

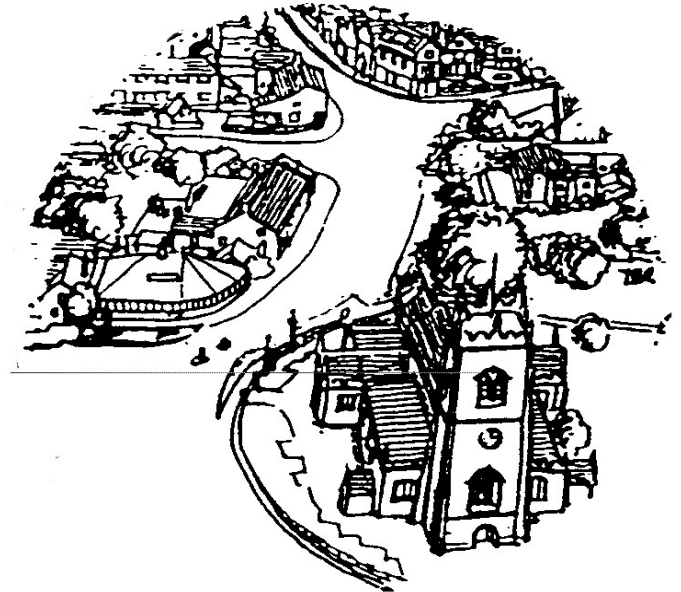
BOWDON CONSERVATION GROUP

Registered as a charity since 1973. Reg. No. 502689

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Chairman: Kate Stross



Minutes of the 46th Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd October 2019 in the Parish Centre, Stamford Road, Bowdon

01:19 Chairman's Welcome

Ms Stross welcomed the members to the 46th Annual General meeting giving a welcome in particular to the guest speaker historian David Eastwood. David was going to talk on the subject of The Lords of Dunham and their Estates.

02:19 Apologies for Absence

Committee Members: Kim Halford, Nigel Haworth and Simon Nicholas.

Apologies had also been received from: John Barrat, John Bacon, Sir Graham Brady, Martyn Bromley, Mike Carroll, Neil Colby, Chrystal Hart, Joyce Kenworthy, Gillian King, David and Helen Lewis, Rosemary Moorhead, Stephen Perrett, Mike and Susan Sanderson, Andrew Shaw, Sheila Warhurst and Andrew Wilde.

03:19 Chairman's Report

Ms K Stross

First of all a warm welcome and thank you to all our members who are here this evening. This is our 46th AGM and the first one at which I have spoken as Chairman. You will be aware that Andrew Shaw our previous chair resigned 2 years ago and to date we have been unable to find a replacement. As a result, other committee members asked me to take on the role of Chairman, which I agreed to do.

I'm going to talk first this evening about some sad events of the past year and then about the activity of the group.

Events of the Past Year – I couldn't possibly speak to you without recalling the sad deaths in the past year of 2 of our past committee members, to whom we and you, as BCG

members, owe a significant debt. David Pilkington was on our committee for just over 5 years from late 2010 until early 2016. David grew up in Bowdon, attended Altrincham Boys Grammar, qualified as a chartered surveyor and joined our committee in late 2010 to advise us on planning matters. He helped us take a view on the planning applications affecting this area and then drafted our responses to those applications. We are still using his well drafted, expert responses as examples of just how a forceful and effective response to a planning application should be shaped. David left our committee in early 2016 when he moved to Hale and shortly thereafter was diagnosed with cancer. He sadly died in February of this year.

