



Views from the Hill

Newsletter of the Tewkesbury Lodge Estate Residents' Association

March 2021



Our green spaces are under threat

We are fortunate to live in an area that still retains some special green spaces which give our neighbourhood its distinctive, wooded character and which are so incredibly important to our local environment in many ways. However, this is now under threat with the potential loss of two of our green spaces: the Reservoir site, and the Telecommunications Mast site.

The Reservoir site

Bounded by Honor Oak Road, Canonbie Road, Liphook Crescent, Rocombe Crescent and Horniman Drive, the Reservoir site is (or until very recently was) a grassy slope underneath which is an underground Victorian reservoir. Many of the grasses and flowers that have grown there are ones that can be found on the North Downs, and they support many invertebrates including one species of rare insect. The site is recognised by the Council as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), and on that basis the Council rejected applications in 1995 and 1999 to develop the site.



The Dial House before the bulldozers moved in



After the bulldozers... The Dial House can be seen in the top left-hand corner

Little has happened on the site since then. However, late in November the owner started to clear the site of vegetation. We alerted the Council, whose officers visited the site in December and January. Unfortunately, the Council tells us that the owner is legally entitled to do this, and we have confirmed that this is the case. No-one knows what will happen next. This is deeply distressing. If the developer does again apply to develop the site, then the Association will put in the strongest objection that it can, just as we did before.

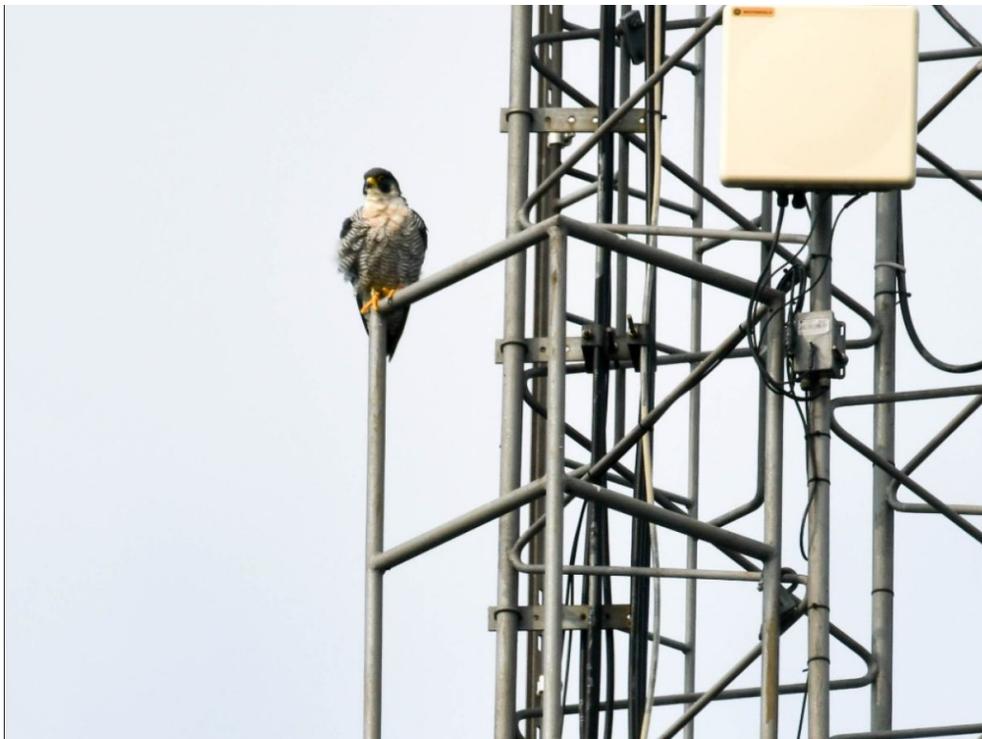
The Mast site - Have your say NOW

The recently published *Lewisham New Local Plan* sets out key objectives for our area. These include issues such as housing and transport, which will determine future planning decisions. To accommodate changes in its population, Lewisham needs 1,000 - 2,000 new housing units to be built each year so has looked across the Borough at a wide range of possibilities. Most notably for the Estate, the green area between the Telecom site in Horniman Drive and Havelock House in Honor Oak Road has been identified for the possible development of up to 30 housing units.

