

A History of Chalfont Heights



Contents

INTRODUCTION Page 2

by VIC SUTTON

A PERSONAL CHRONICLE Page 5

by JOHN LAURIE

APPENDICES

1. HISTORICAL – A. House Builder 1955 Page 16
 B. Map of the Estate 1948 Page 20

2. ESTATE – OFFICERS AND KEY FUNCTIONS Page 21

3. GENERAL INFORMATION ON ESTATE POLICY Page 23

Roads
Verges
Trees

4. ESTATE – DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES Page 25

5. MAP – CHALFONT HEIGHTS ESTATE – 1976 Page 26

Introduction

Many times over the years, residents have asked "Why don't you produce a booklet about the Estate?" A good idea! – but there was never time. There were always other matters seemingly more important and the years passed. Then suddenly we became aware that it was to be our fiftieth birthday in 1977. This event could not go unmarked. We decided to produce our booklet. We had in mind a clinical history supported by several appendices. John Laurie was requested to advise on some of the key events of our history – Oonah Laurie would be the memory bank.

The 'Personal Chronicle of Chalfont Heights' which follows is rather different from what we (and John!) originally had in mind. It is certainly 'personal' and thereby provocative, but trust you will find it both informative and amusing.

During its preparation it was interesting to read the Minutes prepared by Mr. Manson of the first General Roads Committee Meeting held on 15th April 1957 and ponder on a few of the contributions made. Mr. Eddie Wilson "endorsed the idea of keeping the roads in their present state, ie. not so good!" Mr. Eyre said "that he had changed his mind three times since he had come to the meeting but right now he did not feel that he wanted the roads to be too good." The demand was obvious. The roads should be 'not too good'. We like to think that this 'not too good' or, in more elegant terms, 'rural', standard has been maintained.

Another subject which has been a chestnut at A.G.M. after A.G.M. ever since Mr. Wickham remarked in his laconic style that "it was not, in his opinion, so much a question of a bigger contribution per head but of a bigger proportion of the residents paying their contribution", is the annual subscription. This thought has echoed many times over the years. Happily to say all three of these gentlemen are still residents on the Estate.

There has been confusion amongst Residents of the difference between the Roads Committee and the Estate Trustees. This has been dealt with in some detail in John Laurie's Chronicle, but simply – the

Roads Committee was formed in 1953 and is elected yearly at the Annual General Meeting. They are responsible for maintenance of roads, verges and trees and for the collection of subscriptions. It is not a Residents Association.

The Estate Trustees are successors in title to the Stroud Trustees. They were established in 1965 and elected by the Roads Committee when they purchased from the Stroud Trust, on behalf of residents, the Estate roads, trees and verges. The Trustees thus became the successors in title to all the benefits resulting from the Covenants imposed in the original Estate title deeds.

There were four Trustees elected by the Roads Committee and it is the Committee's responsibility to appoint new Trustees as necessary. Perhaps the Trustees principle concern is with new developments on the Estate. It is an unwelcome task for the Trustees, who are also residents of the Estate, to be required to pass judgement on developments proposed by other residents. There is a conflict of interest between the developer who wishes to build to his requirements at his own cost on his own property and the neighbours who are sometimes adversely affected by such development. It is fair to state, however, that in recent years most of the cases that have resulted in dispute have been where outside developers have been involved. It is the Trustee's policy to discuss, as the case demands, development with both the developer and those affected and, where necessary, to seek amendments to achieve the optimum solution to both parties. Guidelines which the Trustees use on making their assessments are included, as Appendix 4 to this document.

We should like to stress that Residents are well advised to look after their own interests. It is they who are most financially and materially affected by the developments of their neighbours and developers. We advise that residents should read "Do these affect you" in the local weekly papers and where appropriate make proper representation to the Chiltern District Council. It is far simpler to have plans amended at that

stage than rely upon the persuasive powers or the threat of exercise of Covenants by the Trustees after plans have been passed by the Local Authority. We should also suggest that it is "neighbourly" to discuss plans before submission to the Local Authority.

In our various legal problems on Trustee matters we must acknowledge the very considerable help and advice given to us in the past by Mr. Bernard Clarke, who was until recent years a resident of Woodside Hill and one of the original Trustees.

To date all development problems have been resolved by discussion without recourse to legal proceedings and we hope that will continue in the future. But one cannot be sure, particularly as Government policy and social changes apply pressures resulting in greater housing densities. We believe it is the wish of the majority of residents to maintain our present standards and we trust that in the event of having to take a case to law we will get help and financial support from residents. This means ALL residents, since we would be concerned with principles, and principles would not have a geographic limitation.

We hope you will find this booklet of some interest. It will be updated from time to time and insert pages will be circulated.

TO OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY !



V.J.R. Sutton,
Lincoln Road,
Chalfont Heights,
1977.

A Personal Chronicle

This year, 1977, we celebrate our Golden Jubilee. On May 20th 1927, a lawyer from London called Lewis Stroud bought a hundred and twenty-two acres of farm land for twelve thousand pounds, with the express purpose of creating a private housing estate.

Swan Farm had for centuries been the home farm of the Manor House. The farm itself has gone, but two buildings still stand to link us historically with the old village of Chalfont St. Peter. One is the Youth Centre, once the ancient tithe-barn of Swan Farm; the other is the Technological Centre of the British Aluminium Company, which used to be Chalfont Park – one of the three Manor Houses in the village.

Sir Edward Mackay Edgar, Bart., then owner of Chalfont Park, disposed of the farm in the eighteen eighties. As an investment it changed hands several times, though it continued as a working farm under its tenant, Mrs. Bonsey, until finally acquired by Lewis Stroud.

The Title Deeds he signed that day are worth reading: his purchase comprised – “All that piece of land bounded (a) in part by Joiners Lane and by land belonging to Messrs. Sturgess, Lipscomb, Ballard and others; (b) on the South by land belonging to Lady Edgar and Messrs. Muir and Robinson; (c) on the East by Chesham Lane; and (d) on the West by land belonging to Walter James Parker, Wm. Crane and others, and as to two strips by Amersham Road.” In layman’s terms, these boundaries were:

- (a) Cottages and sites mainly at the upper end of Joiners Lane.
- (b) The northern bounds of Gerrards Cross Golf Club and Hogtrough Wood.
- (c) Denham Lane.
- (d) The River Misbourne.

The ‘two strips by Amersham Road’ are important. They provided access to the Estate from the road and were to become the lower ends of Woodside Hill and Chiltern Hill. They were also the start of two estab-

lished rights of way. The first curves south-east and is that bane of the Golf Club as it crosses two fairways; the other followed what is now Chiltern Hill as far as "Greenhedges", then it cut diagonally across the Estate to the Denham Road. Traditional pedestrian rights are now maintained via Chiltern Hill and Ellis Avenue.

Lewis Stroud and his son, Frederick Lewis Stroud (he was a civil engineer and architect ; we called him 'the Colonel'), within a few years had reduced the Estate to its present limits by disposing of three of its outlying portions; (a) the fields to the east which now comprise Winkers Farm, (b) the sites and cottages in Joiners Lane and (c) a long strip west of the Misbourne bought by the Buckinghamshire County Council as the route of the proposed bypass road.