The other and more recent death is that of Christine Bainbridge and I have no doubt that a number of you, like myself and other members of our committee, were at her funeral in August. Christine was secretary to the Conservation Group for over 20 years, from about 1995 to when she resigned in 2015 as the pressure of her other commitments increased. She was the backbone of the organisation – supremely well organised, knowledgeable, with a big list of contacts and strong personal relationships and was a huge support to us all. As in everything in her life, Christine did not take on a responsibility without more than meeting it and we all relied on her hugely. She left this committee as caring for her husband Derek took more and more of her time, but typically of Christine she found her successor before her departure and was instrumental in organising the transition and sorting out our records and getting them digitised. In the past couple of years Christine had to combine her caring responsibilities with herself being treated for breast cancer. Derek sadly died earlier this year and Christine did not survive him for many months. The Conservation Group was happy to make a donation to her chosen charity, WaterAid, in Christine's memory and we are also in discussion with Trafford about some other remembrance of her, hoping to plant a forest tree somewhere in Bowdon in her memory. We owe both of these people a great debt and they are sadly missed.

One other thing that I should mention is that we learnt in early 2019 that one of our members, Michael Anthony Kerr, of Pinewood had left us a legacy in his will, for which we are most grateful. We used that legacy to upgrade our IT, with a new look to our website and the purchase of a dedicated laptop, which has made our committee meetings a lot more efficient.

General Activity – I think 2018/19 has been a pretty similar year to previous ones. The committee has met regularly and has been involved in a range of planning issues, often supporting approaches from Members who are concerned about planning and enforcement issues that have a particular effect on them. In addition we have recently participated in a pre-consultation workshop organised by Trafford Council to consider how proposed Planning Design Guidelines for Trafford in general and the area of Altrincham and its surroundings in particular might be developed. We also recently participated in research carried out by Manchester Airport who are in the early stages of preparing to re-plan the flight paths to and from the airport. We need to be very vigilant about modified take off routes as Bowdon could be severely impacted. We recommend that members take a look at www.manchesterairport.co.uk/futureairspace. Neil Morton our committee member dealing with airport issues will be happy to discuss details later.

I think I would extract a couple of themes from the local planning issues we have been involved in. Perhaps the most important is that the green and spacious environment we live in is under real threat.

Property prices are now so high and this remains such a desirable area to live in that property owners are keen to do whatever they can to maximise the value of their property. This might be by building large extensions to existing properties, or by trying to split large plots and build additional dwellings in large gardens, or in an increasing number of cases

there are applications to completely demolish the existing building on a site, replacing it with one or more new dwellings with far larger footprints and a consequential loss of green space, gardens and trees. We look at each application on its merits, but it is contrary to the Conservation Area guidelines to split existing plots and we regularly find ourselves objecting to either the scale of a proposed new development compared with the existing property (over-development or over-massing) or else objecting to the sub-division of an existing plot (densification).

This is not the only threat to the green environment that we benefit from. There are a large number of applications to fell trees entirely, even trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders, or to prune trees so severely that their character will be drastically changed. These are often mature trees whose scale and character must have been very apparent to the purchaser of a property at the time of purchase. Unless there is a clear threat to people or structures we believe that these trees should be preserved and protected. Where there are proposals to replace a felled tree, we urge that the replacement has the potential to be of a similar scale, not just a small quick growing roadside or garden ornamental specimen.

We have also seen more than one application in the past year to replace grassed areas with all-weather artificial sports pitches. We have also objected to this de-greening of the area.

The state of the roads is another continuing issue. They have continued to deteriorate since we last met despite some resurfacing work and if we have a colder winter this year than we did in 2018/19 this problem will worsen further. The increasing volume of commuter parking on our streets worsens the problems caused by potholes making them ever more difficult for drivers to avoid and a real menace for cyclists. All I can suggest is that residents complain to Trafford regularly and vociferously so that our elected representatives are very much aware of the strength of feeling on this issue and can put it at the top of Trafford's Framework Contractor Amey's agenda.

Despite the fact that it is over a year since we last met, there has been no application made yet to restore and develop Denzell Cottages into further office space linked to the courtyard and the existing new office building. The developer had approached us and the Friends of Denzell Gardens and the Devisdale last year for comments and we were generally happy with their proposals. We would welcome proposals to bring back into use buildings that are at risk of falling into dereliction.

