

DEC '72

number 9

GLC puts vans before LIVES

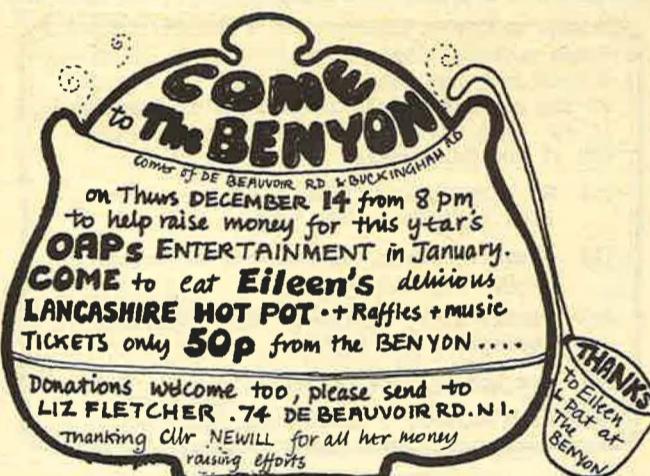
The authorities have been busy since the petition for a pedestrian crossing in Southgate Road was presented (as reported in the last *De Beaver*). Officials took a count of people trying to cross the road, we gather, and of the traffic. They got the right people count, and the right traffic count, for a crossing.

BUT . . . the Greater London Council and the police said there wasn't a good case for a Zebra crossing. You see, shops and factories couldn't load and unload goods. Or so they say.

BUT . . . they are talking about putting traffic lights at Northchurch Road by the middle of next year (do they know about the road closures?). And they may put "traffic refuges" in the middle of Southgate Rd in a couple of places. Big deal. Give us our crossing.

Vivienne Stockdale has received 2 communications from the authorities since the petition. The first, from the chairman of Hackney Accident Prevention Committee, whom Stanley Clinton Davis, MP, contacted for us. He supported the view that there is "a concentration of parked vehicles" and that many drivers travel too fast along this road.

On Friday, November 24, a letter was received giving notification of a site meeting for that day between the GLC, police, Hackney & Islington borough councils and London Transport, to discuss the possibilities of a pedestrian crossing. It could have been erected within several months if they had reached agreement. But what now? Lots of local residents are already angry as the news travels.



MR CLAYTON THE INSPECTOR

Geoffrey Rippon, newly appointed Secretary of State for the Environment, has decided not to allow Hackney Council to cancel De Beauvoir's southern area General Improvement Area (GIA). Mr Rippon also comes down very firmly against the "extensive demolition" in the southern area which the Council proposed at the public inquiry into the southern area's future in March.

In an official letter to Hackney's Town Clerk, the Department of the Environment gives Hackney 6 months in which to choose between three alternatives - all of which involve keeping and improving most of the houses in the existing General Improvement Area (GIA). The three courses are:

- to cut down the "extensive demolition" of redevelopment plan 5 which the Council put to the public inquiry in March and to keep the existing De Beauvoir South GIA.
- to withdraw the Council resolution to cancel the GIA and resolve instead to exclude certain areas to be redeveloped from the existing GIA. The excluded areas should be designated on a published plan.
- to resolve to add those areas which are to be kept and improved to the central area GIA if Mr Rippon agrees to cancel the southern area GIA. The areas to be kept and improved should be designated on a published plan.

Consult local people

Hackney has to consult local people in making up its mind. Mr Rippon says he is deferring his decision (on the Council's resolution to cancel the GIA) for a period of not more than six months, "during which he trusts that a solution can be worked out between the Council and those affected, though he recognises that complete unanimity of view may not be attainable." "Those affected" means local residents (including the Southern Area Action Group) and Brown & Brown for the Benyon Estate, the biggest landlord in the area.

Mr Rippon did not like Hackney's new "reserved area" status for houses to be kept and improved. He did not accept that it was right to remove from owners and occupiers of properties proposed for rehabilitation "the planning security and the expectation of environmental improvement" which they enjoyed within a GIA.

Mr T H Clayton, the inspector who held the public in-

quiry in March into Hackney's resolution to cancel the GIA, advised Mr Rippon not to approve the Council's resolution - but suggested that a part, or parts, of the area could be excluded from the GIA (and thus redeveloped) later on. He did not consider that the original declaration in April, 1971, by the previous Council under Conservative control had been improperly made.

