination plant on the Thames estuary. They claim they are already using over half of the annual rainfall, and need more supplies to cope with rising demand. Readers may think that the UK must be one of the few countries that does not have a water supply problem bearing in mind how much rain we get, but this is not the case. We have a high density population, with high water consumption and high wastage. Plus unfortunately much of the rain falls in places like Wales and Scotland when the consumption is mostly in South East England. More information on the water consumption and available supplies of different countries can be seen in Bjorn Lomborg's book "The Skeptical Environmentalist".

Bellamy Says Global Warming is Poppycock

On a related environmental issue, Professor David Bellamy said that "global warming is poppycock" in a recent major article in the Daily Mail. He believes the Kyoto Protocol is potentially a massive waste of money and that any change in worldwide temperatures is a purely natural cycle of global warming and cooling. The full article can be seen on the ABD web site (<http://www.abd.org.uk> under "Environment").

But Jeremy Clarkson has claimed that David Bellamy contributes to environmental pollution by wearing a heavy beard. He claimed that the extra weight of facial hair adds to the petrol consumption of any vehicle they are sitting in, and that someone has worked out that a moustache costs £5 per year extra in fuel.

(Editor's Comments: Environmental enthusiasts should clearly lose their beards and go on a diet).

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Falling

According to a recent report from the Office of National Statistics, total UK greenhouse gas emissions fell by 10% from 1990 to 2002. However transport emissions (which are now 18% of the total) were on a rising trend until 2000, after which they fell, primarily because of the downturn in air travel.

Emissions from cars only increased by 6% from 1990 to 2002, which is clearly much less than the growth in traffic. In any case it accounts for less than half of all road transport emissions. However road freight emissions rose by 48% and air transport emissions rose by 85%.

(Editor's Comments: The air transport figures are particularly bad, partly because the industry is little regulated, the fuel used is untaxed, and the government has actually been encouraging the expansion of airports and air travel when it is one of the most environmentally damaging forms of transport. If the government had any sense they would stop penalising the private car and do more to tackle the problems of air transport and road freight).

Hybrid Cars - The Way Ahead



The New Toyota Prius

Both Toyota and Honda launched hybrid cars some years ago with their Prius and Insight models. The intention was to provide very low fuel consumption and very clean exhausts by using a hybrid electric/petrol drive system. The petrol engine would be in operation only part of the time, and be used to generate electricity, which was stored in batteries and applied to create the motive power.

As electric power is used alone when operating at low speeds, these vehicles are also exceedingly quiet. And because the petrol engine when in operation is operating at optimum speed, it is highly efficient with minimal pollution being generated.

The original Toyota Prius was the more successful of the two vehicles, but even with a government subsidy, sales were poor in the UK. It was expensive, slow, and not much more economical than a small diesel car. You really had to be an "eco-fanatic" to justify buying one and even then it really only made sense if you did a high mileage in low speed city driving conditions (an unusual combination).

However Toyota have released a new version of the car which is much improved (see picture above). Press reviews have generally been much more favourable and it is now seen as offering a practical alternative. As it also qualifies for a concession on the London Congestion Charge, it may be of particular interest to Londoners. The urban fuel consumption is only 56.5 mpg, and prices range from £17,545 to £20,045.

(Editor's Comments: Certainly worth a look if you want a new family car).

Bus Drivers Don't Like Humps

Your editor and the promoter of speed humps in the city of Hull recently exchanged letters in the columns of Local Transport Today concerning the latter's misleading claims. This was picked up by Peter Shipp, the Chief Executive of East Yorkshire Motor Services Group (based in Hull) who had the following comments to make:

"It is rather disingenuous of Hull's road safety manager to say that vertical traffic calming measures are used 'in agreement...with bus operators'. We have never been happy about vertical measures of any sort on bus routes...."

He goes on to say that they have only accepted "cushions" as the lesser evil, but even so they can cause problems because of badly parked cars or oncoming traffic. In fact they have had to withdraw one route and they still get numerous incidents of damage to vehicles (and to on-bus CCTV systems due to vibration).

