

NEW Bentswood News



From your Bentswood Ward Labour Councillors Richard Goddard (Tel: 453379) & Paddy Henry (Tel: 453942) ■ Editor: John Crawford (Tel: 412240) Issue 2, September 2004

PILGRIM COURT: PROTECTING THE ELDERLY

YOUR BENTSWOOD LABOUR COUNCILLORS are demanding that Pilgrim Court, America Lane, must be re-opened to continue its half a century's provision of sheltered accommodation for the elderly from Bentswood and the whole of Mid Sussex. This follows broken promises by the New Downland Housing Association. They said only 6 months ago that every resident would return once the major refurbishment work was finished.

Then New Downland back-tracked. Though they denied rumours of asylum seekers and key workers being housed at Pilgrim Court, your ward councillors, together with District Council Leader Cllr Christine Field and Cabinet Member Cllr Andrew McNaughton, called New Downland to a meeting in the early summer. They reminded its Chief Executive that planning permission had been granted only for redeveloping Pilgrim Court for existing residents and other elderly people with an identified need of purpose-built sheltered accommodation – and asked to receive, urgently, suitable proposals to meet such needs.

REPLY BY PRESS RELEASE

Such proposals have not yet been received. Instead, New Downland's response to this face-to-face reminder came on 11 August. Councillors got a call from a Middy reporter asking for reactions to New Downland's press release – they were, after all, planning to offer Pilgrim Court, for now, to key workers instead of redeveloping to provide sheltered housing for the elderly.

Ignoring the Council is serious. Worse still, New Downland is showing disregard for the welfare of vulnerable elderly people – whom it displaced all over the District. These people – many of whom have given a lifetime of key worker service to their community – have been cut off from their friends. From their support agencies. From the friendly Post Office and shops close by on America Lane. And treated like so many numbers.

ACTION – AND NO SURRENDER

Your Councillors are grateful for the strong support of Bentswood people in expressing your outrage at this hoodwinking of our community, the District Council and most of all the dispersed residents of Pilgrim Court. Especially we thank hundreds of you who have signed the petition organised by Pilgrim Court residents and America Lane shopkeepers.

We assure you that Pilgrim Court as we have known it will continue. New Downland will be left in no doubt that our tax-payers' money is meant to enable them to provide sheltered accommodation at Pilgrim Court, especially for the elderly – and not for any other use. The District and Town Councils and our MP, Nicholas Soames, support us in this. So the Housing Association should take heed of what happened when Heyworth School was threatened last year. Similar short shrift will be given by our community and District to these plans. Just as we protected our children's future, so we will protect our senior residents' future. Any civilisation worthy of the name must do.

We councillors will continue to make representations to the District Council, our MP and the appropriate Government Minister. But our actions will be all the stronger if YOU write in too – even if you signed the petition. Let's have heavy postbags of letters for:



The Hon Nicholas Soames MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

and also for: **Cllr Mrs Christine Field**
Leader
Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex RH16 1SS



SAFEGUARDING MATERNITY AND NEONATAL SERVICES

Your ward councillors warned when our NHS Trust was set to merge with Brighton – a merger exposed in the Bentswood News but denied by the Trust – that vital Princess Royal services – including A&E – would be put at risk. But NHS bureaucrats claimed that local paediatric and maternity care would improve.

Unfortunately we were right. Since February this year, emergency paediatric medical cases have been treated at Brighton. Now NHS pen-pushers – clutching the fig leaf of the Royal College of Paediatric and Child Health's policy to provide fewer specialised centres – are putting all maternity and paediatric care at the PRH at risk.

Your Bentswood councillors, through a District Council working party, are urging that local services are continued, and have asked MP Nicholas Soames to put their strong case forcefully to the Secretary of State for Health. He will.

ON OTHER PAGES: Black Bags and the Vulnerable
• Stopping Anti Social Behaviour • Easing Parking –
the Priory and the PRH • Troon Court • Town in Bloom
• New Play Area at Wilmington Way • Town Centre
Food Store • St Paul's Site • Anna Sewell and
Bentswood's History • Food Talk →→→→→→→→

Black Bags: protecting the vulnerable

The District Council is asking us to put our rubbish out in bin liners – just inside our property, **NOT** at the road side as rumoured. Every home will receive full, clear information about this. This has, though, been controversial because Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill are amongst the last places in England to lose a back-of-house collection service. That service is very costly to us Council Tax payers. Nearly all of us have been buying bin liners for many years. So no new personal expense is involved – again, despite rumours.

In East Grinstead – until 1974 under a different council – had its free supply of bin liners withdrawn about 10 years ago and, unlike us, has not had a back-of-house collection. Here,

no such whittling down of collection services has occurred, and since the popular blue box recycling began many of us have been putting our rubbish out alongside our blue boxes.

