BIRCHMEET ✓ 8

THE REEPHAM SOCIETY

OCCASIONAL INFORMATION SHEET JANUARY 1987

The Society's Executive Committee has decided all our members should have a copy of the enclosed letter to Broadland District Council. Normally it would have been reproduced in our Newsletter, but the Committee felt it should be circulated quickly, so we are issuing it with 1987 Membership cards. This letter gives the Society's comments on the District Council's proposal to allocate more land in Reepham for a further estate of 50-60 dwellings. Many of you will have seen the Exhibition in the Bircham Centre in early December about these proposals. If a public meeting is arranged we hope that Society members will attend and make known their views, whatever they are. ×

The Society was 10 years old in 1986, and has grown from small beginnings to its present membership of over 300. Our main purposes are the promotion of high standards of architecture and planning, together with the preservation, protection, development and improvement of local features of historic or public interest. As a registered amenity society we have a statutory right to be consulted about certain planning applications in our area, and are also given an opportunity to comment about changes proposed to the Official Town Plan for Reepham - hence the attached letter to the District Council.

This year the Society was also asked to complete a lengthy Civic Trust questionnaire about Reepham. Three of our younger residents co-operated in the completion of the subjective questions and we were very grateful for their help. Replies from nearly a thousand local amenity societies will be co-ordinated by the Trust and published in a report which will highlight the environment's strengths and weaknesses and suggest how it might be improved where necessary.

Our annual general meeting will be on 23 April and will include the election of officers and committee for 1987/88. There will be some vacancies on the Committee and we hope that more working as well as retired members will spare the time to join us. If you feel like volunteering, or want to suggest someone else, please let me know, or tell any Committee member (Nominations must be made by 28 March).

We would also welcome members' suggestions about interesting speakers for our monthly social meetings and ideas for places to visit on the June outing (for 1988 !).

Our major social event each year is the Wine and Cheese Party. Last year was felt by many of those who came to have been the best yet - certainly it was the most successful financially. Pat Large, Joy Waring and Evelyn Olney were responsible for all the arrangements - and also did much of the hard work. Our thanks go to them and their helpers.

The Committee also want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Bircham Centre Management Committee on their splendid achievements so far in the refurbishing of the Bircham Centre. The Reepham Society donated £500 in 1985/86 and was pleased to be able recently to respond to a specific request for a short-term loan of a further £500.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a healthy, happy and prosperous year.

Margaret Hemmings, Honorary Secretary
"Cheville", Whitwell Road, Reepham. Tel 870759

× This meeting has now been fixed for Wednesday, February 11, at 7.30 pm

TEXT OF LETTER FROM THE REEPHAM SOCIETY TO THE BROADLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Thank you for inviting the Reepham Society to comment on the revised draft Reepham Local Plan, dated November 1986. The Society's Executive Committee has instructed me to write in support of the revised proposals to allocate for recreational purposes an additional area of public open space adjacent to Stimpson's Piece. But I am to tell you that the Society objects to the new housing proposals, both on the principle of further allocations for estate development at this stage and to the specific location proposal.

Objections in Principle

As you will know from discussions with our Chairman and with me, our Society was disappointed that the Broadland District Council decided to revise the draft Plan in relation to housing. The original draft had concluded that it was not necessary to make further allocations of land for estate development at the present time. Society members who attended the public meeting last April left with the impression that there would be no change to that conclusion. You have explained that you later received a request from the Parish Council to review the housing allocation and that your subsequent revision to provide land for a further 60 estate dwellings was the result of an up-dating of your housing completion figures and of closed discussions with local councillors. My Committee are surprised that the Parish did not give local residents an opportunity to express their views before asking the District Council to change the draft Plan so drastically.

Census figures show that until the early 1970s the population of Reepham had been less than 1400 for many years. By 1981 it had risen to 1900 and is now estimated to be about 2,200. In discussions with planning officials a few years ago representatives of our Society were given to understand that the optimum population was felt to be 2,500, which would allow the town to retain its character. Your November plan records 134 planning permissions for dwellings not yet completed which, at an average of, say 3 residents per unit would allow for a further 400 people. In addition you envisage a continuing average of 10 successful infill applications per year, giving a further 30 residents per year. Thus the population of Reepham is likely to be 2750 by the year 1991, a doubling over 20 years and an increase of 40 per cent over 10 years.

You are now proposing a further 50-60 dwellings which would bring our population to about 3,000

The dwellings already approved (i.e. those which will bring our population to 2,750) risk drastically altering the nature of the town and in the opinion of The Reepham Society any further significant increase would be opposed by the vast majority of residents. Indications are that the long-term inhabitants consider that there has already been too much expansion and the incomers chose Reepham because they wished to live in a comparatively small and self-contained rural community. Even our shop-keepers are not unanimous in their support of further expansion, a significant number feeling that they would not benefit appreciably from the proposed development since most newcomers would shop in the City and/or out of town supermarkets. So far as we can ascertain, support for additional housing allocations at this stage is virtually confined to those who can expect to benefit directly.

Existing local amenities may prove to be strained by developments already approved but not completed. We appreciate that it is arguable whether the development or the amenities should come first. This Society is strongly of the opinion that in this case no further provision for expansion should be approved until the extent of the need for further and/or improved amenities can be assessed and programmed.

The people of Reepham clearly wish the character of their town to be retained and are opposed to its conversion to a dormitory for Norwich, as has happened to Drayton and Taverham. If their wish is to be met any increase in allocations for estate dwellings beyond those already approved should be deferred until there has been a period (say 5 years) for consolidation and assessment. Any agreed development thereafter should await and follow an expansion in employment opportunities in or immediately around Reepham.

Objections to the specific site proposed for allocation.

The Reepham Society has always strongly supported your stated concern to retain the relatively unspoilt south and south eastern edges of Reepham (para 1.17 of the 1979 plan and 2.38 of the up-dated version). When the Robbins Lane development was approved it was understood that no further encroachment would be allowed on that edge of the town. In our view there is no justification for your apparent change of policy now.

The Society is particularly concerned that the increased traffic around our primary and secondary schools which would result from your proposal would unacceptably increase the hazards for children. Roads around Reepham are barely adequate for present traffic and cannot cope with increased use by private and service vehicles.

Many parents in the town consider that should the 5 acre site south of the primary school playing field cease to be used for agricultural purposes then it should be earmarked for use by either the primary or secondary school. The existing school facilities are felt by many parents to be already inadequate and there will be an increased demand once the 134 dwellings already authorised are occupied.

General

With the passage of time since your revised draft was written many points have been overtaken by events. The most obvious are perhaps in paragraphs 2.19 (the bus shelter was demolished several months ago), 2.35 (the property on the corner of School Road and Dereham Road has been rebuilt) and 2.41 (the conversion of Nelson House is well under way).

When you were in Reepham with the exhibition you said that the District Council would consider holding another public meeting to discuss the revised proposals if there appeared to be a demand. In the opinion of The Reepham Society there is sufficient strength of feeling in Reepham to justify such a meeting.