He also suggests there are as many requests for removal of humps in the East Riding as there are for their installation, contrary to comments from Hull road safety staff.

(Editor's Comments: This is yet more evidence that the promoters of the wide area traffic calming measures in Hull have consistently misled the public and other road safety engineers about the true situation in Hull).

Gatwick Bus Drivers Suffer Medical Problems

Bus drivers at Gatwick Airport have also complained about 27 new speed humps installed in a staff car park. Driver Richard Symonds said that they are very angry and that "BAA have not listened at all to the people who use the road". Another driver said "The pain runs from behind my shoulders into my neck" and he has been advised by his doctor to take time off work. Apparently a lot of the bus drivers have filled in industrial accident report forms.

Other drivers apparently drive down the centre of the roads to avoid the humps. A BAA spokesman said "the situation was being

monitored to establish why cars were being driven in the middle of the road".

Penrith Buses Bumped Off

A Penrith housing estate could lose its bus service because the boss of NBM Coaches has threatened to withdraw his buses due to damage from speed humps. It seems he has already had to scrap a £20,000 air suspended Volvo bus. He said "It's absolutely wrecked. It only lasted nine months. You couldn't even sit in the back of it when you were going over the humps, even at 20 mph."

London Election Results

You have probably already heard that Ken Livingstone retained his position as Mayor of London, but with a significantly reduced majority. This means it is likely that the Congestion Charge will stay and the transport policies of TfL will not change.

The Conservatives and UK Independence Party (UKIP) won more seats on the Greater London Assembly (GLA) but not an overall majority. Assuming the Greens offset the UKIP to some extent (as they were at opposite ends of the spectrum on transport issues), this will leave the balance of power in the hands of the Liberal/Democrats which may make it much more difficult for Ken to push ahead with extending the Congestion Charge zone to the west.

However such projects as trams in West London might still be on the agenda. The GLA can ultimately veto any budget they dislike, but it will probably depend on the general attitude of the Liberal/Democrats to the Mayor's policies as to whether we see any changes (the Lib/Dems certainly supported Ken on many issues in the past although their leader on the GLA seems somewhat sceptical of Ken's financial planning skills from his recent comments).

Neil and Coleman Do Well

Bob Neil retained his GLA seat for Bexley & Bromley with a similar vote to last time, despite a strong showing from the UKIP which reduced the votes given to other parties.

Brain Coleman, the Mayor's fiercest critic, retained his seat in Barnet & Camden. Whereas at the last election he only had a very narrow majority over Labour, he achieved a majority of 11,519 this time which is a very strong public endorsement for his transport policies. Clearly the public welcome removal of speed humps on the whole!

Road Deaths Rise But Casualties Fall

Figures have recently been published for road traffic accidents for the UK in 2003. Numbers killed were 3,508 which is actually 77 higher than the previous year. Government targets for accident reduction are measured with reference to the average over the years 1994-1998. In those years, there were 3,578 deaths on average, which shows that no progress has been made at all.

Transport Policies and Speed Cameras

The above was immediately jumped on by commentators such as the Association of British Drivers (ABD - see <http://www.abd.org.uk>) who claimed it was clear evidence that existing road safety policies such as more speed cameras and road humps were deeply misconceived. For example, Transport Minister Alistair Darling claimed in the week before the above data was published that speed cameras erected in the last three years had saved 100 lives. "So why isn't this reflected in the figures?" asked the ABD. The ABD also pointed out that Britain now has one of the worst records for reducing road deaths in the EU. For example, when comparing road deaths in 2002 with the average of 1994-1998, deaths have been reduced by 12.6% in France, 22.9% in Germany, and 35.5% in Portugal.

Alistair Darling's claims were based on a detailed analysis of road camera sites, based on before/after accident data. However this approach has lots of potential flaws. Often changes in traffic flows are not measured, reversion to mean effects ignored and other road safety engineering measures implemented at the same time not taken into account.

