



S. D. S.

(COPY)

S.B. No. 1 (Filmsy)

METROPOLITAN POLICE

SPECIAL BRANCH



Special Report

14th day of January 1975

SUBJECT

Battersea Redevelopment Action Group

Reference to Papers

W 7/4/201

1. The following information has been received from a reliable source:-
2. "Battersea Redevelopment Action Group (BRAG) held a public meeting on Thursday 9 January, 1975, at St Mary le Park, Parkgate Road, SW11, to discuss the Trust House Forts plan to redevelop the Battersea Fun Fair. The meeting, which commenced at 8 pm, attracted an audience of about 150 persons and closed at 10.30 pm.
3. The meeting was chaired by Privacy of Henry Prince Estate Tenants Association and speaking for BRAG were Privacy International Socialists, Privacy and Privacy. Other speakers were Privacy and Privacy (Chief of the Arts and Recreation Dept. of the GLC and Councillor Privacy, Chief Planning Officer of Wandsworth Borough Council.
4. Privacy and Privacy soon got the audience on their side and when the GLC representative attempted to speak, they were shouted down. Ernest ROEMER and Privacy of BRAG, who were conveniently placed in the audience, were cleverly asking questions to whip up the feelings of the audience even more. ROEMER stated that BRAG would stop the development by demonstrating and stopping the developers' lorries.
5. Other Wandsworth councillors at the meeting were Privacy, Privacy and Privacy, who promised to assist BRAG on the matter. It was also of interest to see that all three Wandsworth councillors bought copies of Red Weekly, which was on sale at the meeting. After the meeting closed, the audience, who were mainly residents of the area, considered the meeting had been a big success and promised to attend the next public meeting on the same subject to be held on 20 January 1975 at 8 Falcon Road, SW11 at 7.30 pm. A collection towards the costs of the meeting netted about £10. Copies of the attached leaflet were distributed.
6. Persons mentioned in this report and others identified as being present at the meeting are shown on the attached Appendix.

CONFIDENTIAL

M.P. 72-37343/10M (2)

Chief Inspector



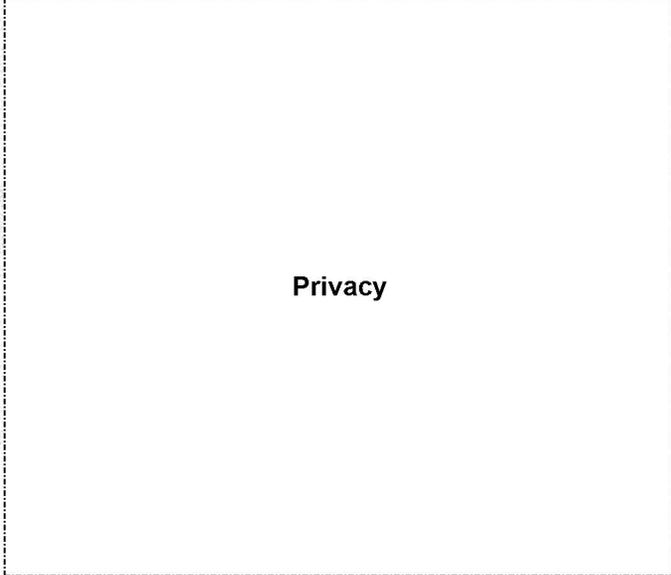
Ruhlson
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT



S. D. S.

APPENDIX

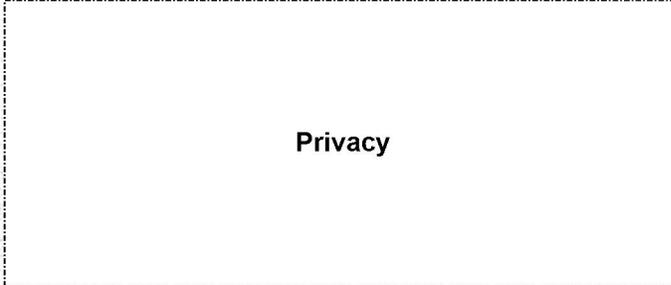
Appendix to a report dated 14th January 1975 concerning a meeting held by BRAG on 9.1.75.



Privacy

Ernest BODKER (BRAG)

RF.105/60/522



Privacy



THE MAGIC WORLD OF BATTERSEA PARK



BRAG REPORT. THE FUTURE OF BATTERSEA FUNFAIR

Private development in Battersea has not in the past exhibited any sensitivity to the needs of the working class population of the borough. The past few years have seen development, actual and proposed, Valiant House, Raglans, Morgans, which have all continued this pattern. Now Battersea Park. The nature of the housing market ensures that open space in London becomes surrounded by expensive housing, that has been the case in Battersea. However for many people Battersea Park is the only truly open space that they can enjoy, even though it is a distance from their homes. The council has even constructed housing at higher than the density (136 per acre per annum) regarded as the maximum for inner London. The quality of the open space has been the element of the park. The above should be sufficient reason for the needs of tenants of poor housing everywhere, especially on estates like the Dodington, to have their needs considered as paramount when any development in Battersea is contemplated. What follows here should offer even more support for the above view.

