

NEW CHAIRMAN FOR HGS TRUST

Gerry Mansell retires again

Recently there have been a number of changes on the Trust Council. Gerry Mansell, who had been Chairman for 7 years (March 1984-September 1990 and October 1992-October 1993) has resigned following his move to Hampstead. Under the Articles of the Trust elected members of the Council are required to be Suburb residents. He has been replaced as Chairman by Eddie Caplin, and Colin Gregory has been co-opted to fill the casual vacancy. He will stand for election at the 1994 AGM. Both Eddie and Colin have been long term members of the Residents Association Council, and for 10 years Eddie was the RA representative on the Property and Plans Committee. This is a sub committee of the main Trust Council which looks at applications for alterations. Eddie is married with two children and lives in Litchfield Way while Colin lives in Denman Drive.

RIBA member

John Senter, who has been the RIBA appointee on the Trust Council for the last 7 years, has moved to Rye, and resigned from the Council. His place has been taken by Alan Hewett who is a partner in the West London architectural practice of Barnsley Hewett and Mallinson.

Anniversaries

The Trust has, and will be, celebrating a number of anniversaries. The Company was incorporated 25 years ago in March 1968. The Scheme of Management for Hampstead Garden Suburb was approved by



Mervyn Miller presented Suburb pictures to Gerry Mansell and Jean Burtchett

the High Court 20 years ago on 17 January 1974. Ten years ago on 17 February 1983 the High Court approved an amendment to the original Scheme whereby the Freeholders now pay a variable rather than fixed management charge each year.

The Scheme of Management was set up under Section 19 of the 1967 Leasehold Reform Act. The Act allowed householders to acquire their freeholds (enfranchise) if the rateable value was below a certain amount. All the Schemes which were set up under this Act, with the exception of Hampstead Garden Suburb, were operated by the ground landlord in places such as Letchworth, Dulwich and Belgravia.

The provisions of the 1967 Act have now been extended to all householders and many flat

owners under the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act which became law in November 1993. It is envisaged that flat owners will form companies to own and manage the freehold on a communal basis. This is analogous to the way the Trust was established to administer the Scheme of Management on behalf of Suburb residents.

Jean Burtchett

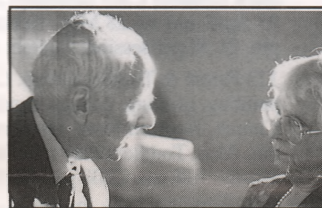
Next summer Jean Burtchett, the longest serving member of the Trust staff, will be celebrating her twentieth anniversary as book-keeper. She was educated at the Henrietta Barnett School and, before joining the Trust in 1974, worked for the Institute.

CK

Trust's Christmas Luncheon

The Trust's Christmas Luncheon, an occasion for meeting and greeting 70 or so Suburb luminaries, was the first opportunity for the new Chairman to outline his ideas for continuing the work of his predecessors.

It was also an occasion for farewells to Gerry Mansell and John Senter as Vice Chairman. Dr Mervyn Miller spoke to the gathering when he also welcomed Eddie Caplin and Colin Gregory. RW



Stuart Gray chats to Mairi Howie at the Trust Christmas lunch

From the new chairman

I have been most impressed over the years by my predecessor's achievements on behalf of the Trust. Whilst I cannot expect to match Gerry Mansell's contribution, I hope to continue the role of Chairman in the same vein.

It should be appreciated that the Trust Council's make up (of 4 elected members and 4 appointed by outside bodies) guarantees a cross section of views on most topics and that the Chairman's role is often that of distilling the consensus from these views. I am lucky in that the other members are all articulate and constructive yet with views in common arising from the need to act in the best interests of the Suburb.

On planning matters, I expect the checks and balances of existing procedures to be

maintained (and improved wherever possible) to provide as fair and consistent overall policy as is compatible with retaining the unique character of the area we live in.

A set of planning guidelines, jointly produced with Barnet, should be in circulation shortly. This document should assist greatly in clarifying what types of alterations can and can't be made.

Financially, the Trust continues to strengthen - essential to carry out the very long term role it has been given.

Other issues will no doubt arise during my Chairmanship and I intend retaining an open mind, valuing input from all relevant parties (especially the RA) and developing the appropriate policy at the Trust Council meetings. EC

Trust Review Procedure

Chris Kellerman's article in the last edition of the Suburb News on "Trust Review Procedure" was very welcome. This new procedure came about through the close working relationship between the Trust and the RA, which we hope will serve to increase communication between the Trust and residents making planning applications.

However, many residents may not be aware that as the RA's permanent representative on the Property and Plans Committee (PPC), I report directly back to

CONSAM (Conservation and Amenities Committee of the RA), which keeps the RA ahead of all new applications, and acts as an advisory body on planning matters to the Trust Council.

