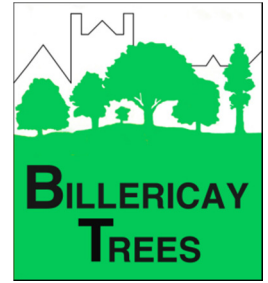




The Billericay Tree Warden’s Bi-monthly News-sheet for May 2023



Our News-sheets are available to view on the Billericay Town Council’s website including back issues and are listed under the header “The Town”. There are also tree related Fact Sheets included to advise residents. The Factsheets can also be viewed on Facebook at <https://tinyurl.com/3hxdy5m9> & <https://tinyurl.com/k8bzd772>

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1] Open Day at the Chantry Centre – The Town’s Societies & Interest Groups Meet the Public!

On Friday 24th March the BTC hosted event was organized by the BDRA and was an opportunity to showcase the many Societies and interest groups that flourish within our town and for our residents to meet them. In all, some 28 Societies and interest groups were represented. The event ran from 10am to 3pm and there was a definite buzz in the room as those behind their display table answered questions and handed out relevant leaflets. We the Billericay Tree Wardens, aptly shared a display table with the Norsey Wood Society sharing the theme of trees! Seen here are Tree Warden members Cllr Chris May and June Waidson who made up part of the rota system that also included Dr Nigel, Fiona & Neil for the event. It’s thanks to our Fiona Farmery for organizing our presence at the event and preparing our Tree Warden literature. To add to the convivial atmosphere, refreshments had been laid on by the BTC!



2] Tree Loss at the Junction of Hillway and Hatfield Drive – A Gap-site Development at Work!



On or around Saturday 1st April this year we were made aware that four mature trees had been felled on the green at the junction of Hillway and Hatfield Drive. A shady green area with a high “Street Scene” amenity value had lost its community value to the local residents. Research indicates that it was a leftover piece of land from the Taylor Wimpey estate development, built many years ago, and had been recently put



up for auction. A gap-site Developer now owns the land and presumably will be submitting a Planning Application (PA) for a dwelling. It is legal to fell non-TPO trees on private land that one owns even before submitting a PA. A

change in Planning law would need to be taken to prevent such a situation occurring. Enquiries are still being made by BBC Planning as there is a suggestion that the land was maintained by the Essex County Council Highways. So we await the results of this enquiry. An anomaly occurs in these situations for if the PA is Refused, that is a property will not be allowed to be built on the site, then trees serving the community and adding the “Green Lung” effect for our town have been unnecessarily lost and will assuredly not be replaced. There’s always the risk that a similar loss will occur in our town for these little green areas are not itemized and their ownership not always known thus they remain vulnerable.

3] The Billericay Forest School Initiative (BFS) – Empowering the Young

Since 2017 there has been operating a series of responsible woodland “classes” held in local woods where the young folk have been introduced to the great outdoors. The purpose of which is to encourage the children to advance along the learning curve of self-awareness, gaining confidence in acquiring basic skills, relating to their fellow foresters (human relationships) and taking on board what can be the raw face of the natural world – Muddy puddles and all!

A barrier that needs to be confronted and learnt is the taking of appropriate risks that the facilitators involved carefully monitor. Learning by personal hands-on experience and example is a building block for self-confidence and self-esteem.

The **BFS** initiative is run by local lady Lauren Ramsay, a qualified Primary school teacher and her team of facilitators that with their acknowledged skills impart resilience, independence and creativity in the young.

It is no coincidence that Lauren is not only knowledgeable and passionate about trees but is also fiercely protective of them when they are unnecessarily threatened. They too are her charges....

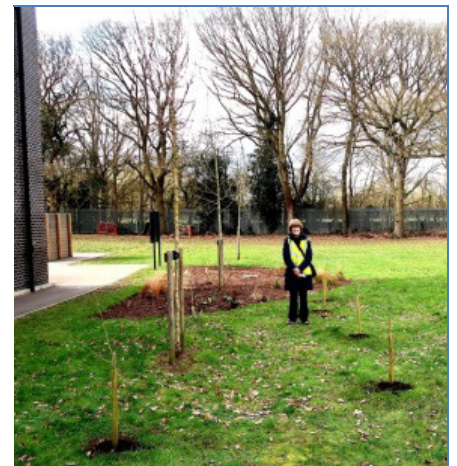
The **BTW’s** view is that introducing the young to the natural world about us is now even more essential as we move alarmingly ever closer into the grips of the **Climate Crisis**. Among the young of today will be tomorrow’s ambassadors and technical advisers who will be needed to effect change and set a course for sustainable survival; not only for us humans but for all the other life forms that travel with us on Planet Home. To be brutally honest: to mitigate the damage by the past generations.

To achieve it, the paths may be muddy but the resolve more solid!

There are various teaching sessions on offer that are held in and around Billericay, including private woodland, Norsey Wood and Mill Meadows:- <https://www.billericayforestschool.co.uk/>

4] Back to Brightside School!

On the 23rd March 2022 we had attended Brightside School and carried out a tree planting project that involved the participation of c.375 school children! A seamless event that was logistically organized between the teaching staff and BTW member Fiona! The children clearly enjoyed the event judging by the enthusiasm shown and the many questions it evoked! Unfortunately, the long drought that occurred a month later killed off about a third of the 20 trees initially planted. So on the 23rd of February of this year we went back to Brightside to engage with their Eco-class of 18 pupils and jointly planted replacements. The enthusiasm and keenness to help was as strong as ever! As we know, there are sensible restrictions on photographing children as it requires the permission from every parent for a picture of their child to be published. The lone figure in the photograph is of Fiona standing between the two lines of trees. In the background is a crescent shaped planting border created by the Essex & Suffolk Water authority to soak up the periodic flash flooding that can occur in that part of the playing field.
Photo by John.



