

BERA



***THE
RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
FOR
THORPE BAY***

BERA Web-Site – www.bera.co.uk

Welcome to our latest information pack, either as a current resident or possibly a new home owner, which covers the whole of the Thorpe Bay area, including Bournes Green and the Burges Estate. Thorpe Bay is one of the most attractive and desirable seaside residential locations in Essex. With its beautiful sandy seafront, thriving local shopping centre, award winning park, numerous sports clubs (including sailing, golf, tennis, and bowling), excellent and varied local schools and churches, all within an hour's rail journey of central London, Thorpe Bay remains a charming and tranquil place to live.



The Bowling Club green

Tennis Club courts



As a newcomer to the area, or perhaps someone who is relocating locally, we would like to take a few moments of your time to provide you with a brief introduction to BERA (*the Burges Estate Residents Association*) by telling you a little of the

area's background and what the Association has been able to achieve over the past 25 and more years, not only for the benefit of its members but, through their support, for all the residents of the Thorpe Bay Area.

Background to the Burges Estate

The development of the Burges Estate started shortly before the turn of the 20th century and was expanded over the following 60 years, largely within the parameters of Thorpe Hall Avenue, Gloucester Terrace, Burges Terrace, Shaftsbury Avenue and Plas Newydd to the west, Acacia Drive and Station Road to the north, Maplin Way, Armagh, Antrim, Caulfield, Church, Waterford Roads, Ulster and Leitrim Avenues to the east and the seafront (*Thorpe Bay Gardens*) to the south.

Thorpe Bay Gardens from the seafront



The wealthy Burges family, from whom the Estate derives its name, headed by Colonel John Burges, were from Northern Ireland and their origins live on in the names of many local roads such as Tyrone, Fermoy, Dungannon Drive/Chase and Parkanaur Avenue.

As was common in this period across many similar residential developments in England, covenants were put in place with a view to protecting the character and integrity of these developments.

Generally the main provisions of these covenants were similar:

- Formal consent (a licence) to be obtained from the freeholder for any alterations to a property
- A single family dwelling house per building plot
- No business to be run from the property
- Building Insurance to be purchased through the freeholder's nominated insurer (*removed very much later by legislative changes*)
- No alehouses or hostelries to be erected (*less widespread but applicable to the Burges Estate*)

These covenants and others not standardised across the Estate were originally included by the freeholder for good reason; to stop any over-development and to maintain its character and appearance. Because of this these covenants were, by definition, restrictive but were not generally controversial.

Looking north along Parkanaur Avenue



Fast forward then to 1984 when the interests of the Burges family ended with the death of Ynyr Alfred Burges, who was the last family survivor. The freehold of the Estate became available and was purchased by the Lintott family and renamed Thorpe Estate Ltd. (*It was rumoured at the time that the Lintott family believed they were purchasing only part of the Estate, then being used as motor showrooms in Station Road, not the freehold of the whole Estate!*) The freehold was transferred again in 2001 and became the property of the Regis Group (Thorpe Estate Ltd.)

What happened next

In 1990, a small band of local residents joined together to oppose the conversion of a house in Gloucester Terrace from a single family dwelling into flats, which was contrary to the terms of the covenants, limiting the development of each building plot to a single family dwelling house. Today that property is still a house and that small band of residents became the founders of BERA, and so the Burges Estate Residents Association was formed.

While the Association's original purpose was to protect the character of the estate and in particular to fight against any overdevelopment or the conversion of houses into flats, its role changed significantly following the transfer of the Estate from the Lintott family to the Regis Group in 2001.

View from Thorpe Bay Gardens over the sea



View of the tennis court gardens



Instead of the covenant on “alterations” to property being enforced to protect the Estate, it was used instead as a bargaining chip for financial gain, to extract money from owners wanting to make changes to their properties in return for being granted a licence to carry out the proposed work. Previously, only small fees, sufficient to cover administrative costs, were being charged. Now potentially large sums of money were being demanded simply to be granted the required licences; for example, £20,000 for a garage extension, £30,000-£50,000 for an extension and £100,000 for a demolition and rebuild, all seemingly with no fixed pattern as to how the fees demanded were calculated. Rather than providing protection and benefitting owners, both the market value and the marketability of properties covered by the “alteration” covenant were being adversely affected once the restrictive nature of this covenant became known to prospective purchasers.