Arbitrary plan

The inspector savagely criticised redevelopment plan 5 which was drawn up specially for the inquiry by Ryder's, the Council's planning consultants. He described the plan as "arbitrary proposals, bearing no relation to ownership pattern or condition of properties"!

In particular, the inspector found that

- a "small amount" of redevelopment was desirable within the area.
- not all the industries in the area were "harmful to the residential development".
- public open space could be provided on Council-owned land on the east side of Ufton Road (rather than by destroying homes on either side of De Beauvoir Road).

He pointed out that all industries in the area would have to be moved to allow redevelopment, possibly involving compulsory purchase orders, but industries which were not a nuisance could remain in a GIA - "so that the difficulties of removing offensive operations would be greater for redevelopment than improvement."

The inspector suggested that traffic dangers for public open space near Ufton Road could be reduced by closing Ufton Road at the Downham Road end and by building across the end of the road over the "pre-fab sites" on both sides. This would also provide new homes in the area for local families who had to move to allow their existing houses to be demolished or improved.

Finally, in his view, many of the existing houses in the area could provide satisfactory accommodation for 7 or 8 people when improved - so it was possible that more accommodation would become available by more improvement than by the Council's redevelopment plan. He found that a number of houses in the area had already been successfully improved and converted, and that the De Beauvoir Association gave ample evidence of strong local support for a policy of improvement rather than demolition.

SAAG ASKS FOR FULL AREA SURVEY

About 50 residents of the southern area attended a public meeting in the crypt on November 22, called at only 2 days' notice, to pass on the inquiry decision and decide what to do next.

Two members of the SAAG planning team repeated their evidence of the need for a full residents' attitude

survey. It was unanimously agreed to urge the Council to carry out such a survey and Frank Fletcher agreed to write to the Council in those terms. The general mood was of regret at yet another delay but residents were encouraged to hear that the Department of the Environment was to monitor Hackney's public consultation - and that a definite decision on the GIA boundaries was due in at most 6 months.

The report (see above) was further discussed, and the "arbitrary" plan 5 was put on display for the first time in the area. Alan Rayner, of 7 Ufton Rd, was elected to Charles Maitland's vacant seat on the Council's central area GIA steering committee.

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PLANS FOR COUNCIL HOMES ON DISPLAY?

Praise for Hackney Council from Graham Parsey, De Beauvoir Association chairman, following the news that the Council had responded to comments on their redevelopment plans for the prefab sites in or near the GIA. We reported the major changes in October.

Hackney's planning committee has, however, deferred a decision on the Mortimer Road library site (this had been criticised for providing garages which spoilt the look of the new development).

Hertford Road remains 3 storey despite the criticism that it is an otherwise intact street of 2 storey villas; the concession of a mansard roof has been made but it is doubtful whether this will help. The Association had suggested that since Ardleigh Road is already 4 storey the additional accommodation would best be provided there. However we await the promised local display of the drawings before we express any further comment.

We thank Cllr Alf Linzell and his committee for their fruitful discussions and hope that the outstanding details can be resolved including the local exhibition.

The homes of tenants in De Beauvoir Square who put in official applications to Hackney Council for improvement orders are now included in Brown & Brown's improvement programme for 1973. The De Beauvoir Association has asked Councillor Ken Wilson, chairman of Hackney's housing management committee, to come to a second meeting for local tenants to explain the Council's policy towards landlords.

but of course.... CLAYTON FURS

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RENTS PRIVATE TENANTS

If you rent your home unfurnished from a private landlord, the Housing Finance Act 1972 makes important changes in the way your rent is fixed. The Act affects both controlled and regulated tenants of unfurnished homes. Tenants of furnished homes are not affected.

You have a controlled tenancy, generally speaking, if your home's rateable value was not more than £40 in November, 1957, and if you or, in some cases, a member of your family have lived there since before July 6, 1957. You should be paying a low and rigidly controlled rent. You have a regulated tenancy, generally speaking, if it is not controlled and you do not share "essential living accommodation" with your landlord.

2 If you are a regulated or controlled tenant, then the Rent Act 1968 safeguards your right to stay on in your home and nothing in the new Act affects this. It is a criminal offence for anyone to bully or harass you, or to evict you without going to court for an eviction order. You can take out an injunction to protect yourself against a landlord in such circumstances and can recover damages.