Injuries Fall However

But the good news is that overall casualties were down 3 per cent. Seriously injured fell by 6% to 33,707, and slightly injured fell by 4% to 253,393. There was a particularly good reduction in child injuries which fell by 8%. The breakdown by type of road user is as follows:

UK Overall Casualties	2003 Number	% Change over 2002
Pedestrians	36,405	-6%
Pedal Cyclists	17,033	0%
Motorcyclists	28,411	0%
Car Users	188,342	-5%
Bus & Coach Users	9,068	+1%
Goods Vehicles	9,958	-2%
Totals	290,607	-4%

Incidentally any of our readers who are still awake will notice that the total does not appear to add up, but that is how the data was published by the Department for Transport See the full report at:

http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_transstats/documents/page/dft_transstats_029323.hcsp

(Editor's Comments: It is disconcerting that injury accidents continue to fall, but deaths do not. In reality, it may simply be that the injury data is unreliable as there is known to be gross under-reporting of such figures, whereas fatalities are rarely missed. It could be that much of the apparent saving is due to fewer minor accidents being reported as it is very suspicious that road deaths seem to not be statistically linked to overall accidents. Of course one of the possible distortions in the figures is that the police are responsible for collecting and reporting the accident data, when they also share responsibility for road safety - a structure that almost guarantees some bias in the data, particularly bearing in mind their current workload and lack of resources.

But irrespective of the above comment, it is plain that fatalities to motorcycle riders continue to rise, which is another disconcerting trend. These were up 14% on the previous year, and up 48% from the baseline.

Pedestrian accidents and child accidents appear to be continuing to fall, but is this because we are walking less and children are now often taken to school by car? In summary, interpreting this data to

draw conclusions about the effectiveness of road safety programmes is exceedingly difficult.

But it is also true that if you argue that fining several million motorists every year for breaking a technical speed limit is having a positive impact on overall road deaths, then clearly you would be wrong).

London & Bromley Data

The London Road Safety Unit also recently published data for London which shows similar overall trends. For example, fatalities fell by 7 to 272 in 2003, but are actually still up by 9% on the 1994-98 baseline. Serious injuries in London fell by 9% last year which is a good result and may be because of a stronger concentration of effort on prevention of such accidents. Overall casualties were down by 7% on 2002.

The data for Bromley is shown below, which is generally very positive. Bromley was second in the list of all London boroughs in the overall reduction in accidents, even though Bromley adopted a "no more speed humps" policy in 2002! Surely a demonstration that Bromley's policies are wiser than other London boroughs?

Or is this the result of bias in data collection by the police as many people in Bromley are coming to realise that reporting minor incidents to the police is a waste of time as often they simply do not respond?

Bromley Casualties	2003 Number	% Change over 2002
Pedestrians	157	-23%
Pedal Cyclists	66	+14%
Motorcyclists	152	-17%
Car Users	626	-21%
Totals	1,095	-21%

Fatalities in Bromley rose to 13 (but the small numbers are affected by statistical randomness and therefore difficult to interpret).

It's worth pointing out before everyone is too self congratulatory about the above numbers that the weather was significantly drier than normal in 2003. This would have had a positive impact on accident numbers.

Congestion Charge Impact

There was no significant difference in overall injuries in the central London boroughs as against outer London boroughs (minus 6.3% versus minus 7%), although the City of London at minus 23% did particularly well. It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions on the impact of reduced traffic in the Congestion Charging zone.

Parking Bills in London Rise Rapidly

According to a report in the Daily Telegraph, parking charges in England have risen 50% since 1997 and are now almost £1 billion per annum. London drivers contribute about half the total, with the 12 inner London boroughs collecting £294 million last year.

On the overall figure of £966 million, a profit of £380 million was made, which shows how councils are using this revenue to subsidise other programmes. For example in Bromley they are used to subsidise public transport projects.

Charges for council owned car parks and parking meters have risen much faster than inflation (and much faster than costs), and the rising spread of permit parking schemes has also contributed substantially. More vigorous enforcement by civil parking attendants has also raised revenues.

