

SOS - GREEN PUBLIC LAND UNDER THREAT- SOS

BROOKDENE NATURE RESERVE

Land to the rear of 71 Holden Road, adjoining Dollis Brook. 26th July 2015

The situation is as follows – there is an area of unspoilt green land to the rear of 71 Holden Rd that backs onto Dollis Brook. It is 0.7 of an acre and is situated on the east bank of Dollis Brook opposite the Old Finchleas Sports Ground near the confluence with Folly Brook. It is publicly owned and part of the site is designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC). Council officers are now proposing to grant a 150 year lease on the land to a developer.



Council officers are referring to this area of land as: 'rear of 71 Holden Road'. One thing we have observed over the years is that if a piece of green land does not have a proper name it becomes more obscure, less well known, less used and therefore easier to classify as low quality or derelict land, with the consequence that the gates are opened for 'disposal'. 'Land to the rear of' will not do, so we are referring to this land as The Brookdene Nature Reserve. This is because we believe that this relatively unspoilt and beautiful space is at present a haven for all sorts of wildlife and it should become a designated nature reserve. If you visit this site or already know it and you feel moved to write to the council please refer to it as The Brookdene Nature Reserve.

71 Holden Road is better known as Brookdene and comprises of 8 purpose built masonettes dating from the 1960s. The flats next door to the south are 63 Holden Road and the flats to the north are 75 Holden Road, thus there are no longer numbers 65, 67, 69, or 73 which relate only to where old houses once stood. Brookdene is directly opposite St Barnabus Church. Access to the green space can be gained by crossing this part of the brook from west to east – it is normally very shallow here with shingle banks, and stepping stones are in place.



On 15th December 2014 a 5 page report was put before the Assets, Growth and Regeneration Committee of Barnet Council. This report was very brief, lacked any proper description, details or photos and was also somewhat misleading. In the first sentence it describes the land as '*currently land locked and not accessible to the public*'. This is patently untrue, as you can see from the photos there are well trodden paths criss-crossing the land and it is well used by local people. Also on page 1 it states as a recommendation in bold lettering: '***That the land is declared surplus to the council's requirements.***'



On page 2 it states: *This report is required to declare the land as surplus to the Council's requirements as the council was approached by the adjoining owner to acquire the land to complete their development on the frontage land.* Or in every day parlance the developer approached a council officer to ask if he could get ownership or a lease on the land and the officer said - 'leave it with me, I'll see what I can do.' The report goes on to say that a bridge across the brook could be installed but the cost would be *'substantial in relation to its potential use.'* (nonsense - a 16' span timber bridge can be built for a very modest

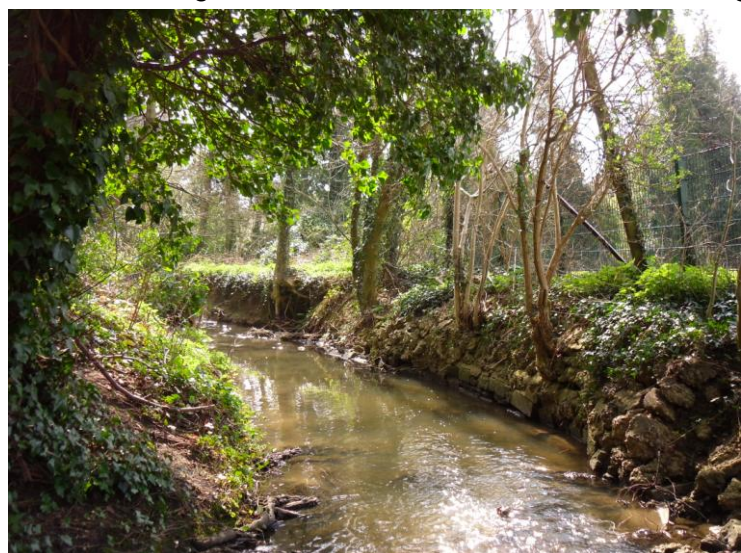
cost.) It adds: *'The woodland is in a neglected state'* and *'the most economical solution is to dispose of the site by way of a long lease'*. The 8 members of the committee present (from all parties) followed the officer's recommendation and voted unanimously to dispose of the land on 14th December 2014. As far as we can ascertain no ecological or environmental survey or impact assessment has yet been carried out.

The developer wishes to build no less than 43 new housing units on the entire site of the 8 maisonettes (including existing front and back gardens) and use the public open land *'to provide garden/amenity land for the frontage development'*. So whilst it may be true that the developer will not build on the woodland, he needs it to enhance the massive housing redevelopment. The woodland would then become a sort of communal woodland garden for the new residents. Such a massive housing development would contravene many current council policies on green spaces and biodiversity and should not even be being contemplated.

Under section 123 (2a) Of the Local Government Act 1972 Barnet Council is required to firstly advertise the proposed sale in the local press and secondly *'consider any objections to the proposed disposal that may be made to them.'* This is why the last page of the AG&R report says the all important words: ***'If objections are raised and the public outcry is great then it could jeopardize this sale'***. If there are a large number of objections Barnet Council must take heed or risk breaking the law.

So what can you do? Firstly visit the site and see what you think. If you live anywhere near, tell your neighbours – spread the word' and forward this document. Secondly please take the time to write to all the councillors on the Assets, Growth & Regeneration Committee, Brookdene is being referred back to them on the 7th September where public objections will be considered. Lodging objections is now the only way we can save this public open land. It will still have to pass through various stages of council procedure but the further it goes along the harder it will be to stop.

Write your objection to Barnet Council before 15th August so that it will be considered on 7th September. We must do all we can to save this beautiful land and keep it in public ownership. If you cannot locate the addresses of committee members, please write to:



Faith Mwende, Committee Clerk, London Borough of Barnet, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Rd South, London N11 1NP. Email: faith.mwende@barnet.gov.uk.