

Lady Elizabeth Byng Playing Field

There was, until January 2015, a little known playing field at the top of Sunnybank Road. It was accessed from the footpath that connected Sunnybank Road to Cherry Tree Lane footpath that passes the Ashwood estate on its way to the Barnet Road. The playing field was on land leased from the Wrotham Park Estate.



In early January 2015 the landowners fenced off the playing field area from the footpath, removed the grass and grubbed up the hedgerow that enclosed the playing field. This hedgerow is believed to be 'ancient hedgerow' or possibly an 'important hedgerow', both of which require permission from the local planning authority before they can be removed. There are also two oak trees in the south boundary of the playing field which have tree preservation orders on them. These trees, so far, remain in situ.

Enquiries to the Hertsmere Parks Department revealed that the land was leased to Hertsmere Borough Council and the lease was last renewed in

1984 for 21 years so the lease expired in 2005. On expiry, the council decided not to renew the lease so the land reverted to the landowner, the Wrotham Park Estate.



Playing Field in January

The Potters Bar Society has been approached by several people concerned about these works, the loss of the hedgerow, the two trees with preservation orders on them and the work that is being undertaken on a pond that is situated further to the west of the playing field. Here a large hole has been dug out next to the pond, about twice the size of the existing pond. This area is frequented by bird watchers who have concerns about the disturbance to the birds and other animals as well as the destruction of bushes and bulrushes around the existing pond.



Location of the pond and Potters Bar Brook

Other work has been undertaken on the Potters Bar Brook and the other brook/drainage ditch in the field. The drainage ditch has been run

through a corrugated plastic pipe and covered over with earth, and in the last week of January, a section of the Potters Bar Brook has also been run through similar pipe and covered over for about 60 metres from near where the brook is culverted to run under Ashwood Road. This covering of the ditch and brook may reduce drainage of the field and apparently there are already problems with the drainage of this piece of land.



The two protected oak trees



Potters Bar Brook culvert under Ashwood Road

The Potters Bar Society has contacted Hertsmere's Planning Enforcement Officer to voice our concerns, particularly about the hedgerow and trees. He has visited the site and issued a Planning Contravention Notice to the

land owners seeking further clarification of their intentions. We await their response. The issue of the brook has also been raised with the Planning Enforcement Officer.



Area where Potters Bar Brook has been covered over.

Walkers have also expressed concern as they commonly walk from Pope Paul's School in Baker Street, along the edge of the field via the pond, to Cherry Tree Lane and exit the field via the playing field. Their concerns range from what is happening at the pond, the damage to the plant life and wild animal habitat, to will they still be able to walk this route. It should be noted that this route is not an official Right of Way but has probably been in use for at least 45 years. Many houses in Oakroyd Avenue and Oakroyd Close have gates in their back garden fences leading out onto the path.

There is also considerable concern that the work maybe in preparation for housing development. The Potters Bar Society has no information to indicate that this might be the case.