Rent allowances

3 From January 1, Hackney Council must operate a rent allowance scheme for unfurnished tenants.

Under the scheme, you can apply to the Council for a rent allowance - a cash payment towards the cost of your rent. You will have to fill in a form, giving details of your family earnings and circumstances, for the Council to assess how much you are entitled to. A tenant of a housing association is also entitled to a rent allowance.

Rent agreements

4 Under the new Act you may, if you wish, agree a rent increase from January 1 onwards with the landlord without going to the Rent Officer. But don't forget the "freeze", which applies to rents. You can refuse to enter into an agreement with the landlord; and if you do not agree to a rent increase, the rent cannot normally be increased unless the landlord himself goes to the Rent Officer. If you do sign a new rent agreement, you may at any time - even the very next day - go to the Rent Officer and ask him to register a "fair" rent for your home. Usually it is safer to go to the Rent Officer. But you can find out how high "fair" rents for other unfurnished homes locally are from his register and work out if your landlord's rent is higher or lower. You can also get advice from the Rent Officer.

5 If you are a sitting tenant, both you and the landlord must sign a rent agreement. The agreement must begin with a statement that:

- (a) the tenant's security of tenure (ie your right to stay on in your home) will not be affected if you refuse to sign the agreement; and
- (b) signing the agreement does not take away your right to apply at any time to the Rent Officer to register a "fair" rent.

De-controlled tenants

6 The new Act brings all controlled tenancies except for "slums" (ie those homes which are officially notified as unfit by the Council) into the "fair" rent system for regulated tenancies by stages. The first controlled tenancies to be affected are those with a rateable value (as at March 31 1972) of £95 or more. These homes come out of control on January 1 and applications to the Rent Officer to register a "fair" rent for them can be made now. Note that it is the rateable value of the flat or rooms which you rent which counts, not the rateable value of the house they are in. Again, the rent can't go up under the Government's "freeze". Not all controlled tenancies are brought into the "fair" rent system on January 1. Those with a rateable value of under £95 stay controlled for the time being.

Rent increases

7 The "fair" rent for a newly de-controlled tenancy is usually going to be much higher than the rent previously paid - possibly even three or four times as much. But you do not actually pay the new "fair" rent immediately: the rent increase is phased over two years. When the "freeze" ends, you pay the controlled rent plus a third of the increase for the first year; you pay the controlled rent plus two-thirds of the increase for the second year; and after

two years, you pay the full "fair" rent. So, if your controlled rent was £2 a week, and the "fair" rent is £5 a week, you pay £3 a week for the first year, £4 a week for the second year, and £5 a week after two years. But if a third of the increase is less than 50p a week, the two annual rent rises are of 50p a week each instead.

Rules for de-control

8 When your tenancy moves from control into the "fair" rent system, your landlord can ask you to sign a rent agreement instead of going to the Rent Officer - again, don't forget the "freeze". Any agreement must be signed and must begin with the statements of your rights, as stated in paragraph 5 above. At least 28 days before an agreement can come into force, the landlord must deposit a prescribed form containing full details of the agreement with Hackney Council and provide you with a copy. The Council must inform you when the rent increase begins. The agreement is open to public inspection for 3 years. FURTHER, the landlord must lodge any subsequent agreement in the 3 years with the Council.

The danger is that the landlord's rent agreement won't provide for the phased rent increase you would have paid if the Rent Officer had registered a "fair" rent. You may have to pay the full new rent immediately. Also, the landlord may charge a very high, and unfair, rent.

Overpaid rent

9 If the landlord just raises the rent for a regulated or de-controlled tenancy - or makes an agreement which doesn't follow the rules laid down in paragraphs 5 or 8 above - you are entitled to get back any rent increase you have paid by deducting it from the rent you are currently paying. You can recover overpaid rent going back over two years in this way. You need also only pay rent at the level you previously paid until a proper rent agreement is made or a "fair" rent is registered.