Father and son had their plans well laid and certainly wasted no time carrying them out. In the twelve years between 1927 and the outbreak of war in 1939, when all private building was suspended, not to be resumed for ten years, they surveyed the land, made roads and verges, planted hundreds of trees and supervised the building and selling of no less than sixty-six houses. Here I feel we ought to pay tribute to these two practical men who laid the foundations of our Estate, and laid them well. Those of us who had seen what sins speculating planners of the thirties could commit realise how lucky we are.

It is true that the Estate, abruptly halted in its development, had a raw look. The roads, awaiting the return of the builders' lorries, were very rough and became rougher. Late into the forties our two hills provided challenging race tracks for daring young men in pepped-up sports cars; they called themselves The Bugatti Owners' Club and charged non-residents sixpence to watch the mayhem. Telegraph poles straddled the verges non-perpendicularly and party-phones were at a premium. Many gardens lay fallow. There was no main drainage — all the houses had cesspools buried in their front gardens; these worked well, except when a girls' school temporarily occupied Woodside House; then our primitive system broke down. Even so, we were years ahead of the cottagers in the High Street. Until 1953 they had no system whatsoever — but the lettuces were wonderful !

And yet our first sight of the Heights as we walked from the Station down Kingsway, armed with Messrs' Frost's viewing order, was quite impressive. On that winter day early in 1944, a thin forest of young trees clothed the hillside screening the scattered houses and defining the green and fallow acres; it all looked invitingly rural to us townsfolk.

And so indeed it proved. We had dogs and cats, hens, doves and

golden pheasants, and ponies in the paddock. The ponies grew fat, for they grazed in the vast field opposite, which was empty except for Wivelsfield's short garden and the distant St. Peter's Lodge on Chiltern Hill.

As a member of Dad's Army, I feel it is my duty to report our Estate's wartime 'incidents'. Personally, I have nothing to report — my year on guard two nights a week in the barn of a now shamefully derelict Hill Farm was happily a total non-event. My comrades though, could tell of two landmines a mile away, one in the fields of Coldharbour Farm, the other (a killer, sad to say) near Bull Lane. The Heights had one near miss — a stick of small bombs which straddled the gardens of Upway and burst a gas main in Joiners Lane. End of report.

Walking or cycling to the village, we saw that the development of the Estate had begun, not unnaturally, nearest to the shops. Sandy Rise already had nineteen houses. There were thirteen in Lewis Lane; eight on the left and five on the right going up Chiltern Hill; five on Lincoln Road overlooking the valley and the aforementioned Wivelsfield opposite; five on our side of Woodside Hill, with Lincoln House facing us; Mountfort alone on Ellis Avenue, and finally, eight on or near Upway; sixty-six houses in all.

Southfield had acted as a show house for prospective purchasers. Members of the Stroud family had occupied it, as well as, in turn, Lincoln House, Woodside House and Mountfort.

A map (see Appendix 1B), kindly supplied by Mr. Milliner, shows the Estate as it was just before the building rush started around 1950. It also indicates, very faintly, a temporary feature of some historic interest; Colonel Stroud had planned a road crossing from Woodside Hill to Chiltern Hill, halfway between Lincoln Road and Ellis Avenue. We remember a fine avenue of young birch trees growing up in readiness. There is some evidence that he was also considering a parallel road crossing from opposite Southfield to below St. Peter's Lodge, which would have had a single row of houses along its lower side. The projected bypass road possibly quashed that idea. The Colonel must have regretted the loss of his avenue, and of the rows of pretty birches which defined 90' plots uphill from Quanton on Woodside Hill. I doubt if he would have approved of our ingenious jigsaw of Half Acre Hill and Lincoln Way, or of the reduction of his plots to two-thirds of his planned widths.

The map also gives a graphic indication of how eagerly the house agents were anticipating the lifting of restrictions on building permits and materials. Plots were selling like hot cakes and, as the map shows, local builders were ready with their plans.

A young researcher who works in the Amersham Council Offices supplied me with another map indicating the date when each house was erected between 1953 and 1965. There is a hiatus of three years between the resumption of post-war building and the year 1953, because for these three years the official records are sparse (the Town and Country Planning Act had just been passed). But during the ten years he does cover, the Heights evolved from being an unequally spaced conglomeration of houses of varying character into a fairly homogeneous Estate.

I have used his figures, plus some research by Mr. Vic Sutton and myself, to compile, (to be published separately) a Register of the Estate Roads with each house listed in situ, together with the year it was built (where ascertainable), its present owner's name and telephone number. Over the years revision will be needed, of course, but I hope that others beside myself will feel that our very own Directory can integrate our community in a most worthwhile way.

Analysing the Estate's development, we find that it was most rapid in the ten years following the lifting of restrictions after the war; at that time eighty houses were built. (No wonder our poor roads suffered !) Twenty-eight were added in the sixties and nine more (to date) in the seventies, making a total, with Stroud's sixty-six, of one hundred and eighty-two houses; averaging three heads per home, that makes a population around five hundred — quite a village, indeed, if numbers were all. But, of course, they are not; for a village is an entity with a soul of its own. Much of what follows is an attempt to record the efforts made by a handful of good men to establish that entity and give it a pinch of soul.

Going back to 1952, in that year we reached a point in our Estate's history which marked the biggest change since Swan Farm was bought by the Strouds. Lewis had died in 1950, the Colonel in 1951 and his younger brother Anthony Stroud, who had left the district, remained as principal trustee. His family interest in the Estate was limited to two or three houses in Upway and the ownership of the roads, verges and trees.

Whilst the Estate was growing, Lewis and the Colonel had imposed a discipline of sorts on us early settlers from their office in the Amersham Road, with a paid bailiff as watch-dog. But in February 1952, Anthony Stroud sent a circular letter round to all the residents to tell them that as the Estate was yielding no profit to the Stroud Trustees they could no longer afford to maintain the roads, etc. They hoped, therefore, that the residents themselves would carry on this work.

It was a crisis. The roads were in a bad way, especially the two hills, and it was essential that there should be a continuing stewardship.

Fortunately, (and it always seems to happen in England), three good men and true emerged spontaneously from amongst our habitually easygoing residents to shoulder what they probably assumed would be a temporary responsibility. They deserve a place in our history.

They were Mr. A.C. Manson of Gartmore (now Blue Cedar Cottage), Mr. Ronald Ogden of Lincoln House and Mr. J.R. Roeder of Overcombe. They called themselves a Provisional Committee, and they sent out a circular letter to all ninety-six residents asking whether they would be willing to contribute £3.00 per head to cover the cost of preventing the roads from becoming impassable. Sad to say, the very first letter in the first of many massive volumes of Committee records – the substance of our Estate's Chronicle – is from a solicitor. His client refused to recognise that Ogden and Co. had any authority; she (yes !) rudely and categorically flouted their "impertinent" demand for £3.00.

Happily, her response was not typical. By January 1953, the Road Account was opened and enough cheques arrived from rational householders to get a contractor busy with sand, ballast and cement filling in the deepest potholes. By the end of the first year's efforts there was a bank balance of £12.00; the Committee had justified itself.

For the next three years the records testify to the Committee's unending and heroic attempts to satisfy the basic demands of car owning residents. Twice more a £3.00 per head levy was requested and (partially) donated. Resistance came from some who wanted a more drastic and permanent treatment. A few even favoured a takeover of the roads by the County Council, involving a maximum cost of £4.00 per foot frontage, as against an estimated £6,000 down payment for a do-it-ourselves resurfacing of only five main roads.