High Orpington Charges Deterred Usage

Incidentally one of the reasons that the use of Orpington Station Road Car Park appears to have declined, and hence it could be claimed to be "underutilised" by the council, was probably because the charges were increased by the council to a level that people were unwilling to pay. This reduced its use by shoppers who no doubt are now shopping elsewhere, accelerating the decline of Orpington as a local retail centre.

The Situation In Bromley

Moreover Bromley recently reported a shortfall in the revenue surplus from parking as compared with budgets. This has possibly been caused by higher penalty notice charges, ensuring better "compliance" but bus lane camera penalty charges are expected to make up for the losses. Perhaps higher charges are finally discouraging parking in Bromley.

Note that 40% of Bromley Penalty Charge Notices are never recovered though, which gives a good indication of the number of unlicensed vehicles or untraceable owners.

Parking and Farnborough Hospital

A good example of the way permit parking schemes proliferate is the new Princess Royal University Hospital in Farnborough. This is prime example of the inadequate provision for public and staff parking, leading to much parking in surrounding residential streets.

A permit parking scheme was introduced in some roads in 2002 and more in 2003. And what has happened? Simply that the cars have migrated to other streets further away, much to the annoyance of residents in such roads as Hollydale Drive. Oddly enough they are also complaining about people who park there at lunchtime to eat their lunch! The council therefore proposes to extend the existing permit parking scheme.

(Editor's Comments: When will the council and councillors learn that you don't solve any problems by rationing existing on-street parking spaces? The solution has always been to provide adequate off-street parking and to ensure that any new developments have adequate provision to meet demand).

There is one possible ray of light in this gloom though. It seems that TfL are unlikely to fund such schemes in future due to budgetary constraints. So the costs will have to come out of local Bromley council funds, which should help to deter these unnecessary and pointless schemes.

Fixed Penalty Notices for Traffic Offences

As you are probably aware from press and radio advertising, many road traffic offences in London can now result in an instant £100 fixed penalty fine. A few of these offences are:

- Failing to obey a road traffic sign.
- Blocking a junction with crossed yellow lines.
- Parking outside a school where it is banned.
- Going the wrong way down a one way street.

And how will these regulations be enforced? By traffic wardens and cameras. It may be a year or more before they arrive in Bromley however.

(Editor's Comments: This seems to be yet another example of the harassment of motorists in London instigated by Ken Livingstone and TfL. The charge is surely too high for what could be a very trivial mistake that anyone may occasionally make.)

Help with Penalty Notices Appeals

A new web site that has recently won an award from the Times newspaper is Appeal Now, which is at <http://www.appealnow.com> . This site provides assistance with parking tickets and London Congestion Charge penalty notices by automatically generating suitable appeals for you.

Cycle Lanes in Bromley



Sundridge Avenue Cycle Lanes

Many of our members have criticised the apparent wastage of money on cycle lanes in Bromley, when cyclists are rarely to be seen. For example the recently introduced scheme in Sundridge Avenue shown above. These schemes are often funded by TfL as part of the "London Cycle Network" which is costing millions of pounds.

However, Councillor George Taylor said at a recent meeting that there will be no more cycle lanes unless there is more demand for cycling in the borough. It seems the expected growth in cycling in the borough has failed to materialise. In fact the numbers are probably falling although they are now so low that they are difficult to measure.

(Editor's Comments: A sensible decision. How that will go down with Adrian Bell, Head of Transport Strategy at the council and a keen cyclist, remains to be seen. Mr Taylor may also have to face the wrath of TfL who he described as "monolithic, bureaucratic and unaccountable" at the same meeting).

Bus Stop Build-Outs



A Bus Blocking Traffic Opposite Clock House Station

You may have noticed that a lot of bus stop lay-bys have been filled in, and even "build-outs" constructed. These works are implemented by TfL (Transport for London) as part of schemes to improve bus routes and the justifications are:

- a - It makes it easier for buses to get back out into the stream of traffic, thus speeding their journeys.
- b - It helps to meet the requirement for disabled access to bus entry platforms (although it's not totally clear why this is so).

