



Friends of PURLEY BEECHES

SUBMISSION FOR LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATION FOR PURLEY BEECHES

I write this submission as Chairman and on behalf of the one hundred plus family members of the Friends of Purley Beeches. The intention of these pages is to prove beyond any doubt that Purley Beeches deserves the protection from any future threat of development by way of being designated as a Local Green Space.

LOCATION

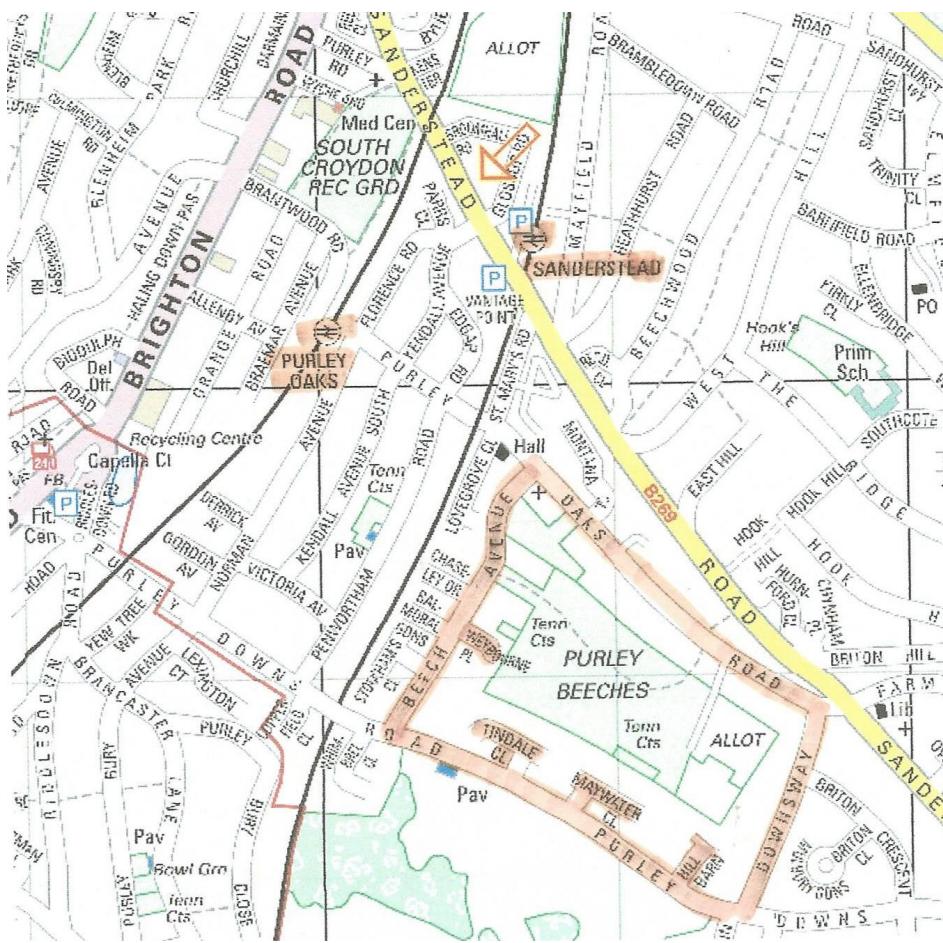
Purley Beeches is located within a seven-minute walk from both Purley Oaks and Sanderstead railway stations and is directly connected to Wettern Tree Gardens which has an existing designation as 'Locally listed Historic Parks and Gardens.' The two adjoining open spaces are bounded on all sides by residential roads, Purley Oaks Road, Downsway, Purley Downs Road and Beech Avenue.

There has already been substantial infill housing that backs on to Purley Beeches, namely: - Tindale Close, Maywater Close, Hill Barn and Weybourne Place developments. Many of the local roads also have substantial block of flats: - Wettern Close, Montana Close, Theresa's Walk, Barrards Hall in Beech Avenue as well as many others in Sanderstead Road and Beechwood Road and more to come in West Hill. All of these flats have little or no amenity space, Purley

Beeches is the only place for the families living in these flats to come and relax and play in.

St Mary's Church and associated halls are set into the corner of Wettern Tree Gardens at the corner of Beech Avenue and Purley Oaks Road.

There are four entrances to Purley Beeches, situated in: - Beech Avenue, Purley Downs Road via Tindale Close, Purley Oaks Road and Via Wettern Tree Gardens.



DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Purley Beeches consists of seventeen acres, mostly wooded with many paths criss-crossing. At the far end is a sloping, open green space with two tennis courts at the top. It is a very secure open space for people, children and dogs, with two of the four entrances accessed via gates.