These formidable figures resulted in another circular letter in February 1955, requesting comments. Only 40 replies were received and just half of these were in favour of the £6,000 scheme. It was shelved. The suggestion of a Council takeover sank without trace.

In December 1956, Mr. A.E. Stroud, enclosing his final contribution of £20,00 to the Road Fund, informed Ogden that as the Stroud Trust had sold all its Estate land, except for its continuing ownership of the roads, verges and trees, a local agent would henceforward serve as our sole link with the Strouds. The Committee realised that this crucially altered our constitution as an Estate.

In March 1957, all 123 residents received a circular letter of real significance; it announced that the first ever meeting of the residents

would be held at 8 pm on April 15th at the Golf Club; it enclosed a questionnaire to help the meeting achieve positive results, and it invited willing committee men to submit their names. The questions were:—

1. Will you attend ?
2. Will you continue paying £3.00 per annum ?
3. Are you willing to make a down-payment of £50 to have the two Hills resurfaced provided sixty others agree ?
4. Are you willing to deposit an additional £70.00 to have the other main roads resurfaced ?

Only fifty-five replied, thirty-seven giving a positive 'yes' to the £3.00, eighteen to the £50.00, none to the £70.00.

Despite so half-hearted a response, this historic first annual meeting of residents proved to be a surprising success, and it established a lasting precedent. Seventy-two of us attended and met our committee of three after their four years' altruistic service. Mr. Ogden, the Chairman, made a modest reference to the limited results of their 'road-patching', surmised that a suggested take-over of the roads by the District Council was not viable and invited discussion on the results of the questionnaire. A proposal was carried, almost unanimously, that the annual contribution be continued, but that it be raised to £5.00 per house per annum. (The year after, it would be £6.00, and the year after that six guineas, unless you volunteered a £30 down payment — I don't need to tell you what it is now.) A new committee was set up comprising, in addition to the three original members, Messrs' Ashworth, Loe, Hooper, Morgan and Templeton; Mr. Ogden was Chairman, Mr. Hooper Hon. Secretary and Mr. Ashworth Hon. Treasurer. So our first representative Roads Committee was born.

Consequent upon this broadening of our Executive — as Parkinson's Law had warned us — the paperwork proliferated so luxuriantly that this Chronicle must indeed limit itself to a brutal digest of the fifteen hundred typed and MS. pages composed of Minutes, of monthly and annual meetings and of hundreds of letters to and from residents, some of them so ill-tempered that one can but wonder at the patience of a Committee doing its best for a community which seemed at once apathetic and exigent.

Combing through this mass of paperwork — the source books of my Chronicle — I feel that every man public spirited enough to serve on the Committee deserves mention, but there are too many, for the personnel changes continually through emigration, age or (sadly) death. However, four names stand out by virtue of their unflagging efforts, those of Messrs. R.B. Ogden, M.C. Ashworth, V.J.R. Sutton and the late J.R.T. Hooper.

Some of the Committee's problems particularly relevant to the

Estate's administration will be recorded. But among all these, big issues loomed.

The village bypass, for over thirty years a vague promise, (or threat — opinion was divided), became with little warning a shattering reality when in the spring of '67 an army of Irish navvies descended on us with their bulldozers and started ploughing their inexorable furrow from Joiners Lane to the bottom of Kingsway, playing havoc with our western communications. They closed Chiltern Hill for two months whilst building the bridge and its approaches; our only exit to Amersham Road, apart from a footpath at Chiltern Hill and another at Swan Lane, was across muddy excavations and Woodside Hill's Bailey bridge. Then, when the concrete bridge was usable, they closed Woodside Hill to complete the roundabout. In a commendably short time all our section of the bypass was functioning and by the summer of '69 we could nip up Kingsway to the station or across the new bridge to the village, or along the old A413 to London. The Tatling End extension of the bypass was delayed but Sandy Rise had suffered; Swan Lane became a footpath.

The other big issue arose when the County Council began putting us on main drainage in the autumn of '64, and completed the operation by January '65. Here again it all happened with so little fuss that even the Committee records are unusually laconic. They told us we had to fill in our own cesspits. That, I remember, was quite a job.

Reverting to our mundane domestic problems; a disciplined Heights dweller who wouldn't dream of erecting a rabbit hutch in his garden before asking permission might well assume that our paternal surveillance dates from the advent of the 1957 Committee. Not so. That Committee's sole concern was with the roads, verges and trees; it was a Roads Committee, as our Committee is today. The Estate's aesthetic standards (to put it grandly) were controlled, somewhat loosely, by Messrs. Boyers of Slough, the aforementioned agents for the Stroud Trustees.

This means that throughout the Estate's most hectic development there was minimal control when it was most needed. I find no record of sanctions by the Stroud Trustees, or by Ogden's triumvirate, or by Boyers; so the builders had a bonanza. Nevertheless, their houses, though not up to the standard of the Colonel's last pre-War exemplars — Lincoln House, Mountfort and Woodside House — are a standing credit to the builders' integrity. Look at Lincoln Road, at the upper end of the two Hills, and at Ellis Avenue for proof; and at the 1955 'House Builder' reproduced in an appendix — a frankly commercial angle on our Estate which I find refreshing. There is a morbid interest too, in the prices quoted, and in the cost per plot on the map (Appendix 1B).

This exciting, if perilous, free-for-all attitude persisted until 1965, another of our seminal years. In September, the Roads Committee, for the sum of £200.00, bought on behalf of the residents the roads, trees and verges from the Stroud Trust. Now, after forty long years we were really and truly on our own. In legal terms, we had become 'successors in title to all the benefits resulting from the Covenants imposed on the Estate'. In consequence, the Roads Committee promptly vested the ownership in four Trustees, namely Messrs. J.R.T. Hooper, M.C. Ashworth, B.W. Clarke and J. Simons.

These four gentlemen began forthwith to exercise their executive powers. No new house would be built until they and their architect had made sure that it was up to standard, and that it infringed no neighbour's rights. They exerted a draconian control over householders who wanted to extend to their boundary limits, or to cut their gardens in half and build on the empty bits, etc. Much ink was spilt, tempers were frayed, County Councils were confronted when too generous with their permits. Usually compromises were reached, but sometimes thumbs were turned down.

This chronicler has no desire to re-open old wounds, but, without being specific, he thinks there is both interest and instruction in the following case histories — a handful chosen from hundreds.

A problem had arisen early in the sixties when the owner of a house adjacent to, but outside the Estate, wanted to build three houses on Estate land he had acquired, with a new access to Lewis Lane; however (and this was the crunch), he wanted his own house to have similar access, and to be taken into the Estate. This created a precedent, but tolerant diplomacy prevailed; now all four houses are part of the Heights.

Our Committee's grandest debate about development began a few years ago and still continues. We all remember how disturbed most of us were when the County Council announced its Scheme XM 2075 concerning large tracts of empty ground around the top of Joiners Lane and beyond. Our immediate concern was areas H1 and H2 — more identifiably elements of Winkers Farm. It was planned to house a small new estate plus a Council school at H2 and a smaller housing area at H1, all to be served from our Estate by our roads. Opposition, and not only from the Heights, was instant and voluble, culminating in a protest meeting at the Church Hall. Nevertheless, the Council had its way over one part of the plan. We believed that our neighbouring bit of virgin Green Belt would stay inviolate; but not for long. A recent private development of 2.17 acres of Winkers Farm paddock has obtained Government and Council approval. Our Trustees, ever vigilant, continue to exert their efforts, and to great effect, against such powerful opposition, to ensure the new estate will be built to a high standard.