A notice board inside Battersea Park, South of Pond:

"The site of this park was formerly known as Battersea Fields, part of the grounds was used for market gardens, but much of it was gradually waste reclaimed from the river in the sixteenth century and later used for pigeon shooting, fairs, donkey racing and other amusements. In 1846 an Act authorized the purchase by H.M. Office of Works of 320 acres in Battersea Fields for a public park. The park which is 200 acres in extent, was handed over to the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1867, transferred to the L.C.C. in 1889 and has been maintained by the G.L.C. since 1965".

In May 1951 the Festival of Britain opened on the South Bank, with a pleasure park of 37 acres at Battersea Park. It had over eight million visitors in 1951, over four million in 1952, and two and a quarter million in 1953, the government then ended its sponsorship. The L.C.C. reduced the size of the pleasure park but agreed to continued operation by Festival Gardens Battersea Park Ltd. (now a subsidiary of Trust Houses Park Ltd.). It is claimed by Trust Houses Park that "attendance figures since 1954 onwards have averaged more than a million visitors each season proof of any is required, of the need for a place of relaxation of this nature".

On 14th December 1971 a new agreement was made by the, then Tory G.L.C., with Festival Gardens Battersea Park Ltd. to operate an amusement park in Battersea Park for a period of sixty years from the 1st of January 1972. This agreement was made on Chas. ...'s Action. The Chairman of the G.L.C. Arts &

Recreations Committee, Mr. Sebag-Montefiore at that time, was and still is a member of the Carlton Club and associated with the South Rank Theatre Board, just like Sir Joseph Lockwood (see below). The G.L.C. Planning Committee was neither informed nor consulted, nor was Wandsworth Borough Council. As to the terms of the agreement, Wandsworth Council have been told that these are solely a matter between the G.L.C. and Festival Gardens Battersea Park Ltd.

The present Labour administration at the G.L.C. have stated that after the agreement was signed they "bitterly and strongly opposed the conditions of the lease" (G.L.C. Minutes 15.10.74). The present chairman of the G.L.C. Arts and Recreation Committee, Cllr. Ellis Hillman, has stated that the new scheme "promises well for a completely new family fun-centre in this splendid park" (Daily Telegraph 12.9.74).

The old Battersea Funfair had been allowed to decay over the last few years, it has now been demolished. Battersea is used to this developers' scorched earth policy (Clapham Junction, Raglan). It was announced in 1974, that a consortium had been established between Trust Houses Forte and E.N.I. to invest approximately five million pounds in building a "Magic World Theme Park" which they hope to be operational by 1976. The companies expect 2-3 million visitors a year and propose an admission charge of 35p for adults and 25p for children and expect an annual turnover of approximately three million pounds (Daily Telegraph Business News 12.9.74).

The following quotations are from Trust Houses Forte publicity material:
"Disney set a new standard in Amusement Parks with the concept of bringing together activities of educational, historic and artistic interest within an amusement area, all with a very high standard of design and construction and usually conforming to a type or period, hence the term "Theme Park.....the entrance area will be the REGENCY PLACE and will consist of a courtyard surrounded by elegant Regency-style buildings, accommodating reception facilities, souvenir shops and refreshment amenities....the TUDOR SQUARE and TUDOR STREET with their typical buildings and cobbled surfaces, houses all the games in the park. These will be fewer than at present and will be carefully selected for variety and excellence of presentation. The Tudor area abuts a mediaeval castle with battlements, tower and turrets surmounted by flags and pennants....NEW ORLEANS is the style of the catering area..... providing a purpose planned menu of unique appeal....AMERICAN COLONIAL... the style chosen for the stately buildings which will also provide a fitting background to the Park's formal gardens.

* Adjacent to the American Colonial area are the rides which are planned mainly to be grouped in threes to feature them in triarcs of coloured illuminated cascades of ribboned sails. The feature rides and experiences are of several types....they take the visitor into scenes of magic, fantasy, fairy stories, adventure and mystery. They will be of a type unique in this country. Additionally, there is the river voyage through a jungle setting, passing native settlements, interesting animals and tropical vegetation....

....another adventure journey will be the "Antarctic", a journey by low mono-rail through scenes of pioneering days.....it is likely that a number of pavilions, exhibits and entertainments will be free to patrons who will have paid the entrance charge, presently assessed at 35p.....apart from the restaurants specially designed kiosks will sell ice-cream, soft drinks and similar refreshments. Of particular interest will be the FROSTY PALACE in the American Colonial complex - an exciting presentation of an ice-cream parlour.....The inclusion of 2.1 acres of the park within the new perimeter is more than balanced by ceding 3.96 acres elsewhere in the park..

....The Riverside building is to be reinstated to provide a Riverside Bar and a covered refreshment/picnic area. Within Magic World there will be no licensed bars....the number of kiosks on the carriage-way is to be reduced to eight for sales appropriate to the Amusement Park.....The cost of the complex is estimated at some five million pounds, and when completed will provide local employment, both permanent and seasonal, at a considerably higher level than in the past. The well trained, well dressed staff will be an important factor in a gay, attractive setting of Britain's first themed Amusement Park".

