



**BROOKMILL ROAD CONSERVATION AREA SOCIETY AGM 19 JUNE 2023**  
**Held at Blueprint for All, 39 Brookmill Road, SE8 4HU**

**Chair's report covering period 13 June 2023 – 19 June 2024**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Firstly a word about the history and significance of conservation in the Brookmill area. The CA is characterized by unusual architectural coherence of a small number of well proportioned streets, houses of different sizes, and a couple of landmark buildings, namely the Brookmill Pub and Blueprint for All. The CA also includes the majority of Brookmill Park. St Stephen's School, notable for its Arts and Crafts inspired architecture is not currently in the CA.

The coherent features endure due to the small number of landlords since construction in the mid-late 1800s by the original developers, followed by the council and Lewisham homes until the right to buy policies of the 80s. A number of houses are now owner-occupied whilst around 50% of properties are still managed by Lewisham Homes (now, Since October 2023, under council management again).

Efforts by conservationists in the 70s led to designation by Lewisham of the area as a key heritage asset, second only to Blackheath in the borough. Article 4 directions were applied, removing permitted development rights. Continual vigilance by conservationists since has ensured the area's key features have largely been protected.

Development affecting the streetscape is likely only to affect privately owned homes, since individual development of social homes is not cost-effective. The incremental development of privately owned homes in the area not only risks the unified roofscape, named as one of **the key characteristics** of the area, but would result in loss of tenure blindness, or differentiation between private and social properties, changing the scale of the properties and producing a gap-toothed streetscape. This erosion of tenure blindness runs counter to Lewisham's policies of inclusion. So an eye has to be kept on this.

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

As an official consultee of Lewisham Council, we review and comment on all planning applications in the area and beyond, where these may set precedents of concern. Applications are circulated to members for comment, discussed by the officers, and responses submitted to Lewisham planning.

All responses submitted by the Society to Lewisham's planning department are in accordance with conservation law. The Society encourages appropriate development and good design. All



responses seek to conserve the key characteristics of the area as highlighted in the Conservation Area's Character Appraisal and our constitution.

It has again been a relatively quiet year. Alongside responding to planning applications, we responded to LB Lewisham consultations and questionnaires, cooperated with local societies on issues of shared concern and attended relevant Council meetings.

The following applications were reviewed and commented on:

- 1 application for installation of a bike store;
- 4 applications for window and front door installations.
- 2 applications for tree felling or pruning
- 1 application for construction of a roof extension
- 2 applications for rear infill extension or rear roof alterations

1 application for construction of a roof extension at Cranbrook Road was refused, and refused again on appeal, on firm grounds.

#### **CONSULTATIONS AND QUESTIONNAIRES:**

- Lewisham Draft Streetscape review
- Sustainable Streets consultation

We have continued to consult the technical team at Historic England regarding developments of interest to CAs, for example in relation to the review of requirements for traditional buildings in terms of energy efficiency.

#### **LEWISHAM AMENITY SOCIETIES**

Following the council's review, the society was formally recognised in April as a Lewisham Amenity Society.

We are a member of FOCAS - the Forum for Community and Amenity Societies in Lewisham - which offers a valuable forum for discussion of council accountability and issues of shared concern. We attended the Lewisham Community Forum in February.

#### **LOCAL LIAISON**

We have continued to liaise with Cllr Penfold on local rubbish management, repair to damaged walls in Brookmill Road, and removal of graffiti-covered metal storage unit on Friendly Street at Commodore Court.

In October, we took part in the Brockley Society conference: 'Conservation - Legacy & Innovation'

Attendance at the presentation of Lewisham Shopping Centre plans happened in November.



In March we met with Cllr Eiles to present our view of conservation in the area. A similar meeting was held with Cllrs Penfold and Lahai-Taylor in 2023.

In May a meeting was held with Paul Middleton, the new Chair of St John's Society, to explore issues of shared concern including access issues at St John's station.

We are grateful to Brockley Society for co-hosting and publicising the talk by Nick Higham on his book, *The Mercenary River*, and to Blueprint for All for venue hire at community rate.

### **PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR**

We look forward to LBL moving forward on the character appraisal review and have recently heard that funding has been secured to commission independent external consultants to review the area.

We plan further communication with Historic England on evolving retrofit guidance and opportunities for Conservation Areas.

We have embarked on research into the history of water extraction in the area and into the history of the Lucas family and their connections to rice cultivation and exploitation of enslaved peoples in South Carolina.

This report will be available on the Society's website.