Next: rent & improvement

These notes outline the main changes which may affect you, but they can't cover the effects of the new Act in all individual circumstances. If you want advice or help, you can contact any of the following:

- (a) Mr Lach, Rent Officer, 219 Mare Street, E.8. (telephone 985 5875)
- (b) Frank Fletcher, De Beauvoir Association, 74 De Beauvoir Road, N.1.
- (c) Stuart Weir, Citizens' Rights Office. (telephone 405 9795)
- (d) Sue Aubrey, 144 De Beauvoir Road, N.1.
- (e) Alan Rayner, 7 Ufton Road, N.1.

LETTER

I hear there are plans to join up two of the semi-detached houses in Buckingham Road and two of the cottages in Tottenham Road.

I don't think buildings are particularly important: it's the people who live in them that count, but this part of London does have some special qualities and once destroyed they can never be replaced. One of these is its openness, which will be vastly diminished if we are left with solid terraces where before there were semi-detached pairs. De Beauvoir Rd is already suffering badly from joining-up & I think it would be a great pity if other parts of the area caught the same disease. Surely planning permission for this kind of 'closing-up' in De Beauvoir should always be refused? WILLIAM VERITY, 4 Culford Grove

DBA Annual Report

In his report Graham Parsey, chairman of the De Beauvoir Association, expressed growing concern at the lack of progress in the GIA programme for the central area. Despite the residents' contribution with the public exhibition, two public meetings and the submission of the second Residents' Report during the past year, it may be another year before anything tangible is seen in the area. At the same time many residents have seen their housing conditions deteriorate over the past 2½ years.

The Residents' Report which had been submitted on July 5th was not expected to get Council approval until December 20th, with another 6 months for GLC approval and statutory procedures.

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A MERRY XMAS

ANGER OVER COMMUNITY CENTRE AND DUMP SITES

GIVE US PLAY SPACES !

Anger at the Council's apparent lack of concern about play space in De Beauvoir is growing. There are signs that the point of explosion is not far off. People are demanding to know:

Why nearly a 1000 families were plonked down in high rise flats with nowhere to meet & nowhere for their children to play?

Why the long-promised Community Centre for the New Town is still in doubt ? and

Why the Council has no plans at all for any play facilities for the next four years ? (the earliest date possible for the centre to open).

When will Councillors and officials wake up to the fact that four years is a long time in a child's life? Whatever happens about the Community Centre children in the De Beauvoir area - and especially in the New Town - desperately need somewhere to play now. The Council asks for assurances that whatever facilities they supply will be used. The question ought to go around the other way: how can they prove that it is possible for children to live for four of the most sensitive years of their life without anywhere to get out and play ?

LIKE A LITTLE PRISON

For all the evidence points the other way. Pat Smythe who is an expert on play, addressed the De Beauvoir Association at the AGM and said that there was now enough knowledge about high-rise flats to prove conclusively that they were the cause of delinquency, mental illness, and crime. As Mrs Rose, New Town representative on the GIA, put it, "it must be like a little prison for the kiddies", and Mrs Cox, also a representative, said the vandalism around the New Town was horrifying: "There used to be 12 nice little trees along Downham Road. Now only 6 are left - the others torn up by the roots. It's things like that make you feel sick inside." But as she, and Mrs Rutland, a trained play leader and mother, who lives on the estate, also pointed out, "What can you expect but vandalism? There's nothing else to do. And they've got to do something."

At its committee meeting on November 14th the De Beauvoir Association decided to write to the Leader of the Council, Martin Ottolangui, making clear the strength of feeling on this issue and asking for official blessing for volunteers to clear one of the prefab sites on Ufton Road and make it into a play area. Some parents locally are getting so impatient that they may take it into their heads to clear up and organize the sites soon anyway, with or without Council permission. But let us hope that Alderman Ottolangui gives them the chance to do it with.

WILLIAM VERTY

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A MERRY CHRISTMAS

How much longer do the patient tenants of De Beauvoir New Town have to wait for the long overdue community hall? The site is derelict and is used now for the dumping of anybody's dirty old junk. Surely, until such time as the Council moves to build the centre & library, this space could have been cleared, fenced & made into a play area for New Town children?

Over 3 years ago a Tenants' Association was formed which began very enthusiastically but failed to get people together through the lack of accommodation. Gradually, the association deteriorated and fell apart.

In July this year a committee was formed at Rozel Court for a social club for the block, and this has proved most successful with 80% of the tenants as participating members. The committee, though small, have achieved no small success.