A more ominous threat reared its head in April '73. A speculative developer offered far more than their houses had cost to each of six residents for the lower halves of their gardens, with access via a new slip road. This scheme was turned down, with no regrets, by the Trustees. However, a clash of interests in this area, though on a smaller scale, is still unresolved.

Two developments which did pass scrutiny filled up, somewhat belatedly, that wild acreage in the heart of the Estate across which the Colonel had planned his avenue between the Hills. Dear Mr. Hooper wanted to preserve it as our kind of mini-Central Park; but it was too valuable to stay fallow, and it was fully colonised between '59 and '63; a cul-de-sac off Ellis Avenue (Half Acre) served five new houses, and another off Lincoln Road (Lincoln Way), three more.

Four houses filled up Lewis Lane by the mid-sixties; Winkers Lane was extended to provide five new houses; in 1970 two more, after much debate about access, were served by an uphill extension of Sandy Rise, as Lewis Lane insisted that it was already choc-a-bloc.

A sterner war began in February 1972, and waged until late spring '76, when the venerable Greenhedges at the junction of Lincoln Road and Chiltern Hill was sold. Greenhedges had a generous garden and developers were quick to realise its potential — they planned to raze the old house and replace it with three new houses. The Council seemed agreeable, but our Trustees certainly were not. They disliked the very idea of tearing down any house — that had never yet happened, and it would create a bad precedent — also three houses were one too many if our standards were to be maintained. Four years of argument were hardening into dangerous disagreement when, suddenly, the disputed development was dropped and the developer decided to cut his losses and sold the land in two plots. Greenhedges was reprieved by its present owner and a single bungalow is in course of erection on the uphill site facing Chiltern Hill.

There was less debate about the empty plot above this site: it has been amicably filled by two of our newest houses, "Tall Trees" and "Ochre House".

To complete our roster, mention should be made of the Earl Haig Memorial Homes, a well designed complex of ten houses approached by a right fork off Winkers Lane. They were built in 1953 as homes for invalid veterans of the Royal Engineers by that Corps. Colonel Stroud, R.E. donated the land.

Apart from the housing, the Trustees had a host of lesser decisions to make which deserve a brief mention.

In '63 Richard Biffa was discouraged when he tried to bring his incinerators within smelling distance.

1966 was the year of the ramps; and it was the year Mr. Sutton, a relatively new resident, joined the Committee. This conjunction is purely coincidental. Well, he may have suggested the ramps, but he would oppose any idea of applying them further.

There were numerous minor subjects for the Trustees to discuss; balconies which would destroy neighbours' privacy, parked caravans, ugly fencing, obtrusive laundry, etc., etc., all the way down to a request from a charming ecologist who wanted us to provide owls' nests, thereby preserving a threatened species. So frequently are our Trustee's rules infringed (in all innocence usually) by residents who are simply trying to make their own heaven-on-earth, that I'm convinced that yet one more appendix is an essential; an extract from the Minutes of last February's Annual General Meeting (see Appendix 3). These, as it happens, lay down most admirably all the guidelines needed by our new (and old) residents. To me it seems that every single aspect of our rights and wrongs is comprehensively covered. I confess, with shame, that I did not attend the Meeting, but neither did nine out of ten of the other adult residents. It is for our benefit that this fine objective report is reprinted. Let us read, mark and inwardly digest every informative word of it.

Colonel Stroud's pride and joy, those tender saplings of 1924, now vie with vulnerable roads and whimsical developers as Estate nightmares, for they are now forest trees, blocking our heavens in the summer, breaking our backs sweeping dead leaves in the autumn and getting in the way of our new double garages. Some of us cry out if a branch is broken, others more radical ask for their uprooting. They are costly too – the last reckoning was an estimated £3,000 over five years; and our elms are dying. Still, most of us appreciate that our trees are a precious heritage. Replacing them one by one with professional help as they become unmanageable must remain, for us and those who come after us, a sacred charge.

To lighten the closing page of this dry-as-dust chronicle, here is an old story taking us back to the autumn of 1960. A young tearaway drove recklessly up Chiltern Hill, just missing a resident who was posting a letter, and who followed him by car as far as Upway. There the offender had stopped for a chat. He was dead unlucky, as the following dialogue reported in the Bucks Advertiser discloses:

Resident: "Please drive at a reasonable speed on my estate."
Culprit: "Your . . . estate ? Who the . . . are you ?"
Resident: "I am Mr. Ogden, Chairman of the Roads Committee."
Culprit: Obscene laughter and abuse.

Another resident, attempting to delay the offending car as it made a quick getaway, had to jump for his life; and so it became a police matter. The upshot was a three year driving disqualification and a £3.00 fine. For once Mr. Ogden's recurring plea for careful driving (echoed ad nauseam ever since) bore fruit.

And what of the future ?

A distant memory of a letter to Mr. Ogden which says "please don't make the roads too good", evokes in me a response, warm yet surely quite irrational. But is it ? We fill up potholes with one hand, as it were, and set ramp traps with the other. We obliterate the Colonel's most humane conception — the provision of a rural footpath two feet wide on both sides of our roads so that the toddlers and the totterers will feel safe as they walk, with never a backward look, right round the Heights, crossing the roads just twice. The rest of the seven foot verge comprised roughish grass, a foot of it next to each house edge and the rest around the trees. For prettiness and tidiness, as anyone can see, it can't compare with its new-fangled alternative, a seven-foot extension of a well kept lawn, generously planted with bulbs and annuals; the lawn is not for you to walk upon, nor are the flowers for you to pick. Tell me please — when is a verge not a verge ?

Then there's the question of our house names. Can we go on much longer baffling every visitor, delivery van, postman, paper boy (all except John the Milkman, and he has gone) ? Can we afford the charming luxury of altering our label from Blenheim to Balmoral every time an Englishman sells his house to a Scotsman ? I may not see the day, but I'm sure it's coming, when Southfield will be 7, Woodside Hill, The Heights, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks., and what a charming and dignified address. And those ramps: are they controls or traps ? Should not each one be clearly defined ? But enough of an old man's prejudices and impracticalities; let the Chronicle end on a sweeter note.

As I turn into the Heights by any of our three entrances, I sense a lifting of the heart, faint but unmistakable. I have left the public highway and I am travelling on our roads between our verges and our trees and surrounded by our houses. The State may control nearly all else, but in these small respects we are absurdly, and blessedly, out of date.

LONG LIVE CHALFONT HEIGHTS, A PRIVATE ESTATE !

John Laurie
Woodside Hill, 1977

Appendix Ia

Journal of the Federation of Registered House-Builders



This house in Ellis Avenue, Chalfont St. Peter, faces south-west, and stands on a rectangular plot 65 ft. by 175 ft. Plans are included in an article about the estate beginning on page 177.

