

WAR ON THE GREEN BELT IN BYFLEET

Iain Wakeford 2018

In recent weeks I have written about Old Woking & Kingfield Cottages that in the mid 1960's were demolished to make way for new housing, but of course they were not the only areas where old properties were under threat from redevelopment and in Byfleet the large houses of Weymede, Grasmere (Green Lane Farm) and Shrapnells (to the north of Parvis Road) had been considered ripe for development for some time.

By 1964 there had been numerous applications to develop the Grasmere/Weymede site, with the council finally granting permission in January 1964 for 122 houses to be built there. By the time the estate was completed in the Spring of 1967, however, 145 homes had been constructed by Span Developments (to the design of the eminent architect, Eric Lyons).

Next door the 10½ acres at Shrapnells followed (after a public inquiry in 1964) with the council deciding on the name 'Shrapnell Close' in June 1965. That evidently met with some opposition, and less than a month later they agreed to change the name of the new estate to the less incendiary Green Lane Close.

1964 also saw a public inquiry into Woking Council's refusal to allow houses to be built between the High Road and the River Wey (behind the Clock House, north of Mill Lane). The Stock Exchange Benevolent Fund has sought permission to develop about fourteen acres of fields, putting in three applications to the council at a density of either fourteen, eleven or five dwellings per acre. The council had refused them all (hence the inquiry) on the grounds that the Development Plan and Town Map showed the site as in the Metropolitan Green Belt and not zoned for development.



The site of Grasmere (formerly Green Lane Farm) was redeveloped along with the land of Weymede by Span Developments in the mid 1960's.





T2A HOUSE



The sales brochure shows that by the time the estate was complete there were 145 'Span' houses. They were designed by the eminent architect, Eric Lyons. The full brochure can be viewed under the 'Byfleet' page of the 'Archive' section of this website.

The houses of Green Lane Close were actually built on the site of a house called Shrapnells, rather than Green Lane Farm (Grasmere) on the site of the Weymede Estate



The developers accepted this, but claimed that 'the position has been reached where it is not a question of being choosy about land, but of considering its use for development without loss to the amenities – there is no agricultural objection to its development, there is no inadequacy of services and no objection that road access points would be unsatisfactory'.

Of course we have seen in this column in the past that the zoning of much of Byfleet after the war as being within the Green Belt held little sway with developers, many of whom successfully argued against the council, and won – as they would eventually do in the case of the Clock House land. In 1964, however, the inspector ruled against the development stating that he 'considered it important that the open character of this length of the River Wey should be absolutely protected as part of the Green Belt', and said that the 'relatively narrow open strip fringing housing development as envisaged in these plans, would not secure this objective'.