PURLEY BEECHES HISTORY

On the evening of 23rd January 1907 the Parish Council met in the Council's school in Sanderstead Village to discuss the purchase of Purley Beeches by the ratepayers.

For a number of years previously some of the residents of Sanderstead had subscribed for the rent and maintenance of the Beeches but the option to purchase the site expired in February 1907. They had succeeded in raising the sum of £1,474 towards the price of £5,400 asked by the owner Mr E Arkwright, for the freehold, this price being about half the value of the land for building purposes. It was proposed that a rate of 2d in the pound should be levied against the ratepayers in order to raise the necessary money. The resolution was put to the meeting and carried by 50 votes to 30, but a poll was demanded and the Chairman agreed. As a result, a poll of the whole Parish took place on February 2nd 1907. 178 ratepayers voted for the purchase and 114 against. There being a majority in favour of the motion, the Beeches was purchased.

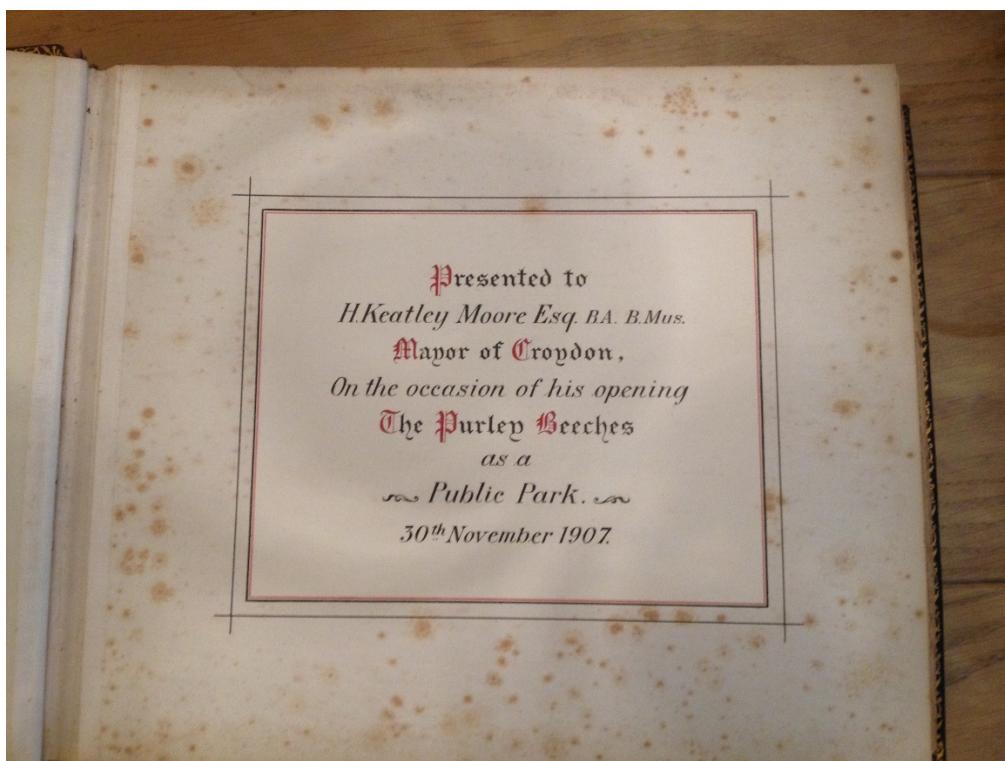
In 1953 the Coulsdon and Purley Urban District Council were granted a coat of arms and this included two trees, one for the Purley Oaks and the other a Beech for Purley Beeches.

Source: - Croydon Council web site

Some thirty years later an adjacent plot was also purchased by 561 supporters, including the then Archbishop of Canterbury and Eric Wettern of Wettern Tree Gardens, the seventeen acres of Purley Beeches was then complete.

During the Second World War the First battalion of the Irish Guards were billeted in Purley Beeches.

The FoPB has in its possession a photograph album of Purley Beeches and surrounding area, created in 1907 and presented to the then Mayor of Croydon in celebration of Purley Beeches being opened as a public park. The image is of the flysheet of the album.



FRIENDS OF PURLEY BEECHES

The FoPB was formed five years ago following forty plus mature Beech trees being cut down by the Council. Any Council work now is only carried out with the approval and agreement of the Friends. On each of the four entrances to Purley Beeches the FoPB has notice boards, with information regarding dates of work parties, reasons for joining FoPB etc. Image below shows notice board at the entrance from Wettern Tree Gardens.



parties, the number of young people, who are so keen and happy to be involved.