Volume 14

Number 7

HOUSING TALK

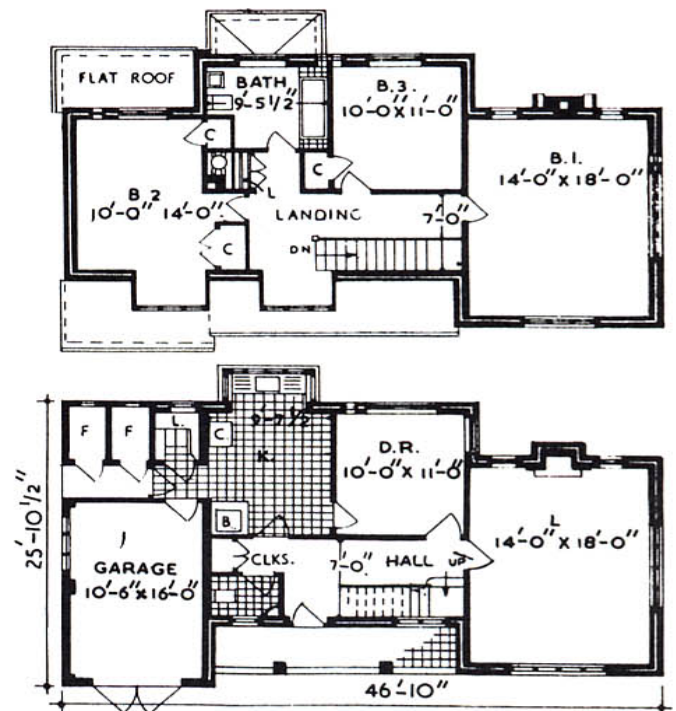
CHALFONT HEIGHTS

Completion of a pre-war estate with high-quality houses built to the purchasers' individual needs.

SINCE 1952 a number of houses have been built on the Chalfont Heights estate at Chalfont St. Peter, Buckinghamshire, by Messrs. W. J. Stringer Ltd. As the name suggests, the estate is set well up on a lightly wooded hillside, facing south-west across the Misbourne valley. Some houses were built here pre-war, and the post-war building is therefore the completion of an estate planned and started upon in the 1930s. In the past three years, Messrs. Stringer have built houses to meet the individual needs of their clients in a price range of about £2,800 to £5,200. On a new estate at Joiners Lane work has now started on 33 speculative houses in a price range of around £3,500 to £4,500. It is apparent that there is a considerable demand in this area for houses with higher space standards and better quality finishes than the average.

Three houses on the Chalfont Heights estate are illustrated here. On some plots the ground slopes very steeply and as far as possible this characteristic is turned to advantage: a semi-basement store, perhaps, has been incorporated. In the examples shown this has not been necessary.

GREEN BELTS



House in Ellis Avenue, Chalfont St. Peter. There is a photograph of the front elevation on page 171.

continued overleaf

CHALFONT HEIGHTS*continued*

Facing north-east, this house on Woodside Hill stands on an 80 ft. by 270 ft. plot. Plans are on the opposite page.



Although each house is planned to meet the distinctive needs of its purchaser, the construction is based on a general specification from which the following description has been composed.

Concrete strip foundations and a solid ground floor are laid. External walls are of the 11 in. cavity type, with bitumen d.p.c. Multi-coloured facings are used, usually old bricks for their mellow quality. Internal partitions are in 4½ in. brick or breeze blocks. Sand-faced clay or concrete roof tiles are laid on battens and felt.

Hall, lounge and dining room normally have wood block floors. Thermoplastic tiles are usual in kitchen and cloakroom. A boarded loft floor is provided. The cold tank is cased in wallboard on 2 in. by 2 in. framing, the cavity being filled with sawdust and a removable cover provided. Window and door frames are wooden; internal doors are generally of the flush type, front doors and frames of solid oak with brass butts. Most windows have leaded lights.

Ceilings are of plasterboard with scrimmed joints and finished with a skin coat. In kitchen, bathroom and w.c. wall tiling is fixed to a height of 4 ft. 6 in. A quarry tile base is provided for cooker and boiler. Central heating is as required. Both gas and electric cooker points are allowed for. The number and siting of electric power and

light points is by arrangement. Low-level sanitary fittings are standard.

In decoration, choice of colours naturally falls on the client. Provision is made for distempering ceilings and walls, except in the kitchen, bathroom and w.c., which are painted, and in garage and stores, which are colour-washed. Externally, cesspool drainage is provided, with soakpits for rainwater drains. Concrete and gravel are the normal finishes for paths and drives.

P.C. sums provided include those for brick fireplaces, wood block and thermoplastic flooring, ironmongery, wall tiling, electrical work, sanitary fittings, boiler and central heating, kitchen cupboards, paths and drives.

Roads on the Chalfont Heights estate are not made up. Problems experienced by the builders at Chalfont include a shortage of bricklayers and plasterers, and the difficulty and expense of obtaining building land, prices being around £10 to £14 per foot. There is no certainty of land to build on beyond two years. The supply of materials is fairly good now. Various causes combine to make the average construction period per house 8 months, compared with about 6 months pre-war.

The houses are designed by J. R. Roeder, F.A.B.S.S., M.F.B. Each house carries the certificate of the National House-Builders Registration Council.



This house in Lincoln Road faces south-west, and stands on an irregular plot varying between 50 ft. and 108 ft. in width, and about 200 ft. deep. Plans are on the right.

Planning and Compensation

IN A CIRCULAR* to local authorities dated July 26, from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, attention is drawn to certain respects in which the work of authorities concerned with planning is affected by the provisions of Parts II and V of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1954.

Reasons for Planning Decisions

The most important point is that concerning the reasons underlying planning decisions. These reasons, says the circular, are of great importance to the applicant, and it is desirable that they should be given in full to assist him in considering whether he should appeal to the Minister, and in preparing his case if he decides to do so. Nevertheless, authorities should remember that compensation is excluded if permission is refused because development would be premature, or because the land is liable to subsidence or flooding. These reasons should not therefore be specified unless they are decisive.

If land is not shown for development in the development plan and the authority think it unlikely that permission for development would be granted at any foreseeable time, to describe the development as "premature" would be inappropriate.

The reference to land liable to subsidence or flooding is intended to relate to cases where the land is already so liable and is thus unsuitable for the projected development, and not to cases where it is expected to become so liable at some date in the future (e.g., as a result of underground mineral workings).

To grant permission subject to conditions so onerous as virtually to nullify the permission is nearly always wrong, says the circular; in such circumstances a plain refusal is to be preferred.

Speedier Compensation Decisions

Authorities are asked to review their arrangements for dealing with claims for compensation under Parts II and V of the Act, in order to reduce to a minimum the time taken at each stage. Many cases, it is suggested, could be dealt with in a few days and it should rarely be necessary for any case to be kept for as long as a month.