CONSAM are particularly interested to hear from anyone who has experience of the new procedure, or anyone who is about to request a review, particularly if there are special circumstances. You can reach me, Ronda Fogel, on 081 455 7430, and I look forward to your calls. RF

Are YOU having TV reception problems?

Many local residents have complained of poor quality television reception. If 200 households can notify the Trust Office of their problems, the matter will be taken further by the BBC who will endeavour to

provide a better signal.

PLEASE WRITE TO:
TV Reception Survey
HGS Trust Office
862 Finchley Road
London NW11 6AB

APPLICATIONS FOR TRUST CONSENT

Some residents are unclear why Planning Applications have to be seen by two separate Authorities: the London Borough of Barnet and the Trust. The answer is that the Suburb was developed as a Leasehold Estate, and the Trust and its predecessors have from the beginning had strict control over all designs, materials, use of buildings and provision of amenities. Even though many properties are now Freehold, the Trust's rights of control have been maintained (by the High Court) to safeguard the standard of alterations to properties.

Conservation Area

In addition, because the Suburb is so important in the history of British domestic architecture and town planning, it was designated in 1968 a Conservation Area - comparatively recently in its history - so that, for the time being at any rate, there is additional protection under planning legislation. But this has already been shown to be affected by the political climate, whereas the Trust works entirely free of any political or profit-making motive, serving only the interests of the residents and the national bodies who are represented on the Council.

A broader view

It was considered that since the Suburb is so important in the history of both British domestic architecture and Town planning a separate organisation was needed for its conservation and

preservation. Other conservation areas are also protected by local organisations, such as the College Estates in Dulwich. By having two separate and independent authorities look at all plans, the Suburb benefits from a higher standard of overall design control. The Trust can take a much broader view and evaluate factors which are outside the remit of the local authority. In most cases the London Borough of Barnet and the Trust will come to similar conclusions on applications, but there are instances when the two authorities diverge. For example in looking at plans, Barnet cannot take purely aesthetic considerations into account.

Not a museum

The objectives of the Trust are not to stop residents from changing their houses but to ensure that changes are done in a harmonious way and in keeping with the spirit of the original design. The Trust recognises that the Suburb is not a museum, but a living community and in modernising their homes residents want larger kitchens, family rooms, more bathrooms,

and utility rooms and would often like to utilise attic space for additional accommodation. In most cases these alterations can be designed within the guidelines laid down by the Trust, and without spoiling the character of either the individual house or the neighbourhood. The Trust is here to serve the community and ideally it would like to approve all applications.

Procedures

The number of refusals can be kept to a minimum if certain simple procedures are followed.

a. Even before employing the services of an architect it is a good idea for the home-owner to have an informal chat with the Trust architect, Mr Wilfred Court. He will outline in general terms the Trust's policies towards the particular kind of alteration required - extensions, loft conversions, garages etc. At the same time he will tell the owner which sort of designs might be suitable in terms of size, materials, detailing etc.

b. If the house-owner decides to go ahead with the alterations, his architect should keep in touch with the Trust while he is

drawing up the plans. Mr Court is willing to attend site meetings with architects to discuss points of detail and help with the choice of materials etc. Through the close involvement of the Trust the chances of a successful application are greatly improved.

Neighbours

When an application has been received an indemnity form is sent out and neighbours are notified. They have two weeks to write back with their objections. Once the relevant fee has been paid the application is considered by the Property and Plans Committee of the Trust which meets in the middle of each month. All decisions have to be ratified by the full Trust Council which also meets monthly.

In evaluating applications the Property and Plans Committee takes into account a number of factors. These include the report of the Trust Architect, the views of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee and the London Borough of Barnet, and letters and neighbours. The whole process from submitting the application to the final

decision of the Trust Council takes around two months. When an application is refused reasons are given and from these the applicant can often deduce the kind of changes that are required to make the plans acceptable.

Too harsh?

The Trust has been criticised for being too harsh and unreasonable and for being completely unrealistic in its conservation policies. To those critics we answer that under the Scheme of Management, the Trust has a legal obligation to uphold certain standards and that if it became too lax it would be accused of not doing its job properly. Obviously the Trust has to strike a delicate balance between these opposing views and while accepting alterations insist on the highest standards.

Design asset

We hope in future that the Trust will move closer to the community and be seen as a definite asset to the Suburb by fostering good designs and workmanship. It is assumed that most people come to live in the Suburb because of the delightful houses, which have remained relatively unspoilt and most residents would be horrified if we allowed indiscriminate 'improvements' to take place. By working closely with the Trust we are confident that the whole community will benefit so that in 100 years there will still be a Suburb of which our grandchildren can be proud.

HAMPSTEAD - GARDEN - SUBURB - TRUST

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