By 2002, the Association’s membership had grown to 235 and over the ensuing decade, because of the pernicious way in which their terms were being applied, the fight to have the restrictive covenants removed became the overarching aim of BERA’s new Chairman, Ron Woodley and the Committee. Through members’ subscriptions and the establishment of a fighting fund, sufficient money was raised for the Association to take legal advice and seek counsel’s opinion.

Over a decade later, with great patience and at considerable cost, BERA had procured a very strong legal opinion and its efforts had attracted widespread media and press support, both locally and nationally. The Association's campaign finally culminated in a successful outcome for its members and for the vast majority of property owners on the Burges Estate. Under mounting pressure, the Freeholder finally agreed to grant owners the right to purchase their restrictive covenants and at long last to have the blight of these covenants lifted from their homes. At the same time, leasehold property owners were given the opportunity to purchase the freehold of their properties. Today, the majority of Burges Estate families own their own freeholds. However, to ensure that the estate would not be over-developed residents signalled their agreement (by inserting into their deeds) to continue with some of the covenants. These are:

1. Not to use or occupy the property or permit the same to be used or occupied for any purpose whatsoever other than as a single private dwelling house and the usual outbuildings belonging thereto and as an office used by the Owner for his or her business or profession.
2. Not at any time to exercise or carry on upon any part of the Property any business or trade or manufacture of any kind save as permitted in paragraph 1 above.
3. Not to do or suffer to be done in or upon the Property any act or thing which may be or become a nuisance or damage to Thorpe Estate and/or its tenants and/or the occupiers of adjoining properties, the Retained Land or the neighbourhood.
4. Not to park or to permit to be parked upon the Property any commercial vehicle, boat, caravan, high sided vehicle or trailer for a period exceeding 24 hours at any one time except in any garage now or to be erected on any part of the Property or on that part of the Property which is not at the rear of the dwelling house.

5. To maintain to the satisfaction of Thorpe Estate or its successors in title proper and satisfactory boundary walls or fences on the side of the Property and where the letter "T" appears on the plan within the red edging (if any);
6. To keep the garden and grounds of the Property in good order and where appropriate neatly cultivated and free from noxious weeds.
7. At all times to continue a fair and proper share towards the cost and expense of maintaining, cleaning, repairing, securing and replacing all party and other walls, fences, sewers, drains, gutters, watercourses and easements used or capable of being used in common by occupiers of the Property with the occupiers of the adjoining or neighbouring properties or lands.

From 235 members in 2002, the Association's membership now exceeds 800, mainly from the 1,500 homes that make up the Burges Estate and the Bournes Green area of Thorpe Bay.

BERA's Achievements

While the campaigns against overdevelopment on the Estate and the opportunity to purchase the restrictive covenants have attracted most publicity, the work and achievements of BERA have been far ranging: Enabling leasehold owners to purchase the freehold of their properties at a fair price.



St. Augustines Church

Improving the quality of the environment by involvement in the planting of new trees and shrubs in Thorpe Bay Gardens, at St Augustines Church and around the whole of the Thorpe Bay.

Stopping proposals to develop blocks of flats along Thorpe Esplanade between Clieveden Road to the west and Maplin Way to the east.

The golf course Club House



Lobbying successfully, with other local action groups, against plans to build a residential estate of 880 homes on the 92 acre site of Thorpe Hall Golf Club.

View from the Club House

Leading campaigns to make the Estate's roads and pavements safer for everyone, and the provision of disabled access and crossing points throughout the Area.

Advising and campaigning in respect of parking improvements and changes in both the removal and addition of new restrictions in conjunction with the local authority.



Free advice for members on personal safety including the provision of personal and panic alarms at no charge (*in conjunction with the Police and Fire Service*).

The Broadway shopping area



Provision of Christmas lights and street markets in The Broadway.

Community activities such as our free monthly coffee mornings, particularly for the elderly and residents living alone.

Regular Newsletters and ready access to local councillors (*the chairman and treasurer are both elected councillors, as well as 3 other members of the association*).

Provision of recycling sacks on request for residents who run out of supplies.

Keeping residents informed about future local and national plans that might impact on them and their families, such as proposed changes to local A&E services, forthcoming road repairs, transport problems etc.

Continue to provide advice and assistance to resident associations in other parts of the UK that are faced with problems such as restrictive covenants, with whom we are happy to share our experiences and expertise.