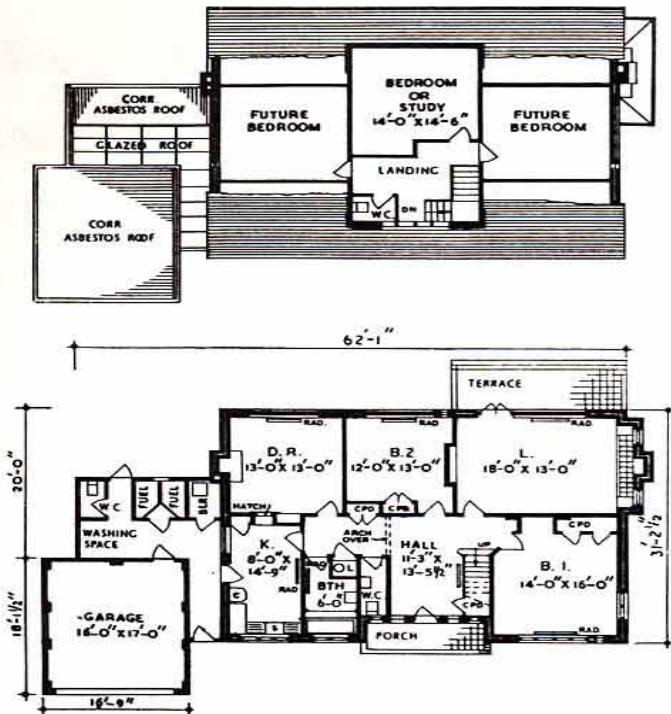
Another point dealt with in the circular is the arrangements for giving an authority a rough indication of the compensation payable under the Act if the permission sought were refused. Authorities are also asked to inform the Minister about any new development of land which might involve the repayment of some or all of a compensation payment already made.

TESTS ON CONVECTOR FIRES

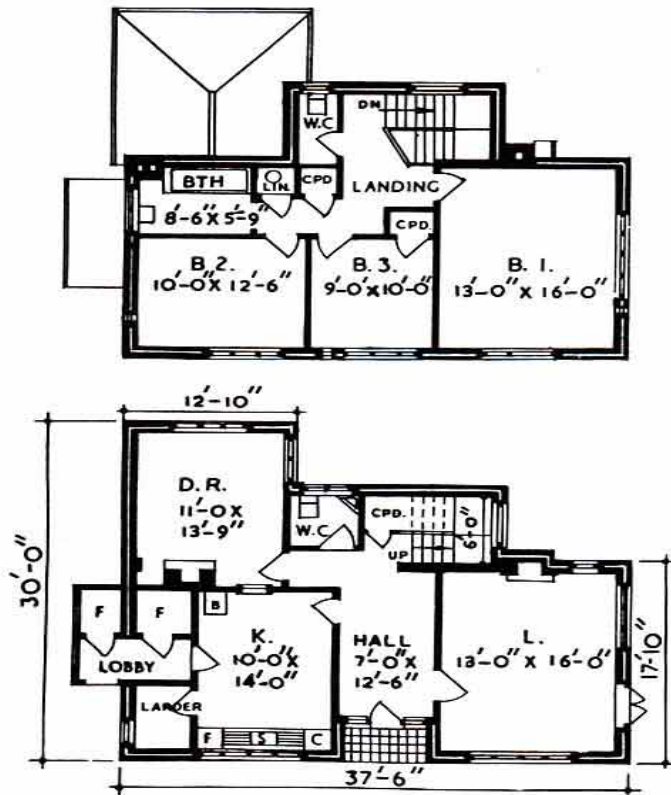
FREE-STANDING CONVECTOR FIRES with restricted throats may bring about a substantial fuel saving of 21 per cent compared with ordinary open fires, even if operated for longer periods and more extensively banked than the open type. This is the conclusion reached after field tests in 39 houses with medium-size living rooms, carried out by staff from the Domestic Appliances Laboratories of the British Coal Utilization Research Association and reported in the journal of the Institute of Fuel.

The fuel saving, says the report, was accompanied by higher levels and a more widespread and equable distribution of warmth. This was confirmed by measurements of warmth, which showed that the free-standing fires are of the order of 60 to 70 per cent better than the open fire when judged on the basis of area of warmth per unit burning rate.

* Circular No. 40/55, "Town and Country Planning Act, 1954," H.M. Stationery Office, 3d.



First floor and ground floor of the house on Woodside Hill, Chalfont St. Peter, illustrated on the left.



House in Lincoln Road, Chalfont St. Peter. The front of the house is shown in the picture opposite.

House Prices and Building Costs

Table shows how increased productivity since 1953 has kept down the price of new houses.

QUARTER ENDED	HOUSE PRICES				HOUSE-BUILDING COSTS
	SECONDHAND HOUSES			NEW HOUSES	
	Up to £1,500 (London up to £2,000)	£1,501-£2,500 (London £2,000 to £3,000)	Over £2,500 (London over £3,000)		
31.12.46	70	71	74	—	—
31.12.47	85	86	94	—	74
31.12.48	85	84	90	—	79
31.12.49	92	95	95	—	80
31.12.50	94	97	99	—	83
31.12.51	102	105	108	—	98
31.12.52	100	100	100	100	100
31.12.53	99	98	99	100	102
31. 3.54	99	98	94	101	103
30. 6.54	99	98	98	102	104
30. 9.54	100	97	95	100	104
31.12.54	98	97	96	101	106
31. 3.55	101	98	98	102	107
30. 6.55	102	101	101	103	111 (provisional)

PRICE TRENDS for new and secondhand houses, and increases in house-building costs, are indicated in the accompanying table recently published by the Co-operative Permanent Building Society. The following notes are appended to the table.

Secondhand House Prices

The indices of the prices at which secondhand houses have been sold are based on reports by the society's surveyors, which contain estimates of 1939 valuations. From these reports, indices based on 1939 values have been compiled and adjusted to the base period, the fourth quarter of 1952. The samples taken consisted of all re-sales of private dwelling-houses upon which the society made advances during the quarters stated, with certain exceptions.

New House Prices

The index of the prices of new houses shows the average prices at which newly-built properties mortgaged to the society were purchased. This index is now included because it points to the trend of house-building costs. The samples taken consisted of all newly-built properties upon which the society made advances during the quarters stated.

House-Building Costs

The house-building costs index has been adjusted according to variations in the prices of materials used in house-building and changes in the wages of building operatives. It is not possible to take into consideration changes of productivity because data on this factor which can be reduced to figures are not available. From the end of the war until about 1953, the productivity factor in compiling the index had not assumed a real degree of importance, and the indices up to that time were very useful in indicating the trend of house-building costs. However, during 1953, it was generally accepted that productivity in the industry was at a higher level than in previous years—there were fewer stoppages due to shortages of building materials and the economies of larger scale production were possible because licences could be obtained to build up to 12 houses at a time. In January, 1954, licences could be obtained to build up

to 50 houses at a time and since then restrictions on building have been almost completely removed. In these circumstances, the house-building costs index probably shows a steeper rise than has actually occurred and it is for this reason that the index showing the average prices at which new houses have been sold is included in the table.

SIX FILMS ON NEW BUILDING METHODS

Six films about building have just been made for the Ministry of Works, with money from America made available under the Conditional Aid Program. They run for ten minutes each, and have a good commentary on the sound-track.

Changing Practices in Building has short sequences on various recent developments in methods and materials, ranging from short pile foundations to finishes. This is a film that will do excellent work in education, and in keeping allied trades and professions up to date; but has time to say little more than what every builder knows already.

Soil Cement Roads, on the other hand, manages to show the whole process of road-making by soil stabilisation, and should be seen by any estate developer who has not been able to watch a road being made by this cost-saving method.

Factory-Made Building Interiors devotes about a minute each to various proprietary makes of prefabricated partition. It shows how they are manufactured and how they are installed.