5] The Fold – Laindon Road – A Conservation Area and the Reids Proposed Development

The BTW checks the Planning Applications that occur in our local area to see if there are any trees on a development site that may come under a “perceived threat”.

Planning Application 22/01097/FULL is a case in point. There are 6 mature Lime trees on the southern border of The Fold that may be in the way of site traffic or emergency vehicle access if the proposed Reids development

goes ahead. The Fold itself is outside of the proposed Reids development area but is surrounded by it on two sides, the Laindon Road and the 6 Lime trees to the south. The trees already have legal protection as they are on BBC land and in a Conservation Area but the BBC are to consider designating them with a TPO.

The 6 mature Lime trees at The Fold possibly represent a border between two farms or estates many years ago and form part of our local tree heritage. The trees also serve a quality “Street Scene” amenity aspect and are in their prime by absorbing air pollution in exchange for exuding oxygen that adds to the “Green Lung” effect, reducing respiratory problems that our town’s trees provide.



The 6 Lime trees adding to the “Street Scene” amenity along the Laindon Road



Plan view of The Fold and its 6 Lime trees

6] The Mistreatment of a TPO Tree on a Building Site - A Breach of the Regulations

BBC Enforcement Responded:-

One of our Tree Warden members identified the maltreatment of a TPO oak along the Norsey Road on a building site. The very same property that felled the third of an acre Ancient Woodland on Green Belt land in his long rear garden that extends down to the Main Ride in Norsey Wood. The legality of which is still under investigation with the Forestry Commission (Refer to item 7 below)

There are strict rules for building sites when their trees are to be retained; TPO or non-TPO. The root system should be protected from the stacking of building materials and heavy site machinery imposing a load on the root system (leading to root compression that can cause the slow death of the tree). The trunk should have a temporary fencing about it to stop passing machinery from damaging the bark. The leaning of boarding up against the trunk does not constitute as such! And we are not party to how the low-level brick wall’s foundation will interface with the tree’s trunk and roots. A responsible contractor would avoid / mitigate these damaging actions. Trees maltreated as such can take quite a few years to die and then the reason is not always attributed to the active site activity of old!



The BTW quickly contacted our Local Authority’s Enforcement department and they immediately attended. The BTW had attended site several years ago when site work first commenced and had recommended tree protection in line with the BBC’s rules but since then what protection had been installed had been removed.

7] News in Brief:- MP John Baron and the Forestry Commission

Following on from the Woodland tree loss in a Norsey Road rear garden that extends down to the Main Ride in Norsey Wood, John wrote to the Forestry Commission (FC) to see if there was any progress on the matter with regards a contravention of the regulations. Although John contacted the FC by letter more than once, there has been no decision with regards a legal action. The tree loss occurred in March of 2022! The BTW has thanked John for his pursuing this issue. This is the same Norsey Road address that has recently maltreated a TPO tree in the front garden and BBC Enforcement were very quick to respond (Refer to item 6 above).

News in Brief:- 95 - 97 Chapel Street

The gap-site Developer has again submitted a PA for two different structures on a conjoined site at 95 – 97 Chapel Street. A previous PA that was refused by the Basildon Borough Council was the subject of an Appeal down in Bristol but was subsequently rejected. The new PA is for a less ambitious building project. There are a line of trees on the site that sit on a raised bank between the United Reformed Church (URC). However, as we understand it, the precise location of the border is in dispute. The BTW is concerned that for the development to go ahead, most of the mature trees would need to be felled to allow for the construction of the new foundations. The trees are a welcomed addition the street's "Street Scene" amenity aspect. BBC Enforcement has visited the site and we await their decision as to whether any of the mature trees should be granted a TPO designation. However, the trees do have protection as they are in the town's Conservation Area and will need permission from the Council to remove. This controversial site with its various Planning Application proposals is far from over and those concerned are hoping the end result will be an asset for the town.

News in Brief:- Grey Lady Place (GLP) Proposed as a Conservation Area

Due to some irregular tree work on the site in the past, we have applied for the GLP to be considered as Conservation Area (CA) as its architecture and mature trees lend itself for the protection that a CA affords. Our environmentally aware Basildon Councillor Cllr Andrew Schrader approached the BBC with this in mind. The Council has responded by agreeing to it in principle but ratification is politically linked to the progress of the **Local Plan**. So at present, there is no known time scale for progress on this issue! However, we have thanked Cllr Andrew for raising this matter with our Local Authority. The GLP has a historical link with the English Gothic Revivalist architect Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811 to 1878) who co-designed the St Pancras Station and its hotel. In his early career, he designed the Workhouse / Almshouses in Tudor style at the GLP; now part of Billericay's cultural heritage.

8] BTW Planning Application Checks

As usual, it's thanks to our BTW Planning Application checking team. This check can sometimes identify PAs that in our opinion unnecessarily threaten trees. So we submit a "Comment" accordingly on the PA advising an alternative solution and / or refer to the potential detriment of the "Street Scene" amenity aspect should the PA be Granted.

We would like to say thank you to various the BBC and BTC Councillors who support our goals and those "Friends on the BTW (FoBTW) who offer their technical advice and practical support

A thank you must go to the Billericay Town Council for providing the BTW with advice, a meeting room at the BTC's Chantry Centre, moral support and Personal Liability and Personal Accident insurance, for BTW members and their volunteers, whilst out in the field with no geographic restriction

The Billericay Tree Wardens are a voluntary group and all information contained therein is not legally binding and is provided as a source of advice and information only

**The BTW's next members' Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 7th June 2023 at 6pm
Unless otherwise stated, we are to opt for a Zoom meeting**



**Prepared by the Billericay Tree Wardens [Editor JHS – May 2023]
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