However, it is important that elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people are protected from any unintended consequences of this tax-saving change. Accordingly, your ward councillors have ensured that they will not be affected or have their health and safety compromised. They will continue to receive a collection service suited to their needs.

If we had all continued to receive that service, we would now be answering to you for an unpopular and unwelcome hike in our Council Tax.

Selfish parking

Since parking wardens were removed from our streets – against our wishes – far too many people have ignored single and double yellow lines, restricted parking areas and even disabled parking bays. We deplore such lazy anti social behaviour, which is sometimes as dangerous as speeding.

Next April the District Council will, for the first time, have powers to tackle this state of affairs. **We are urging them to employ parking wardens.**

Prory and PRH parking priorities

Your Bentswood councillors have **helped to stop** a planning application to reduce business parking spaces at the Priory buildings – and add to parking misery for the Priory estate.

Meanwhile, at the Princess Royal, we have **supported** proposals to increase parking spaces there – which will take pressure off nearby streets.



A Food Store for the Sussex Roundabout

Bentswood councillors are insisting that a badly needed new food retail outlet should open near the Sussex roundabout. We have made sure that alternative planning applications for the vacant units near that roundabout have been turned down.

October Town Council By-Elections...

For personal reasons our Bentswood Ward colleague, Labour Councillor Rosemary Irvine, and a Liberal Democrat Town Councillor in Heath Ward have resigned recently.

Polling cards will be issued in early October for the by-elections.