Bingo is now run weekly on Thursdays at 8pm in the Colville Estate Hall and we warmly invite anyone on the Estate to come along and join in. Bearing in mind that our social club has only been running six months, we have plenty on the agenda for "Xmas" -- the younger children will be having an Xmas gift, the older children will be taken to the Palladium, and the senior citizens will be receiving a pleasing Xmas gift. We are also planning a party early in the New Year for all other members.

The purpose of us telling other tenants of how successful we, in Rozel Court, have been, is that if other blocks followed our ideas a community hall built on our estate could, and would, be made full use of. There are endless opportunities for bringing together all the tenants to make De Beauvoir New Town a much happier community to live in.
P.J.ROSE, M. SANDERSON, Rozel Court Social Club.

A planning application has been approved for the use of part of 30 Southgate Road as a fried fish and chip shop. Mr Mevlit, the proprietor of the new bakery there, said that his sister hoped to open up the fish shop in about two months time. This will fulfil a need expressed by residents of the southern area and the New Town.



PHOTO HACKNEY GAZETTE

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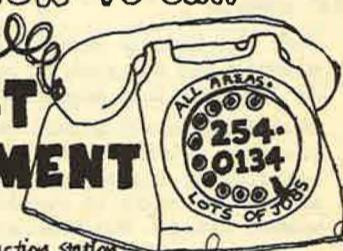
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Council: 'No grants for speculators'

At long last, Hackney Council is acting to curb the misuse of improvement grants by property speculators. The Council will now only make improvement grants to owner-occupiers or owners who are prepared to rent the improved houses or flats unfurnished at "fair" rents. De Beaver and the De Beauvoir Association have consistently urged such a policy on the Council - and Council spokesmen have consistently replied that it is "impossible".

The Council will give improvement grants for the conversion and improvement of tenanted properties "only where the lettings are unfurnished and subject to the full concurrence of existing tenants and assurances from the landlord designed to protect their interests". If tenants have to move out to allow improvement works to be done, they must be fully satisfied with the alternative accommodation they are offered.

If tenants are to remain, the owners must give assurances that they will not be required or encouraged (ie by offering them cash sums) to leave. Owner-occupiers with tenants must give similar assurances as regards letting at "fair" rents only and not requiring or encouraging their tenants to leave.

These new rules may affect the Benyon Estate's improvement policy in the "central area" GIA where houses are being improved with Council improvement grants and then sold at high prices on 50-year leases.

Now that's being done, what about two other "impossible" demands?

1. That the Council should refuse planning permission for the rash of conversions of homes in De Beauvoir into small "bed-sit" flats.
2. That the Council should begin to use compulsory purchase orders on houses which landlords are refusing to improve in the "central area" GIA - and should begin to require landlords to improve houses outside the GIA as well.

Before any Council spokesmen say that the Department of the Environment won't allow CPOs in a GIA, let us quote for them the example of Liverpool Corporation. Liverpool put CPOs on two areas of unimproved housing in a GIA in 1971 and the Secretary of State for the Environment has recently approved them following a public inquiry in March 1972.

So please, don't let anyone tell us that it's "impossible".

The De Beauvoir Association & De Beaver wish everyone a very happy Christmas & New Year

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CATEGORY Tenant Owner-Occupier Leaseholder

PLEASE SEND TO - The Secretary, 7, Ufton Rd, N1.

PEOPLE



JERRY O'NEILL (RIGHT) IN REHEARSAL

Congratulations to Jerry O'Neill, landlord of the Duke of Wellington, on establishing a pub-theatre in his pleasant 'Sugawn Kitchen', which has been well-known now for 5 years for traditional Irish music & songs. So it was appropriate that the first curtain in the new 'Sugawn Theatre' rose on Nov 13 on 2 one-act Irish plays, 'The Shadow of Glen' by J M Synge and Lady Gregory's 'The Rising of the Moon.' Full-house audiences enthusiastically received both plays; the standard of acting by the amateur casts (with Jerry himself as an impressionable R.I.C. sergeant) was high. Next was the Tavistock Rep Company in 6 Pongo plays, well-described in the programme as 'simple, comic, knock-about-pieces.' A week or two of music hall is planned early in the new year & there couldn't be a more suitable place for it than this small pub-theatre, seating 60 to 70 people.