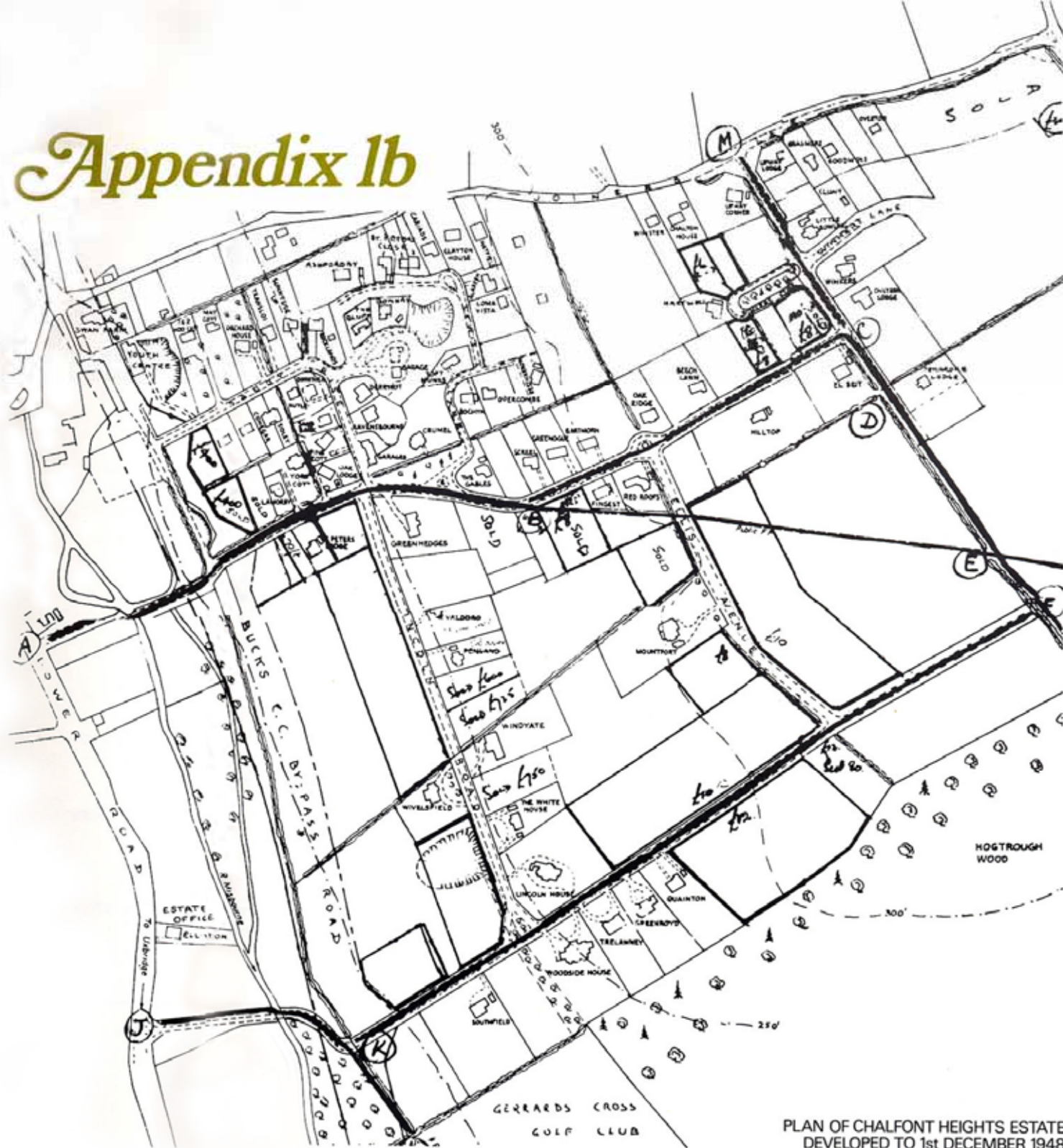
Site Handling of Materials shows the importance of careful planning for the delivery and storage of materials, whether on a cramped city site, or on an extensive housing estate.

Designing a Concrete Mix shows selection of aggregates, tests and trial mixes to determine the most suitable mix for a required strength.

Vibrated Concrete on a Building Site shows some new methods which achieve economies in labour, materials and shuttering.

All these films may be borrowed through the regional offices of the Technical Information Service of the Ministry of Works.

Appendix 1b



PLAN OF CHALFONT HEIGHTS ESTATE
DEVELOPED TO 1st DECEMBER 1948

Appendix 2

CHALFONT HEIGHTS ESTATE – OFFICERS

MR. L.C. BATEMAN	–	Wolverton, Woodside Hill
*MR. V.J.R. SUTTON	–	Cedar Heights, Lincoln Hill
MR. E.A. WILSON	–	Squirrels, Winkers Close

* Secretary to the Trustees

Architect to the Trustees – Mr. H.M. Key, Gerrards Cross
Solicitors to the Trustees – Messrs. Turberville Smith, Uxbridge
Assistant to the Trustees on Developments – Mrs. M.E. Clifton,
Little Dormers,
Chiltern Hill.

- NOTE
- 1) The Committee is subject to re-election or a new Committee elected, each year at the Annual General Meeting, of which due notice is given.
 - 2) The Committee holds a public liability insurance policy in respect of the roads and trees. Cover is up to £50,000 for any one occurrence and up to £250,000 in any one year. The policy is third party and does not cover residents.

TREE SURGEON – D.M. Bishop,
20, Marygold Walk,
Amersham, Bucks. Tel: Little Chalfont 2234

ROAD CONTRACTOR – G. Skinner and Sons, Ltd.,
Old Gravel Pit,
Lower Hatfield Road,
Hertford, Herts. Tel: Hertford 4561/2

NOTE – The Road Contractor will be pleased to undertake at commercial rates the surfacing and drainage of any drives on the Estate.

NOTE — The Trustees act for the Residents as the legal owners of the roads, verges and trees on the Estate and are successors in title to the benefits of the Covenants imposed on the Estate.

ROADS COMMITTEE — 1977

Mr. D.A. Bates	—	Bochym, Lewis Lane
Mr. D.R.S. Brown	—	Hilltop, Chiltern Hill
+Mr. G.H. Jarvis	—	Lyndale Cottage, Woodside Hill
Mr. J.H. Luya (Chairman)	—	Wellingham, Lincoln Road
Air-Cdre S.J. Marchbank (Secretary)	—	Tarn Cottage, Lincoln Road
xMrs. J.K. Payne	—	Knoll House, Lewis Lane
Mr. V.J.R. Sutton	—	Cedar Heights, Lincoln Road
Mr. E.A. Wilson	—	Squirrels, Winkers Close

+ Responsible for Roads and Tree maintenance work.

x Secretary to Roads Committee.

Appendix 3

GENERAL INFORMATION ON ESTATE POLICY, ETC.

Roads:

The Estate roads are owned by the Trustees on behalf of the Residents of the Estate.

The policy established by the Trustees and the Roads Committee over the years is to maintain roads to a good surface but to preserve a rural standard. All road junctions had been specially surfaced to improve wearing qualities. It has to be accepted that in exceptionally heavy rainfall some residents will be inconvenienced. This could only be avoided by embarking upon a most expensive construction programme of grading the roads to fall, kerbing the edges and installing a piped water drainage system. We feel that the result would not be in keeping with the wishes of the majority of residents and the cost would be prohibitive. Normally we now suffer inconvenience about two days a year by adopting the 'rural' approach.