Our family membership has steadily grown to over a hundred, with up to a quarter of the membership attending our monthly work parties. Work includes clearing paths, planting over a thousand spring bulbs and over a hundred trees and of course, litter picking. All those attending enjoy the physical workout and the camaraderie, leaving exhausted but with a feeling of great satisfaction, what more can be expected of our Local Green Space? It can be seen from this photo of one of our bulb planting work

FLORA AND FAUNA



Mature Beech trees dominate, although many were lost in 1987. Other species include Oak, Cherry, Yew, Sycamore, Silver Birch, Ash, Hazel plus many others. Regrettably, many of replacement Beech trees planted after the 87 hurricane have been severely damaged by the grey squirrel population. New trees being planted by the FoPB do not include Beech, but squirrel proof Oak, Rowan, Small Leaf Lime and Cherry.

In the spring the Beeches are now full of colour after the planting by FoPB of thousands of daffodil bulbs and this autumn, hundreds of crocus bulbs as well as daffodil, which will add even more colour to spring 2020, to the delight of all visitors.

Purley Beeches is home to bats, foxes, owls, badgers, parakeets, squirrels and occasionally, deer. Tawny owls are often heard in the area at night.

With so many trees felled five years ago, there is a rich diversity of fungi including the very rare Coral Tooth and the illusive King Alfred's Cakes. The decaying wood also provide habitat for a healthy insect population.



ACTIVITIES

- A. The 8th Purley Scouts, based at the nearby St Mary's Church along with the Beavers and Cubs use the Beeches for woodcraft and orienteering.
- B. Local forest school activities take place, with the agreement of the FoPB, throughout the year.
- C. Many dog walkers exercise their dogs in complete safety from road traffic in the wooded area. Often, on the green more than a dozen dogs and owners will be socialising. There is a very large What's-App group for all the local dog owners who use the Beeches.
- D. Joggers jog the circumference of the Beeches.
- E. Children play football and cricket on the Green and explore the woods.
- F. Mothers bring their new-born babies and toddlers to the Beeches, most of its paths are pushchair friendly.
- G. The tennis courts are regularly used all year through, during the summer months there are often people sitting waiting to use the courts.
- H. Large family parties utilize the green for picnics etc. Local school groups gather for class picnics and get-togethers on the hill.
- I. Silent Cinema has proved to be extremely popular; the sloping green provides a wonderful natural amphitheatre.
- J. FoPB monthly work parties.
- K. Blackberry picking in the late summer.
- L. Tobogganing down the sloping green in the snow.

M. FoPB hosted its first dog show this year. 64 entries and raised very nearly £400 which was donated to Waggy Tails Club (A local charity for special needs teenagers working with therapy dogs, the dogs mostly sourced from the owners who regularly walk them in the Beeches). This show will become an annual activity.



TOMORROWS WORLD

CLIMATE: - We hear dire warning of Climate Change on a daily basis and how essential trees are to our survival. Purley Beeches is almost entirely composed of trees. Everybody I speak to in the Beeches finds it unbelievable that the residents have to prove the obvious. Trees are the lungs of the world and Croydon needs its trees and woodland areas as much as anywhere. The very thought that our woods or any other in the Croydon Borough are at risk of development is considered outrageous.

URBAN INTENSIFICATION: - The three proposed Strategic Options plan for up to 2000 new dwellings, over the next 20 years, particularly in the Sanderstead Station area. Most will be infill flats with little or no garden space. Purley Beeches, being right in the centre of this intensification, will play an essential role in helping to maintain residents' mental wellbeing and fitness by providing a place for both tranquillity and recreation.

WETTERN TREE GARDENS: - Purley Beeches and Wettern Tree Gardens have always been geographically connected, they have their own distinct and unique characters that compliment each other extremely well. Up to now the 'Friends' of each park have existed in isolation, but the need to present submissions has united the 'Friends', which I am sure will lead to very close co-operation in the future.

SUMMARY

I write these pages not as a professional person nor a political person but as a passionate person when it comes to Purley Beeches and I hope I have managed to produce and present sufficient evidence to convince the Planning Inspector and whoever else that needs to be convinced that the characteristics of Purley Beeches are anything but **commonplace**, in fact, as was said to me today, "Purley Beeches is the heart of the community" and as such it deserves the protection of a **Local Green Space** designation to ensure that the Beeches is maintained for future generations as was the intention in 1907 when Purley Beeches was bought by the people, for the people of Sanderstead.



Should there be any lingering doubt as to the tranquillity and the beauty of Purley Beeches I finish this submission with a photo taken recently of the main ride.



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