DORIS KIBBLEWHITE

TOOM & JERRY

Anyone who lives in a house where dirt has collected in forgotten corners, or where secret cracks abound (most houses), will know that the pitter patter of tiny feet across the ceiling means MICE. He may seem harmless as he frisks across the TV screen pursued by Tom, and a lot less worrying than a rat. But in reality the mouse is a carrier of germs, and considerably less easy to eradicate than his bigger brother.

In De Beauvoir, mice are a particular worry to elderly people living alone. They are not active enough to scare them away, nor do they have the energy to clear up the trail of mess they leave. In one instance mice were found to have tunneled right the way through a pile of newspapers, presumably making a nest. A common complaint has been that even when the Council's rodent department is called in there is no follow-up to see that the vermin have gone.

One reason could be that there are only 11 rodent operators (their name) to cover the entire Borough, and just one of those is allocated to De Beauvoir. Even then, it's readily accepted that the only available poison which is also not harmful to children, Warfarin, has for some time been bringing the canny mice to the point of addiction.

The Council has now come up with its own, more radical solution. Where the rodent operator is unable to discourage mice, the Housing Department will relax its "no pets" rule and allow tenants to keep cats. So far the relaxation only applies to three estates, none of them in De Beauvoir.

If anybody on a local estate is troubled by mice, this would be a good time to press their case. In the absence of any chemical means, it seems that the only ultimate deterrent for Jerry is Tom.

CRISPIN AUREY

Felix Haslett, whose poems appeared in earlier editions, died peacefully last month, aged 90. One of those strong characters of that generation who were largely self educated in their twenties, he was an avid writer and reader all his life, leaving notebooks of poems and political, philosophical and historical studies. A simple man with a wry humour he would not have welcomed a lengthy obituary so we shall leave it to his own words to record his death.

REQUIEM

. Do not cry when I die
That is do not cry for me
Only then I'm rid of trouble
So I won't need your sympathy
Keep the flowers in the garden
I don't need them when I'm dead
I would like to be a pleasant memory
Forget the unkind words I've said
No droning parson if you please
Religion's just a fake
I don't require a Holy Friar
Go jump into the lake

Tony Hopkinson and his wife, of 115 Mortimer Rd, are applying to open a combined sauna and hairdressing salon on the ground floor. Mrs Hopkinson is training to be a hairdresser & if Hackney continues to consider the planning application at its present rate (it was put in last February, but had to be resubmitted) she'll be fully qualified by the time the salon opens. There are unlikely to be massage facilities: Tony Hopkinson says the bad reputation of a few West End saunas & "massage parlours" has killed the respectable massage business.

Doris Kibblewhite, who retired as DBA secretary at the association's annual meeting, was warmly thanked for her very special contribution to the area by Graham Parsey and presented by Stuart Weir with a painting by East End artist, Noel Gibson, of her house & 2 bottles of sherry for her husband, Peter. Doris writes: "A big 'thank you' to my friends who contributed to the lovely & appropriate gift presented to me on my retirement as secretary. Peter and I are very proud of it and hope, if there was not the opportunity for you to see the painting at the annual meeting or before, you will call at No 9 for a private view. Peter adds his appreciation for the seasonal bottles."

Alan Rayner, the new secretary of the De Beauvoir Association, works as a computer systems adviser in planning and housing - so we've gained a local expert. Previously he worked with Haringey planning department on General Improvement Areas. Alan, aged 26, lives with his wife Ann in Ufton Road (she works at the Geffrye Museum). He says he hopes to carry on Doris Kibblewhite's efforts "to achieve proper standards of housing and environment in the area. In particular, I hope to encourage public participation in reaching solutions to the problems of the area." Other officers elected at the annual meeting were Graham Parsey, chairman; Joe Bray, treasurer; William Verity, vice-chairman; Robin Young, press officer; Jeremy Hamand, correspondence secretary.

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Your Odeon is now a complete new entertainment complex.

Without it closing, even for a day, we've added two new screens - both in a relaxed and intimate atmosphere of their own, and both with a special 'seat guaranteed' scheme. Just let us know how many seats you require for which performance, at either Screen 2 or 3, and we'll guarantee that seats will be available for you. What's more, everyone under 14 is welcome at half price - all day, every day!

Pick your programme. Pick your time. The exciting new Odeon has something for everyone, with three different programmes all under one roof.