Three aspects of these proposals are of concern to the Association, particularly as the Mast site is a key area of wild woodland on the Estate:

1. At the highest point there are 15 mature oak trees, as well as other native trees. The oak trees are an important remnant of the Great North Wood and a crucial link in a wildlife corridor between Horniman Gardens and One Tree Hill. The oak trees are beautiful in themselves and are the best trees for absorbing carbon dioxide (CO²).

2. Further down the hill is a wilder area of woodland which has plenty of nesting sites for birds and provided food for a family of Peregrine Falcons which successfully bred there last year. So the potential loss of habitat would be significant.



One of the Peregrine Falcon family living on the site

3. Beyond this is a large grassy area which adds to the amenity of the wooded areas and is likely to support a number of invertebrate species. So again, there would be a loss of wildlife habitat.

Although the Plan states that the mature trees would be taken into account, the value of the site to nature and biodiversity would inevitably be reduced by any development.

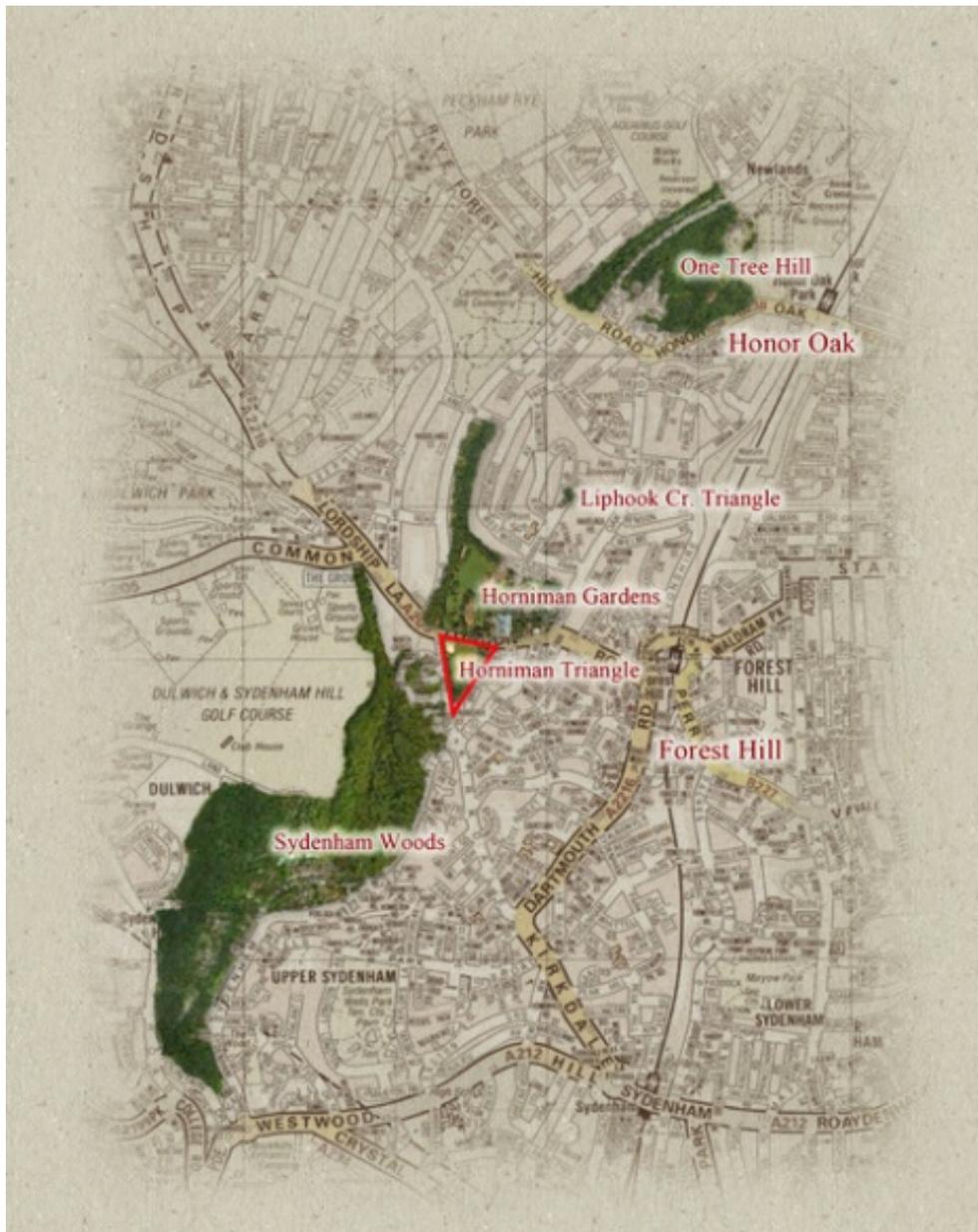
Reasons why the Association and some residents object to these proposals include:

- *Area character* - damage to the wooded, green character of the area.
- *Historic Significance* - remnants of the historic Great North Wood need be retained and connected - not destroyed.
- *Biodiversity and wildlife* – loss/reduction of important fauna and flora habitat and wildlife corridor.
- *Urban greening* – loss of a green space and associated health benefits (air quality).
- *Additional Vehicles* - issues of access and congestion.
- *Local services* – additional pressure on schools, medical services, rubbish collection, utilities etc.
- *Hill views and vistas* – should be protected and enhanced not interrupted with development.

Stuart Checkley, our co-Chair, looks after environmental issues for the Association. Over the last few years he has been responsible for raising the necessary funds to plant 49 street trees around our Estate. He is working with other groups such as the London Wildlife Trust, the Forest Hill Society, and Street Trees for Living to oppose this development.

Although any development may be a long way off, this is our best chance to influence the Council's Development Plan. If you agree with our position, please object today and certainly before the deadline of 11 April 2021. Go online at [lewishamdevelopmentplan/commonplace](https://www.lewishamdevelopmentplan.com/commonplace) and submit your comments by clicking on *comment of this proposal*, select *Havelock House*. Then let the Council know what you think. You only have to comment on topics that interest you.

Oak trees on the Horniman Triangle



Remnants of the Great North Wood

Before we knew of either of the above developments, I had been working with other groups to get more oak trees planted on the Horniman Triangle (opposite the Museum on the other side of Lordship Lane). This is the next step along the wildlife corridor from our Estate through Horniman Gardens to Sydenham and Dulwich Woods. As well as trying to protect as many of our existing oak trees we need to plant new ones on safe sites wherever we can. The Horniman Triangle is the best place to do this and it will strengthen our Estate's links to local remnants of the Great North Wood. We used to have Tawny Owls in our gardens on the Hill. They have retreated into Sydenham Woods, but with a stronger wildlife corridor they could come back.

Extinction Rebellion (XR) has given 12 oak saplings to *Climate Action for Lewisham* and these will be planted next winter on the Horniman Triangle in an area where other oak saplings are growing well. The Forest Hill Society and the Tarleton Woods Residents' Association (with connections to

the London Wildlife Trust) have raised funds for one oak tree. It would be wonderful if TLERAs members could collaborate to fund a second oak tree. *Street Trees for Living* (through which our 49 street trees on the Estate have been planted) has set up a giving page for this project. Go to the [Street Trees for the Horniman Triangle](#) donation webpage where you can donate to the project.

I am hoping to find 30 members of our Association who are each able to donate £20 (or more!) to the project and so add one more oak tree to the wildlife corridor that goes straight through our Estate.

Stuart Checkley

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This newsletter was compiled and edited by Valerie Ward, Stuart Checkley, and Tina Hildrey. Design by John Hudson.

Contributions from members are very welcome and can be e-mailed to us at secretary@tewkesburylodge.org.uk

