

WOODSIDE PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER, MARCH 1991.

Chairman: Mrs J. Weiner, 102 Walmington Fold.
Vice-Chairman: Mr A. Pilcher, 97 Cissbury Ring South.
Hon Treasurer: Mr K. Buckwell, 151 Chanctonbury Way.
Hon Secretary:

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"OFFICES, OFFICES EVERYWHERE....."

One could be excused a burlesque on Coleridge's famous poem of the Ancient Mariner:

"Offices, offices everywhere
Nor any one is let....."

in regard to the abundance of office space built and being built in and around London, however serious the situation is now becoming.

In stark figures there is being erected and planning permissions given in Central London for some 11million square feet of offices, in London Docklands 12.8millions and in Greater London 8.9millions. Not to mention the extensive commercial developments further out in the Home Counties, nor the considerable building taking place at most of the railway termini. Altogether a staggering total exceeding 30million square feet!

Nor is this all. Future schemes, and for which plans even now are being drawn up will add 10.3million square feet to this total. Bear in mind these figures cover the south-eastern part of the country only.

We raise this matter because of the increasing amount of office development having taken place, and continuing to take place, here, in Barnet. "To Let" boards seem to increase proportionate to the number of office buildings being built.

This state of affairs presents inescapable problems. Demands on building materials, bricks, steel, lift equipment etc. sucked into the commercial development now taking place at Canary Wharf and elsewhere are so great, other developments elsewhere even schools and hospitals, are held up for shortage of materials or forced to go further afield on the continent to satisfy their needs. Concentration and multiplication of thousands of people within a defined area for concentrated periods of time aggravate questions of transport, public safety and ill-balanced supplies of public services during working hours, thereby interrupting the pattern of life for those living nearby and destroying amenity.

Remember, as we pointed out in our last newsletter, the conversion of the Gaumont Cinema site into offices was the subject of an appeal. This has been refused and the Council deserve every thanks and encouragement for their refusal. Recently the St Mary's School site at Finchley Central was likewise denied permission to convert the previous use into that of offices by Barnet Council, in spite of their own officials recommendation to go ahead with the office application.

The struggle against this office proliferation however is incessant and made more difficult by the ever increasing difficulty of obtaining information of what is being proposed. To hope nevertheless, we can by our efforts preserve what remains of Finchley and Hendon as a pleasant residential area is the incentive that drives us on.

LONDON TRANSPORT - PUBLIC RELATIONS?

The introduction of a new bus route by London Transport to serve the inhabitants of Woodside Park - Totteridge area, away from the main bus route, aroused a great deal of feeling for and against, among residents. In the outcome, once established, it would appear the majority have accepted and are in favour of the new bus.

It must be said however, the conduct of London Transport in this matter was anything but commendable. We take the view that as a Residents' Association we have the right to be approached concerning transport facilities in this area. In fact we only got to know last August, and this through a third party who themselves had been approached by a "326 Action Group" set up specifically to oppose the new route. We immediately wrote to London Transport suggesting a public meeting for L.T. to discuss with residents their proposals.

Nothing further was heard from them until January when we 'phoned and were informed having ".....kept everyone fully informed....." a final decision would be taken early next month (February).

We protested at such a lack of consideration to the London Regional Passenger Committee (the passengers watch-dog organisation). All to no avail and the service was duly introduced.

Again, early in February we were approached by a newspaper requesting our views on the proposed closing of ticket offices and early closing of stations on the Northern Line north of Finchley Central Station. We had to confess we were not aware of any such proposals but would make immediate enquiries and 'phone them back. That same day 7th February we made enquiries of Head Office L.T. and were informed by 'phone that though there was a possibility of closures (24 stations in the London area were under consideration) no decision had been come to but they would let us know as and when possible proposals were to be made. This information was given to the newspaper. On the same day 7th February, we wrote L.T. confirming that they would inform us as and when initial proposals were conceived.

We now learn that on 1st February decisions had already been made, for on that date a Mr R.E. Bayman the General Manager (Northern Line) had circulated on that date details of the new arrangements to his staff. Further, Mr C.E. Newton the Chairman (London Transport) had at the same time written letters with this same information. On the 4th March we eventually received a letter setting out the proposed changes i.e. closing Totteridge & Whetstone Station after 21.30 hours and the withdrawal of all ticket facilities from Totteridge and Woodside Park.

It may be the new arrangements regarding the bus and underground stations are for the good of the organisation and public in general. However, if thousands (millions) of pounds are spent on maintaining a public relations department the above instances could hardly be an example of money well spent in "Public Relations".

RIGHT of WAY - WALMINGTON FOLD.

We welcome the news that the above has been restored to the use of residents. May we urge everyone to keep the path and it's environs clean and tidy and if rubbish is seen to be dumped please let us know with any evidence available.

There only remains for us to thank Councillor Mrs Joan Levinson, Mr Sydney Chapman M.P., and the Ramblers' Association for their help. Our regrets it has taken us so long!