Advising and helping members concerned about plans for inappropriate or potential over-development close to their own homes.

Winter storage of boats at the yacht club

Working with other local organisations such as the Southend Beach Hut Owner's Association and the police and other services to keep them informed about matters such as vandalism, anti-social behaviour and burglary so that appropriate actions can be taken.



Looking Forward

Southchurch Park Lake and one of the Cricket Pavilions



We have not been idle in our efforts to work for physical and environmental improvements to our local area and to maintain the character and appearance of the Burges Estate and surrounding areas and amenities, such as our

award winning Southchurch Park, and we will continue to do so. We also hope to play a more active role in the future in the provision of services for the elderly and those living alone in the community.



We are developing BERA beyond its historical boundaries into the immediate surrounding areas, enabling even more residents in the whole of Thorpe Bay to benefit from the legal and planning expertise we have built up, and our knowledge of the workings of the local council. To be successful and to make our voice even stronger on local issues, we need more members in the Bournes Green area, West Shoebury and other parts of Thorpe Ward that lie outside the original boundaries of the Burges Estate.

Monthly Residents Coffee Morning



Our vision is to make Thorpe Bay the very best of areas in which to live, by working to improve facilities, helping as many residents as we can and engendering a spirit of community in the area through our activities and the sharing of common objectives.

Membership

We hope that you will want to join us and we look forward to welcoming you and your family as members of the Association.

As members you will automatically receive regular contact by email, about local issues of interest or concern to residents of Thorpe Bay and the Burges Estate. We already have members in the Bournes Green and West Shoebury area of Thorpe Bay and we are hoping to increase the number in the future. You will be welcome to our monthly coffee mornings, the Association's Annual General Meeting, which is in March, and other events that we arrange, such as an "Open Gardens" afternoon that was organised for the first time this year.

Locally there are some of the best schools in Southend-On-Sea, producing very good results in examinations through all the stages of the national curriculum.

Entrance Bournes Green School

Primary Schools are:

Bournes Green School
– 01702 587913

Federation of
Greenways School –
01702 987950

Thorpedene Primary
School – 01702 582225



High Schools:

:

Shoeburyness High School – 01702 292286

Southchurch High School – 01702 415300

Entrance to Southend High School for Girls



Grammar School:

Southend High School for
Girls – 01702 588852

A Membership Application Form has been inserted into the booklet and if you would like to become a member, please complete it and return the application as per the details on the form.

For more information about BERA or to answer any questions you may have please contact:

Ron Woodley – Chairman BERA/Thorpe Councillor

Tel: 01702 588662

Email: ronwoodley@hotmail.co.uk

Mike Stafford – Treasurer BERA/Thorpe Councillor

Tel: 01702 870895

Email: cllrstafford@southend.gov.uk

Martin Terry- Member BERA/Thorpe Councillor

Tel: 07919 527557

Email: cllrterry@southend.gov.uk

Derek Kenyon – Member BERA/Southchurch Councillor

Tel: 07757 360259

Email: cllrkenyon@southend.gov.uk

Nick Ward- Member BERA/Shoeburyness Councillor

Tel: 07973 565777

Email: cllrward@southend.gov.uk

The local MP for Rochford and Southend East is:

James Duddridge

Tel: 01702 616135

Email: james@jamesduddridge.com

Telephone Numbers for Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Emergencies, Out of Hours and Switchboard - 01702 215000

Council Tax, Housing and Council Tax Benefits (including Non Domestic Rates) - 01702 215001

Housing Advice and Choice Based Lettings - 01702 215002

Parking, Highways and Transport - 01702 215003

Planning, Development and Building Control - 01702 215004

Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing - 01702 215005

Waste, Fly tipping, Fly posting and Graffiti - 01702 215006

Children's Services (including Education and Children's Social Services) - 01702 215007

Adult Social Services - 01702 215008

Registration Services (Births, Deaths and Marriages) - 01702 215009

Electoral Registration and Councillor Enquiries - 01702 215010

Leisure, Culture and Tourism (including leisure/sports facilities, libraries, museums and parks) - 01702 215011

Other Useful phone numbers

Crime stoppers – 0800 5551111

Samaritans – 01702 611911

Southend Hospital – 01702 435555

Police Emergency – 999

Police Non-Emergency – 101

Coastguard – 01702 294998

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