We have a long term contract for the maintenance of the principal roads, i.e. Lewis Lane, Ellis Avenue, Woodside Hill, Lincoln Road, Chiltern Hill and Upway. These roads will be surfaced three times in the ten year contract period. All other roads (with the exception of the spur roads off Lincoln Road and Winkers Lane, which are not owned by the Estate) will be kept in good order by the Roads Committee as the need dictates and funds allow.

Verges:

The verges are owned by the Estate Trustees on behalf of the Residents.

Residents are requested to look after the verges bounding their

property. (But this does not mean that they should become an integral part of the garden ! !)

In many cases verges were intended to contain a footpath. In a wooded estate these can be attractive and are surely in the interests of safety. About fifteen years ago there were footpaths on Lincoln Road, Woodside Hill and Ellis Avenue. Now only sections remain. Over the years to come we should like these paths to be reinstated.

Residents have been requested not to park cars on them. This request was made in the interests of safety and tidiness and we are pleased to note that almost without exception Residents support this view.

Trees:

The Roads Committee has appointed its own tree surgeon and we think that, generally speaking, he has tended the trees well over the past years. It is no mean achievement considering that the majority of the trees are of the forest variety. The Committee's aim is to create a "high-up" canopy effect to permit the free passage of all traffic.

The Dutch elm disease has wrought havoc on the many established elm and related species of trees on the Estate. The diseased trees have or will be felled. Those and others which have been removed over the years for various reasons will be replaced by suitable species as the case demands.

There appears to be a very considerable divergence of view amongst residents on the amenity value provided by the trees. The majority of residents enjoy their beauty but a few would like them cut down. It is surprising that they should move onto this wooded Estate, which has changed little over the years, and then wish to change it to suit their own particular wishes. We do accept, however, that a constant watch must be kept on the growth of the particularly vigorous varieties.

Estate owned trees must not be topped, lopped or cut without reference to the Roads Committee.

Appendix 4

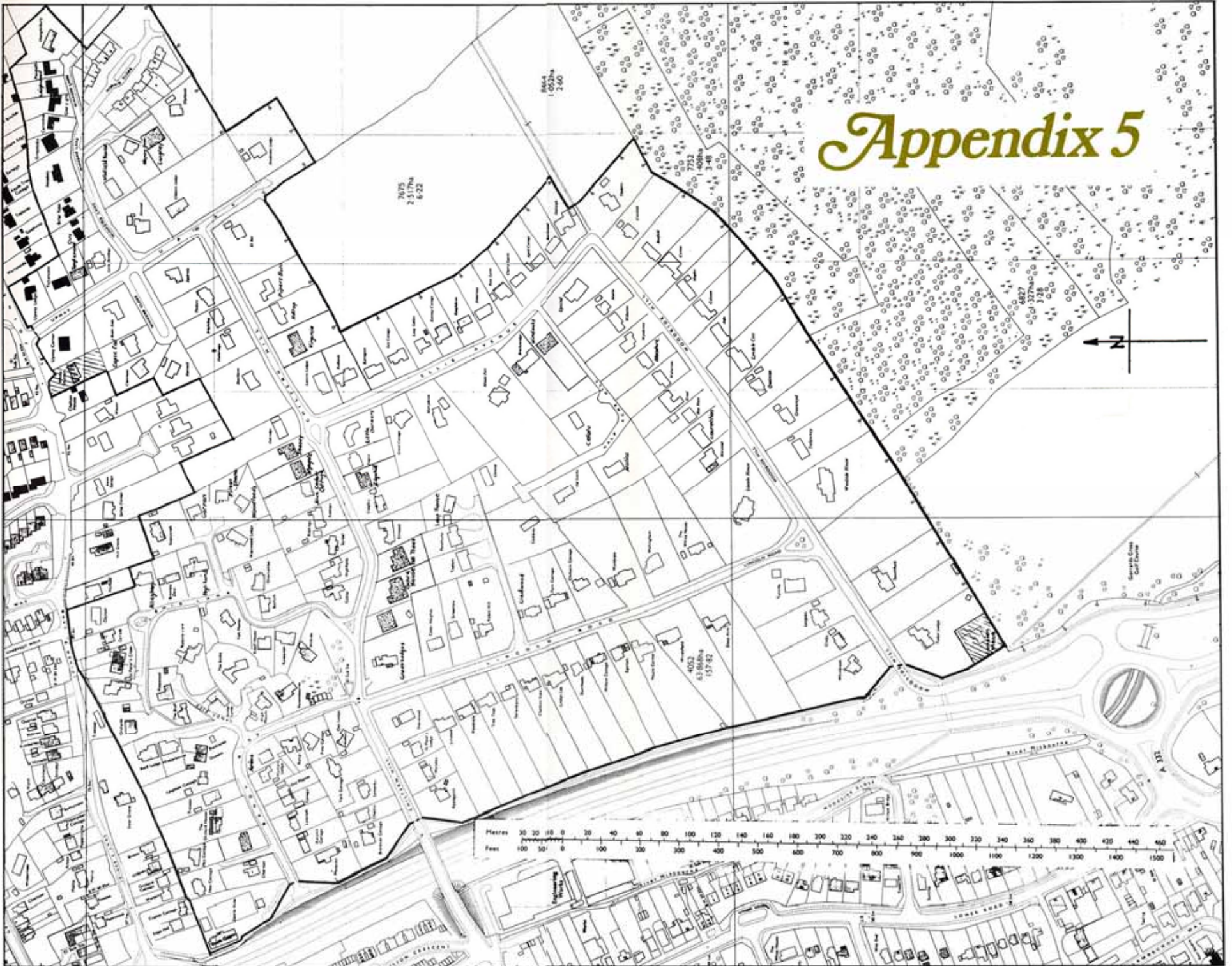
CHALFONT HEIGHTS ESTATE Development Guide Lines

Any new development on Chalfont Heights requires to be approved by two authorities – firstly the Chiltern District Council and secondly the Trustees to the Estate. Approval by the former does not necessarily mean sanction to build will be given by the latter. The authority of the Trustees to reject or modify plans is given by the Covenants established by Colonel Stroud in 1928 and were included in all subsequent property title deeds.

The Trustees choose to amend or reject plans only when the interests of neighbours or residents in general are materially and adversely affected. No hard and fast rules can be laid down – each case is considered on its own merits, but the following guide – lines generally apply :-

- 1) Boundary to boundary development will not be permitted. A minimum of 5 ft. clearance to the boundary is required.
- 2) Plot widths (not frontage) should be 60ft. minimum but this must, of course, be related to the shape and position of the particular plot under review.
- 3) For variation of Covenant, where relevant, a payment of £500.00 (or less according to circumstances) must be paid by the developer to the Estate funds.
- 4) New developments should not unreasonably interfere with the amenities of neighbours. It helps good relations to advise and discuss planning proposals with neighbours prior to formal submission.
- 5) It is advisable to submit plans to the Trustees prior to the Local Authority, since the criteria of each are, or maybe, different and time can be saved by avoiding subsequent change.
- 6) The quality and style of proposed buildings must be in keeping with that on the Estate generally.

Appendix 5





LINCOLN ROAD FROM WOODSIDE



CHILTERN HILL



ESTATE FROM THE AIR



WOODSIDE HILL

PUBLISHED PRIVATELY
BY CHALFONT HEIGHTS
ROADS COMMITTEE
1977