We are told however, that proposals to rebuild the Jubilee Rooms are back on the agenda and in August Trafford advertised for professional consultants' help to prepare a development brief for the site. We understand that Trafford is keen to have local input and we will be happy to offer this. But we are very conscious that the need for adequate parking in Bowdon has if anything increased since the original proposals were made in 2015 and we will scrutinise any ideas with this issue very much in mind. I suggest this is another issue about which we need to remain very vigilant.

Thanks – Lastly I'd just like to express my thanks to the other committee members who have worked so hard over the course of this year. Joyce Gatoff deals with Planning matters, Sue Meakins with trees; Kim Halford is our secretary, Nigel Haworth our membership secretary and treasurer; Simon Nicholas deals with issues of roads and lighting and Neil Morton covers the airport and HS2. But the important thing is that I think we work well, and I hope successfully, together as a team in your interests. Thank you to all of the committee members and also to Richard Hagon our webmaster.

If you have any questions for me or other committee members, can I ask you to hold them until after our Membership Secretary and Treasurer's report which I will introduce briefly after our next speaker and we will deal with all the questions then.

04:19 Talk on the Lords of Dunham and their Estates

David Eastwood

05:19 Membership Secretary's Report:

Presented by Ms K Stross

Treasurer's report:

The accounts for the year end 31st December 2018 show that we have an excess of income of £498.37. In view of this the Accumulated Balance now stands at £9,322.99. Sundry Expenditure of £328.32 represents the Website. In addition, there was a Domain Fee of £136.80 and Insurance cost of £191.52.

Gift Aid continues to bring us income and contributed an extra £182.50. If you no longer pay tax, please notify the treasurer so that the Gift Aid declaration is cancelled.

As mentioned earlier, since the year end we have received a very generous legacy of £1,500 from the estate of the late Mr Mike Kerr who died last July – we have purchased a laptop for use at committee meetings and which is being used today

Membership Secretary's Report:

At the AGM last year we had 336 members and at this time we have 317 members. We have welcomed 6 new members since the last AGM and lost 25 members due to death, moved away from the area and non-payment of subscription.

Finally can I thank the distributors who willingly deliver communications for the Group.

06:19 Election of Officers

Ms K Stross requested that the Officers and committee Members who had agreed to serve again be elected en bloc, to which the members agreed. Committee members were duly re-elected for another year.

07:19 Any other Business

1. Members were informed of a public residents' meeting in Hale on October 4th to discuss recent burglaries and street robberies.
2. Neil Morton discussed the recent research he had participated in on re-planning flight paths approaching and leaving Manchester airport. He showed the current and possible future landing patterns for planes leaving Manchester Airport and explained the possible impact of any changes on Bowdon.
3. Members voiced their concerns and commented on the following issues:
 - An increasing concern on environmental issues and consequential changes in the environment for air travel might reduce the use of Manchester airport in future.
 - Concerns were expressed over the new public sports facilities planned at Altrincham Boys Grammar school and the impact that their increased use and extended hours might have on local residents.
 - Members agreed by a show of hands that they would be happy to receive emails from the group to inform them about significant planning proposals of concern to

the conservation group and to encourage them to respond to Trafford with their views on the proposals.

- New developments, such as Alderbank, are being planned with maximum density and build coverage and minimal green areas. Water run-off from the sites is becoming an increasing problem with the associated need to build run-off tanks.
- Car parked on the streets in Bowdon by people working in Altrincham and the general increase in parking congestion is an increasing problem. St. Margaret's Road is a particular problem, as is the bottom of Stamford Road. The increase is caused in part by the high charges made for use of Altrincham car parks which are left empty in consequence. More yellow lines in Bowdon and lower parking charges in Altrincham are needed.

08:19 Chair's Closing Remarks

Ms Stross thanked our guest speaker and the members for attending the meeting and invited them to remain for wine and snacks. The official business ended at 9.30pm. 34 members and 1 guest attended.