



Leo Boland Esq
The Chief Executive
London Borough of Barnet
North London Business Park
Building 4, Oakley Road South
London N11 1NP

25 April 2005

Dear Mr Boland

Following our meeting with Mr Stewart Murray, Head of Planning on 25 January, I am writing to express our strong objection to the recent decision to make the Conservation Manager redundant and to abolish two planning enforcement officer posts.

We discussed the matter with Mr Murray and I regret that we did not agree with his opinion that the changes would not be significant. These decisions are likely to have a detrimental affect on Hampstead Garden Suburb.

Under The Local Government (Best Value) Performance Indicators and Performance Standards(England) Order 2005(SI 2005 No.598) which came into force on 1 April 2005, Barnet has new performance obligations for Conservation Areas.

Under this legislation, new Character Appraisals are likely to be required for Hampstead Garden Suburb and other Conservation Areas in Barnet. This requirement coincides with your proposal to make your main expert redundant and move other members of his team to other duties in design management outside conservation areas.

The knowledge of the Conservation Manager will also be required in the formulation of the proposed Highways Policy for the Hampstead Garden Suburb Conservation Area which the Head of Highways has agreed to discuss with us. Such a policy looks as if it will soon become a requirement if you are to meet criteria under SI 2005 No.598 for best practice in Conservation Areas.

It goes without saying that Barnet, a wealthy outer London Borough, should feature among the best performers in the whole country in its stewardship of Conservation Areas. We hope that you agree. If you do not, you will also lose eligibility for central Government grants. I believe the present action may lose a grant from English Heritage towards your Conservation Team.

As you know, Hampstead Garden Suburb is an exceptional residential environment in both buildings and man-made
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landscape. Unlike some other areas of its type, it has not been ruined by unsympathetic alterations to buildings.

Before my recent election as Chairman of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association (RA), I chaired, and still remain chairman, of its Conservation and Amenities Committee. We have worked with the Conservation Manager who has built up a wealth of knowledge and contacts within the area in the eight years he has worked on conservation in Barnet. He recognises the importance of proper control and has been involved in obtaining grants from outside bodies such as English Heritage, the HGS Trust and the RA to carry out essential work in the Suburb which Barnet has not been prepared to finance itself.

Even before the announcement that two enforcement officer posts are to be abolished, we have been alarmed at the number of serious infringement cases where no action has been taken. The most economical way to ensure compliance with planning regulations is for all to know that they will not get away with a breach. Currently the opposite is the case in Barnet, as evidenced by the recent proliferation of satellite dishes which Barnet has not dealt with.

We therefore urge you to withdraw the abolition of these three posts and in particular to retain the services of Mr Michael Brown the Conservation Manager because of his unique knowledge of Barnet's needs in this field.

We feel that the neglect of the special attention needed in the Article IV Conservation Area which comprises Hampstead Garden Suburb, together with the recent staffing decisions, may be grounds for a complaint to the Local Authority Ombudsman. However that should be a last resort and we would prefer to proceed by co-operation rather than by confrontation.

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association represents 2,229 households in Hampstead Garden Suburb. It is believed to be the largest such association in the UK.

Yours sincerely

David Lewis
Chairman

cc Stewart Murray, Graham Beattie, Tony Vincett
Local Councillors, Cabinet Members for Planning and the Environment, Parliamentary and local authority candidates, Other interested bodies.