

LEE MANOR SOCIETY



www.leemanorsociety.org

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Review of the Year

We have been involved in discussions in recent months aimed at finding a solution to the problem of parking. Commuter parking clogs local streets but the council's approach to controlling parking causes as many problems as it solves. Parking charges have rocketed while day-long controls imposed in **controlled parking zones** (CPZs) make life difficult for residents. Proposals (see below) have now been put to the council which we hope will mean controls are more flexible and less costly.

Plans to redevelop **Leegate**, the ugly 1960s shopping centre at the Lee Green crossroads, are finally moving ahead. St Modwen, the property group that owns the centre, has signed up a large super-market group as an "anchor tenant" that will bring customers to the smaller

The Society's 2012 Annual Meeting

The Lee Manor Society's AGM will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday, May 16 in the Baring Room of the Manor House, Old Road.

Agenda

Chairman's report, Treasurer's report. Election of officers. General discussion. The following officers are standing for re-election: Charles Batchelor, chairman; Ralph White, deputy chairman; Sheila Peck, secretary; Lorraine Burton, treasurer. Any other nominations must be received in advance of the meeting.

Speaker

Diana Rimel, local historian and writer, will give an illustrated talk on **The History of Lewisham and Lee**. Light refreshments will be served after the meeting.



Spring bulbs planted by Society members

shops. We welcome efforts to improve the centre but we want a development that fits in with the character of the neighbourhood and does not lead to traffic snarl-ups.

The **Emmanuel Pentecostal Church** on Lee High Road, at the corner with Lampmead Road, has put forward plans for a major redevelopment. The church plans a four-storey development to house assembly rooms and a restaurant, sweeping away the 19th century almshouses built by the Merchant Taylors. We

are pressing for a smaller development that retains the almshouses and as much of this history of the site as possible.

The society has installed a **street bench** on the corner of Wantage Road and Taunton Road so shoppers can rest their weary feet on their way back from the Lee Green shops. This is the second such bench to be installed by the society. A few years ago we funded, jointly with Lewisham Rotary, a table and benches in Manor House Gardens.

We welcome the refurbishment of **The Lord Northbrook** pub on Burnt Ash Road that has restored many of the original features. The pub was locally listed at the Society's prompting in 2007. The range of eating-out options in Lee has broadened recently with the opening of new restaurants in Burnt Ash Road and at Lee Green as well as cafes in Manor Lane and Lee High Road.

Parking Controls

The Society has been represented on a committee set up by our local assembly to consider parking issues. The outcome was a set of proposals that were put to the Mayor and Cabinet in March.

The consensus that emerged from our discussions was that parking controls were needed but that existing controlled parking zones (CPZs) were unduly restrictive because they covered too much of the day – from 9am to 7pm in some instances.



Merchant Taylors' Almshouses: part of our history that deserves to be saved

The traffic department had taken the view that it had to cover every eventuality – including shift workers at Lewisham Hospital parking in Lee. We felt this was silly and a short midday ban – of one or two hours - on parking would deter most commuters and free up local streets. Full-day bans complicate life unnecessarily for local residents, impose costs on tradesmen and carers visiting clients or relatives and damage trade in local shops. In addition, the cost of parking has rocketed with residents' permits now costing £120 a year, up from £30 a few years ago.

The council has argued that parking controls have to be self-funding – through residents' and visitors' permit charges and fines. But it emerged from our discussions that CPZs generate generous surpluses for the council's coffers. Any surplus has to be spent on traffic works but the result of this is that residents in CPZs end up paying for the council's roadworks programme across the borough. This is unfair.

The consultation system for CPZs was shown to be inflexible and unresponsive to residents' wishes and needs while the 12-month review of CPZs, once installed, is effectively meaningless.

The consensus that emerged from our discussions was that parking controls were excessive. We hope for a positive response from the council both in the form of any new CPZs and in reviewing existing CPZs. But this requires creative thinking and a reappraisal of what has become a useful source of revenue. So there may be some resistance. But unlike the conservation issues that we normally take up, parking has a wider resonance and has prompted residents' revolts in other boroughs.

Leegate

St Modwen, owner of Leegate, has announced plans for redevelopment of the shopping centre involving a large supermarket covering the south side of the site, including the former Woolworth block, the former petrol station and the car park. It would swallow up the existing passageway and part of the square. Cars would park on the roof of the

supermarket, entering from Burnt Ash Road. The offices and shops on the north of the site, facing Eltham Road, would be revamped and would offer flats, offices and, possibly a hotel. The loss of the passageway would mean pedestrians would have to walk along the Eltham Road frontage, boosting the shops there.