However, Bickley councillor Gordon Jenkins has complained that the ones on Croydon Road, Beckenham and near Clock House Station (see photograph above) create congestion as they obstruct traffic. If a bus is parked at the bus stop, other traffic behind is blocked, or it crosses onto the opposite carriageway to get past, creating a safety hazard. The problem is to be investigated by council staff (if you know of other locations in Bromley where this is a problem then let the editor know and he will forward to the council).

(Editor's Comments: The expense of these constructions must be considerable and I am not personally convinced that they are either necessary or always safe. They may also contribute significantly to congestion if badly designed.)

Build Out in Chislehurst High Street

A build-out of a bus stop has recently been proposed for Chislehurst High Street, outside the sub-post office. BBRAG has already submitted some objections, but if you care to do the same or require more information contact: Tony Wilson, Chislehurst/Mottingham Consultation (TW), Colin Buchanan and Partners, FREEPOST PAM 518, Newcombe House, 45 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 3BR (telephone 020-7309-7038).

Old Hill Traffic Calming Scheme

It was reported in our last Newsletter that a few local residents and your editor had a meeting with Councillor George Taylor, Executive Member for the Environment, to discuss the resident's dissatisfaction with the Old Hill scheme. It was clear from the responses to the BBRAG leaflet which was circulated in the local area that there was overwhelming opposition to the single cushions on the lower part of the hill. Some 70 out of 73 respondents objected to them and many people think they are positively dangerous.

Subsequently Mr Taylor responded with a letter in which he basically said that the council plans to do absolutely nothing. His reasons were not altogether clear but he included a reference to a spurious legal opinion on the potential liabilities if humps are removed.

The residents, supported by BBRAG, have submitted a formal complaint to the council concerning this scheme, and a further letter to Mr Taylor as a direct response to his. They have also commissioned an independent report by an experienced road traffic engineer (Malcolm Heymer who previously worked for another London borough) which points out a number of defects in the way this scheme was designed and in the associated public consultation process.

Full copies of our letters to Mr Taylor, our formal complaint to the council and the independent report can be seen on our web site at: <http://www.bromleytransport.org.uk/News.htm> (or ask the editor if you require a printed copy).

Note that BBAG and the residents are simply asking for rectification of the defective parts of this scheme, not it's complete removal. We have made a number of suggestions to ensure that road safety is maintained.

The residents do not understand why their complaints are simply being ignored when the problems are so obvious to anyone who lives on the road.

Can You See The Humps?



The Single "Cushions" on Old Hill

An additional problem with this scheme that has only recently become apparent in the sunny weather is the simple difficulty of seeing the humps. If you were a motorist who was unfamiliar with the road, would you actually know there was a large, aggressive hump coming up from the above view? The dappled shade effectively hides the hump markings completely.

Quiet Lanes

The Department of Transport has recently published a Traffic Advisory Leaflet on "Quiet Lanes". Quiet Lanes are intended as ways of improving minor rural roads, ie. country lanes, by encouraging "changes to user behaviour". This involves local community involvement, "Quiet Lane" signing, rerouting of traffic and cosmetic type treatments.

Pilot schemes were operated in North Norfolk and in Kent near West Malling (Comp Lane near Great Comp garden and Thong Lane are two of the roads treated, which are near enough to our Bromley readers that you can go and see for yourself). One device used was a "dummy cattle grid" painted on the road.

There was a small reduction in traffic speed and volumes but traffic speeds and accident numbers were low even before the schemes were introduced so it is not at all clear whether there have been any major benefits. However the Countryside Agency and the Department of Transport see them as a way "to maintain the tranquillity and character of minor rural roads".

Orpington Car Park News



The proposed development of a very large superstore by Tesco on the Station Road Car Park site has been covered in depth in previous editions of this Newsletter.

The initial outline planning application was rejected by the Council Development Control Committee primarily on the grounds of "excessive bulk" although there were other objections also.