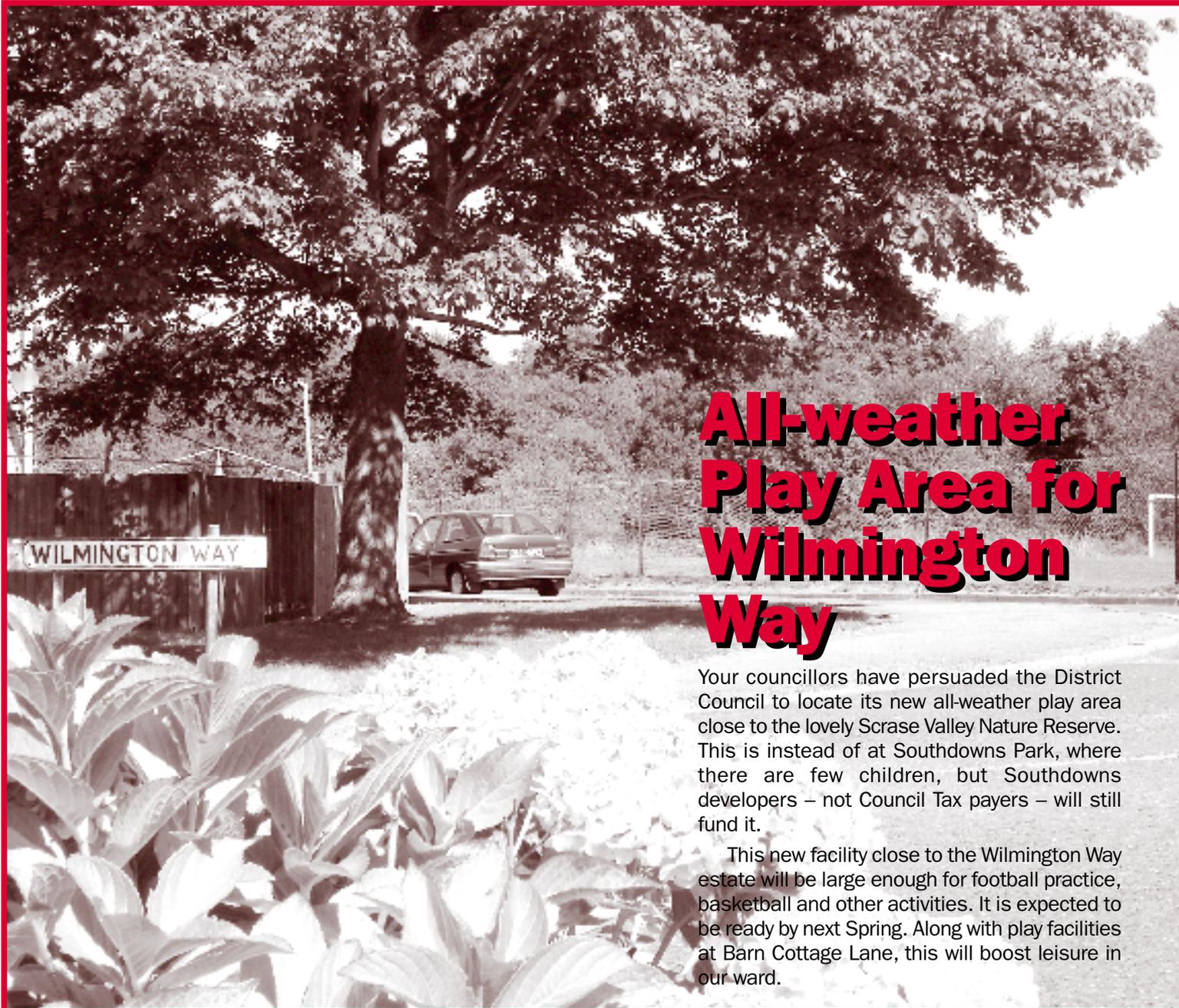
Stopping anti social behaviour

A tiny minority of tiny-minded hooligans has made life intolerable for people in Bentswood Ward and across the whole country. So the Labour Government, this June, gave extra powers to councils, housing associations, the police and the courts to deal severely with them. We welcome this.

We would encourage residents who have formed neighbourhood watch schemes, residents associations and other community groups to address these problems in various ways. And we stress that none of us is more determined to see these new measures work than the overwhelming majority of younger members of our community. They are public spirited and feel let down by the vandals and the litter, lager and loud music louts who menace us.

More sinister are the drug pushers. Neither we nor the community we proudly represent have time or tolerance for them. We urge public bodies such as housing associations to make full use of their new powers – and give those who promote drug and drink-fuelled behaviour no second chances.

However strong the law may be, it is still up to all of us to show our refusal to accept challenges to our enjoyment of home, town and countryside. If you feel threatened by job behaviour, contact us councillors as well as the police. We will, for example, be glad to help you to set up additional neighbourhood watch schemes or residents associations. **Our existing schemes and associations fight hard against hooliganism. We applaud them.**



All-weather Play Area for Wilmington Way

Your councillors have persuaded the District Council to locate its new all-weather play area close to the lovely Scrase Valley Nature Reserve. This is instead of at Southdowns Park, where there are few children, but Southdowns developers – not Council Tax payers – will still fund it.

This new facility close to the Wilmington Way estate will be large enough for football practice, basketball and other activities. It is expected to be ready by next Spring. Along with play facilities at Barn Cottage Lane, this will boost leisure in our ward.

Flowers in our Ward

We are proud of the colourful displays of flowers around our town, so we fully support *Haywards Heath in Bloom*. In particular, your ward councillors have made sure that there have been new plantings of daffodils on the Priory Estate and at Barn Cottage Lane.

These will complement the lovely displays in our residents' own gardens and open spaces.

Troon Court

We have a Whitehall planning inspector to blame for the horrendous experiences visited on Troon Court residents, when a developer was allowed to build a new storey above their heads.

The District Council fully supported your Bentswood councillors in resisting this insensitive plan, but a Department of the Environment inspector had already made a ruling about similar developments on the Priory estate. That, regrettably, left the District Council without powers to refuse planning permission for the Troon Court proposal.

St Paul's Catholic College Site

We are keeping a close watch on plans for the future development of the Oathall Road site. Valuable road improvements must be provided along with the other infrastructure needed for the new housing – which will include social housing. Already, though, we have ensured that open spaces will be retained as a buffer between the new houses and residents nearby.

We will continue to insist that the reasonable and modest requests of residents to enjoy their homes and gardens will be met.



Anna Sewell and Bentswood's History

Anna Sewell of *Black Beauty* fame lived at Petland House, New England Road (near Heyworth School) in the 1840s and Adrienne E. Gavin, author of the newly published *Dark Horse: a life of Anna Sewell*, was relieved at the success of our community's campaign to save the school and its Sewell plaque.

The school has now accepted care of the *Rediscovering America* Bentswood history project from project leader Debby Matthews. Project booklets can be downloaded from:

www.rediscoveringamerica.org.uk

Let's Talk About Food!

A new project was recently launched by Bentswood's own IMPACT Foundation. The *Neighbourhood Healthwatch* project includes Fork to Fork (growing your own food), Get Cooking (healthy food) and a Food Co-operative. There is help for you even in your own home! For more details, to join the fun or to volunteer your time, phone Simon on 01444 457080 or write to IMPACT Foundation, 151 Western Road, Haywards Heath RH16 3LH.



Pilgrim Court – please use the power of your pen (or word processor)

On the front page we asked you to write letters to Nicholas Soames and Christine Field, to urge that no stone must be left unturned, to oblige New Downland to redevelop Pilgrim Court for modern sheltered accommodation for the elderly. Mid Sussex has been proud of such facilities at Pilgrim Court for 50 years.

Like Heyworth School, which together we saved from closure last year, it is one of the “jewels in the crown” of Bentswood. Let's keep it that way. Please write, however short a letter, to the addresses given. In a cause like this **every little bit really does help. Thank you.**

◀ *America Lane shops and post office opposite the entrance to Pilgrim Court: owners helped organise the petition*