We welcome the long-awaited redevelopment of this depressing 1960s shopping area but have a number of concerns. Adding another supermarket to the existing Sainsbury's at Lee Green would increase traffic and threatens gridlock. Would shoppers returning to their cars on the rooftop car park want to use the other local shops? Or would the local community suffer the congestion and pollution from the traffic but get no benefit? Would two supermarkets so close together both prove profitable or would one close down in a few years?

St Modwen says it is uneconomic to provide much in the way of housing on the site. Can this be true when there is such a housing shortage in London? Developers tend to dislike mixed residential/commercial schemes. Is this an administrative convenience?

If this proposal, with its reduction in public space, is to go ahead, the quality of what is retained must be good. Street frontages must be attractive with landscaping, where appropriate, to mask the bulk of the supermarket. Dead street frontages such as those created by Sainsbury's on Lee High Road (a blank wall) and Burnt Ash Road (a car park) must be avoided. There is a danger that the south-facing end of the supermarket, overlooking the Burnt Ash Road houses, and the Leyland Road side will be blank facades.

A few years ago the Society carried out a survey of the Lee Green crossroads, covering all four corners of the junction, including the Leegate corner. We urged the council to draw up a plan for the area to ensure that attractive buildings were retained. We are still waiting for this to be done. We hope that the new development will fit more sensitively into the local scenery than the existing centre.



The Lord Northbrook. A sensitive restoration of a locally listed pub

Street clutter

Telecoms cabinets continue to sprout on our streets as BT and others roll out their broadband programmes. The latest cabinets are larger than the first ones and are often sited close by. We find it amazing that objects that have such an impact on our streets are so poorly designed. In fact, they do not appear to have been designed at all, merely welded together from spare sheets of metal that happened to be lying around in the factory. Contrast this with the quality of street furniture in many continental European cities and the standards that London Transport applies to its bus shelters, stops and signage. It is shameful that a large organisation such as BT can get away with such shoddy design quality and that councils can do so little stop them.

Street Trees

Council contractors recently removed a mature whitebeam tree in Effingham Road. The first residents knew of this was the noise of chain saws taking the tree down. The council's tree department said the tree was in a dangerous condition and was possibly causing damage to nearby houses, which could trigger a claim against the council. When residents want to fell or prune trees in their gardens they are required to explain their reasons and seek planning permission. We believe this requirement should be extended to street trees.

The Society often queries the proposed removal of trees by residents if we are unconvinced there is a good reason. The council should be subject to similar scrutiny. Telecoms companies are required to seek permission for their cabinets but unlike the cabinets, street trees make an important positive contribution to the character of neighbourhoods. Their sudden removal without explanation inevitably causes residents great anguish and frustration. They should be given greater protection.

From A Handbook for Travellers in Kent. Murray 1892.

“About one mile south of Blackheath is the picturesque village of Lee (a station on the Dartford loop line), the neighbourhood of which abounds with modern villas and cottages of gentility with double coach-houses. The ivy-clad tower only remains of the old church: in the churchyard is the tomb of Edmund Halley, the second Astronomer Royal at Greenwich, died 1741. William Parsons, the comedian, is buried here. A new church has been built at no great distance. There is much pleasing country in the neighbourhood of Lee.”

Contributed by David Plumer.

The Society

We are a voluntary group composed of local residents keen to maintain and enhance the character of the local area. We meet on the second Wednesday of every month at 7.30pm at a member's house.

We are always looking for new members to join in the projects in which we are involved. No special knowledge of planning or architecture is required - just a concern for the well-being of the area. Everyone who lives locally is welcome to come.

We have a formal role in advising the council on planning matters and see all applications made in the conservation area. We work with other local conservation groups to achieve improvements to our immediate neighbourhood and Lewisham in general.

We see our role as encouraging people to take an interest in their street beyond their

front gate. Past experience shows that we can make a difference. We do not win all our battles but through concerted action we do achieve improvements and we can prevent ill-thought-out schemes by developers, the council and individuals.

Large home extensions including roof extensions may require planning permission while the demolition of buildings and changes to front garden boundaries are also controlled. Satellite dishes and replacement doors and windows in uPVC are also subject to restrictions.

Changes to frontages that can be seen from the street – or from a park or even a train – are subject to particularly tight controls. Contact us or the planning department on 0208 314 7400.

Why not contact us to receive our monthly Newsletter and other news from the Society? Just email Ralph White on news@leemanorsociety.org and we will add you to our distribution list. Alternatively, visit our website at <http://www.leemanorsociety.org> or call Charles Batchelor on 020 8852 1644.

Lee Manor Society
2012
Annual Plant Mart
2-4 pm Saturday 19th May
2-6 Micheldever Road SE12 8LX
Raffles - Tombola -
- Children's Games -
Bric-à-Brac - Cakes, Jams
and Preserves
Cream Teas will be served
Donations of plants and goods for
the stalls welcome!
visit www.leemanorsociety.org or
email PlantMart@leemanorsociety.org