At the time of writing Tesco have just submitted an appeal on that rejection, but may also submit another application. The latter would apparently be based on sinking the building further into the ground, reducing car park floor heights and possibly removing the medical centre. However the retail floor space and the car parking provision would not be substantially changed. Therefore although it might look cosmetically somewhat better, it would not solve the traffic congestion problems, the other negative impacts on the lives of local residents or the difficulties for local businesses. It seems that this might cost

another £5 million which Tesco wants the council to take off the cost of the site.

Money Talks

You may be wondering why council staff and councillors were so keen initially to push through the Tesco proposals. For example, the Planning Brief was never formally adopted and there was some haste in putting it through the council's consultation processes and committee system (at least in comparison with many developments). Well rumours suggest that the Tesco bid was about £20 million (the actual figure has never been disclosed), which was as much as four times the other bids. The latter apparently had a greater emphasis on "mixed" development.

£20 million is not a trivial amount in terms of Bromley council budgets - for example it equates to about £150 for every household in Bromley so you can see the impact it might have on council resources and taxes.

(Editor's Comments: But the traffic problems that it would create and the negative impacts on businesses and residents would last for ever. To my mind this is a bad bargain, however you look at it. The way to solve the council's budgetary problems is to stop wasted expenditure and the inexorable rise in council budgets, not to raise funds by degrading the environment of the borough in this way).

Formation of OCPAG

The various parties who are opposed to the Tesco proposals have formed a committee to ensure their objections are heard. This is called the Orpington Car Park Action Group (OCPAG) and consists of representatives of local residents, businesses, retailers and other interested parties such as BBRAG.

All these groups would like to see a development on the site that adheres to the following principles:

1. That local residents will not be overshadowed by a building of excessive bulk, and disturbed by 24 hour operation.
2. That traffic congestion in nearby roads will not be made worse than it already is.
3. That adequate public parking will be provided for local businesses and retailers.
4. That any retail development element is complementary to and not over dominant of other retailers in the High Street.

This group needs to raise funds to get expert advice on traffic and planning issues and to participate in any inquiry which is likely to result. To offer your support, or make a donation, please contact the secretary, Maire Phillips, 19 Orchard Grove, Orpington, BR6 0RX (tel: 01689-832614, email: Maire.Phillips@aermec.co.uk).

(Editor's Comments: Please make a donation if you can. BBRAG will be doing so).

Chicanes and Throttles in Bickley

Because the Aquila site development is likely to generate additional traffic on local roads, there are new proposals for traffic calming measures which would be paid for by the developers. This includes a "Toucan" crossing on Blackbrook Lane just south of the Hawthorne Road junction, and a number of Chicane and Throttle Points on Hawthorne Road and Oldfield Road.

The Chicanes and Throttle Points are artificial narrowing of the road so that only one direction is passable at a time, with a priority one way (in this case the chicanes appear to be simply "staggered" throttle points, looking at the design). BBRAG has objected to these proposals and we suggest you do the same. Send your objections to Dave Chilver, Environment Dept., London Borough of Bromley, Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH, quoting reference ADE(TP)/AB/H12/53/B.

(Editor's Comments: These devices are simply dangerous as the only way they slow traffic is by ensuring a risk of a head-on collision. Your editor has frequent personal experience of a road in another part of London where they are used and there are frequent near misses and angry drivers because of people not giving way, or mistaking who has priority.

In Finchley a large number were subsequently removed because of the number of accidents they caused and the "road rage" that was induced.

We surely do not want a rash of these kind of measures in Bromley, simply because speed bumps are no longer an option. I am not convinced there is any justification for traffic calming measures on these roads at all, or that these measures will fix the problems. It is unfortunately the case that residents of these roads are affected by increasing traffic volumes, which the Aquila development will certainly make worse, but the answer was to not permit a development of such high density (as BBRAG and many local residents suggested).

News Snapshots

Sundry news in the last few weeks that is worth a mention is as follows:

+ Many people complain about ground vibrations from speed humps (more on this in our next Newsletter). The latest reported objectors are the European Synchrotron Research Facility (ESRF) at Grenoble who found their sensitive equipment was being disturbed by lorries driving over a speed hump half a mile away.