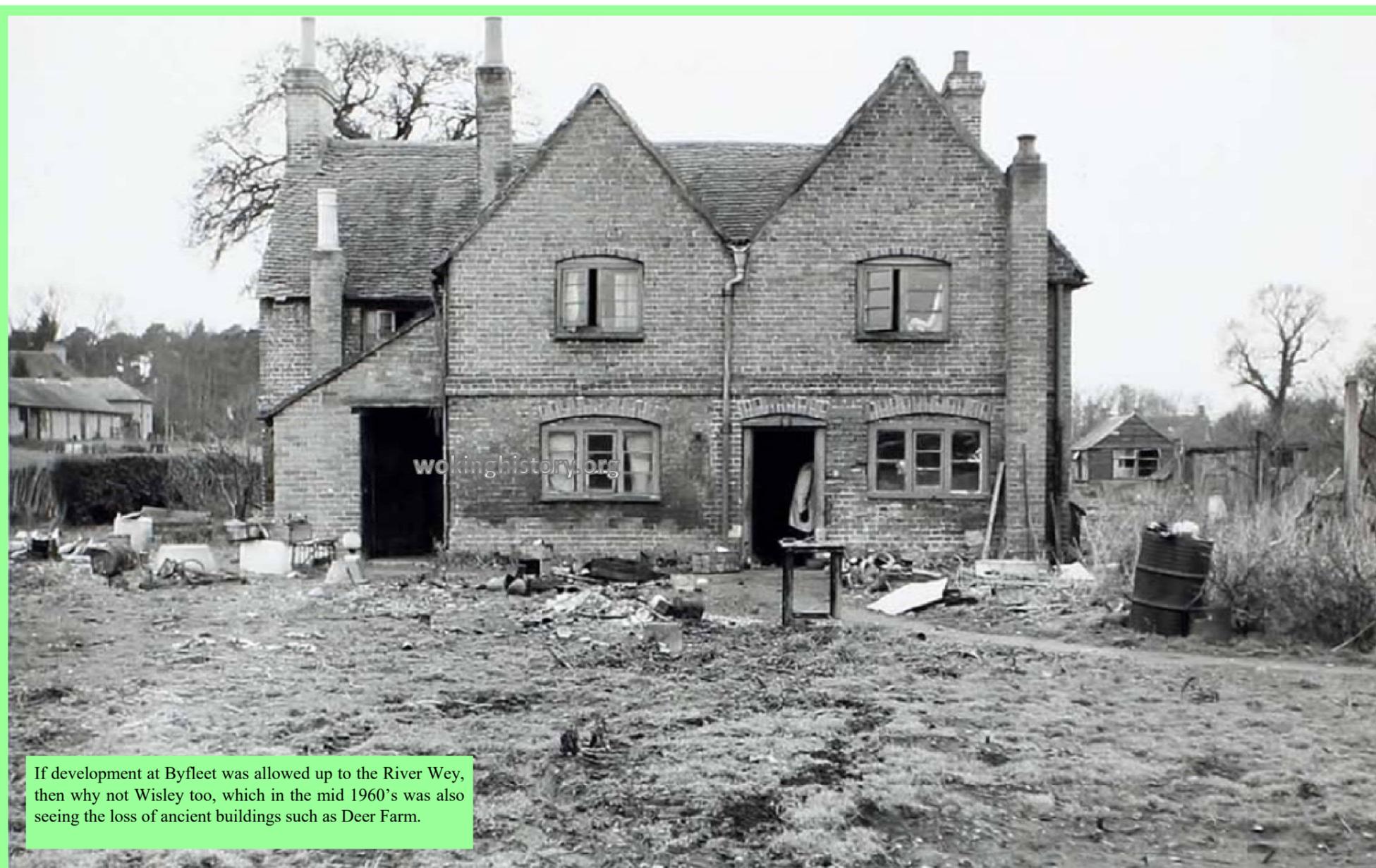
There were, of course, numerous infill developments in the village at this time, including Petersham Close on the site of Petersham Cottage in Oyster Lane (so named in January 1964) and Granville Close off Church Road, which was originally to be called Tulip Tree Close, but following a request from residents was renamed in February 1964. In Binfield Road the townhouses of Melville Court were named in June that year and in December the council came up with the imaginative name of Wey Barton for the development on the site of Wey Barton! Their brains were also working overtime in July 1965 when they came up with the names of Fullerton Drive and Fullerton Way for the new streets off Fullerton Road.



When it came to opposing new developments in the village the council were successful on one occasion at this time, where a company called West Byfleet Builders Ltd proposed to build eight houses/bungalows to the acre on land 'adjoining Pipers Hill and near Sanway Road'. At a public inquiry in 1965 they maintained that it would 'round off' the village as 'it would bring Byfleet's development to a natural boundary as the River Wey flows along the edge of the appeal site', but here at least

Green Belt policy, the proposed route of the M25 (or the 'E' Ring Road as it was then referred to) and possible flooding of the site thankfully put a stop to their plans.

There is no doubt that the River Wey would have been a 'natural boundary' to the development of Byfleet, but it could also be argued that it could be the same for Wisley, where at the same time the old Deers Farm was about to be replaced by the houses of Deers Farm Close.



If development at Byfleet was allowed up to the River Wey, then why not Wisley too, which in the mid 1960's was also seeing the loss of ancient buildings such as Deer Farm.