+ Ben Plowden was previously head of the aggressively anti-car organisation called Living Streets (former name "The Pedestrians Association). He has now been appointed to the position of "Director of Borough Partnerships" for Transport for London (TfL). His group in TfL manages the borough funding programmes and lays down London wide policies, so no doubt we shall see an even more extreme attitude to transport policies in London that in recent years.

+ According to a report in the Sunday Telegraph, London bus subsidies will be £600m this year, equivalent to 35p per passenger based on the average journey. Average fares are only 45p which means that over 75% of all fares are

paid for by ordinary taxpayers. *(Editor's Comments: How can that level of subsidy be justified?).* TfL is asking to increase bus subsidies to £1.02 billion in 2005/2006. The average loading of a bus is 14.5 passengers giving a mere 16% load factor.

+ Ken Livingstone has been getting into hot water as usual. Firstly he has fallen out with RMT union boss Bob Crow after publicly arguing that their claims were unjustified and their picket lines should be crossed (the latter being an anathema to any traditional "left" supporters). Despite the union being strong supporters of his original bid for London Mayor, he has now called them a "bunch of gangsters" according to a report in Private Eye.

Secondly he hosted a press conference for controversial imam Dr al-Qaradawi. Many people said he should be ejected from the country as an "undesirable" or prosecuted for inciting racial hatred.

(Editor's Comments: Private Eye also contained an amusing extract from the "Cairo Times" complaining that respected cleric Dr al-Qaradawi had made the mistake of inviting extreme left wing fundamentalist Red Ken to his press conference. The latter was a known associate of terrorist organisations such as Sinn Fein and had raged a "holy war" against London's motoring community and against peace loving pigeons. It went on at some length in the same vein.)

Thirdly Ken is likely to anger all 4x4 drivers by threatening to double the London Congestion Charge for them. This was an idea supported by the Liberal Democrats who claim they emit four times as much carbon dioxide and do only 12 mpg in urban traffic.

(Editor's Comments: Although I think people who buy these vehicles are unwise, particularly those who live in London, I think they should be ridiculed rather than penalised. It simply looks like yet more bureaucracy to make us try and conform to some concept of what is supposed to be good for us.)

+ It seems the Commission for Integrated Transport is to lose its status as a government quango. The Commission, headed by Professor David Begg, was set up in 1998 to support the government's 10 year transport plan which has

proved to be a major failure. Recently it has criticised the government for failure to implement much of its preferred agenda.

(Editor's Comments: No doubt in future it will have to rely even more on funding from bus and train interests who are always keen advocates of public transport expenditure, and of anti-car policies of course, and have provided much support for Professor Beggs other activities).

+ The police in Whitehaven have apologised to a transit van driver who they stopped for going too slowly. It seems he was going very slowly over some speed humps outside a school in a 20 mph zone and the police driving behind thought that he was simply trying to annoy them.

+ The London Congestion Penalty Charge has just risen from £80 to £100 (£50 if you pay promptly and don't dispute it). No doubt this is due to the fact that evasion is high and enforcement a lot more costly than originally anticipated. Was there any consultation on this? No. *(Editor's Comments: £50 is a more than a days wage for many people, and the failure to pay could simply be an oversight. It's just another example of how motorists are harassed by Ken Livingstone and the people who run TfL).*



BBRAG 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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B.B.R.A.G. Treasurer and Newsletter Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, fax: 020-8295-0378, Email: roger.lawson@btclick.com), Chairman: Peter Appleby. Contact either of the above for information on the aims and objectives of B.B.R.A.G. or for membership information (membership costs £9.50 per annum for individuals, or £7.50 if you opt to receive our Newsletter via email, or £50 for corporate membership). B.B.R.A.G. would be happy to advise or assist anyone who is concerned about any traffic, transport or road safety issues in the borough.

Our internet web address is:

<http://www.bromleytransport.org.uk> . This contains much useful information including articles extracted from our newsletters. It also contains a "News" page which is updated regularly with items of topical interest.

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