More than the above, Mr. Christopher Hopper, the managing director of Festival Gardens Battersea Park Ltd, has said in reply to criticism " anything that anyone can do in this country to encourage the rebirth of family life, and the family taking its entertainment together, would be a good thing. I don't see anything socially unacceptable about that". To say that the project would be Americanised would be "grossly unfair", there was nothing American about the Regency and Tudor areas. To suggest as one group had done that a family visit would cost at least £7 was also unfair "How do they know?" said Mr. Hopper.

As for the argument that the Magic World would be a world for hoodlums, Mr. Hopper said "People who project that sort of image for the place are the ones who suggest that what should happen is that a certain acreage should be set aside as a playground for all the roughs in Battersea" (Guardian 2.1.75).

Sir Leslie Joseph has claimed it as "the first of its kind in Europe, a real trailblazer".

How does the above compare with reality.

North Battersea is an area of gross deprivation, open space is one of the things it lacks. Much of the park area is already taken by water, formal gardens, animal paddocks and car parks as well as the fun-fair. There is already considerable demand for the open space that there is. For instance, football pitches have to be booked a year in advance.

The proposals imply greater car-parking space (they envisage a car-park for 930 in Carriage Drive North, and most important new car-parking on the general play area. The net result would be 11 acres of car-parking in addition to the 11 acres occupied by the fair. If the car-parking were to be used it would mean an increase in the amount of traffic on already well used roads thus an increase could be expected in all the side-effects. If the car-parking is not used then there will be a considerable strain imposed on the already severely deficient public transport in the area.

Trust Houses Forte claim that they are giving more land back to the park than they are taking. The 3.9 acres they wish to return are small parcels of land including the long thin strip of the old railway. The 2.1 acres they desire includes the tennis courts, the netball courts used by local schools and the children's zoo (this last will no doubt be compensated by the animated animals to be found inside the Magic World).

If one assumes that the figures given by Trust House Forte are correct for price and number of admissions then the likely range of prices that a family will have to pay in total can be calculated. Assume a family size of two adults and two children, thus 750,000 families visit and spend £1.20 to get in, but for Trust Houses Forte to reach their turnover each family will have to spend a further £3.60, therefore £4.80 per family. On various assumptions average costs per family would be

£3million turnover	3million visitors	2 adults, 2 children	@ £5
"	"	2 adults, 1 child	@ £3
"	2 million visitors	2 adults, 2 children	@ £6.60
"	"	2 adults, 1 child	@ £4.00.

On top of all this families would have their transport costs to pay on top.

The attitude of local people can best be expressed by quoting Frank Shaw, Chairman of the Wandsworth Tenant's Associations Group: "We wonder how temporary is temporary? A large part of Battersea Park was leased in 1951 to create a showpiece for the Festival of Britain and has somehow remained so ever since."

we would have thought that the leaseholders would have respected the privilege of using public land, but we could hardly say they have done so. How sadly they have allowed the fun-fair to degenerate.....Anyone visiting it during the last few years will have seen how badly it has been neglected with, of course, the exception of those parts which, in a very expensive way, still provide an attraction to visitors - and a profit.....It may be as well for those who are at this moment in favour of the new Disneyland to consider...that in 1951 this festival site provided good family entertainment. It can hardly be said to do so now.....also the leasees do not seem to have a very good record, serious accidents have necessitated maintenance schedules and inspections having to be "looked into". Inquiries have had to be made into the employment of under-age children, and very little attention seems to have been paid to the welfare, moral and physical, of the many young people on the staff....In this day and age we can no longer afford such waste; waste of valuable park space, waste of public money on the repair and protection from vandalism and, perhaps most of all, waste of young lives - whether it is those who are attracted to play truant from school to take employment, or hang around the fun-fair, or the young people whose lives are in such moral and physical danger. Twenty-three years has been a long temporary. It is time that this area once again returned to being a permanent part of a public park". (S.W. Star 3.1.75).

Trust Houses Forte claim that Magic World will provide local employment (see above). It is obvious that a great deal of this will be seasonal employment, and will mean working for a firm and in an industry notorious for its low wages and anti-trade union attitude, as well as the other problems referred to above.

A small survey of the customers, summer 1974, revealed that the majority came from outside London, and that the vast majority of young customers came only very rarely. When young people were asked what they would like to see on the site, they mentioned ice-skating, open air swimming pool, dancing and disco- none of these facilities are to be included in Magic World.

The safety record of Trust Houses Forte is none too good; on Whit Monday 1972, five young people died after an accident on the Big Dipper at Battersea. On August Bank Holiday 1974, 24 customers were trapped for 90 minutes until rescued by firemen, 50ft off the ground on the Jetstream ride, installed three months before. Trust House Forte also owned Summerland on the Isle of Man.

There have been statements issued by local amenity groups which exhibit the spirit of compromise which characterises all of their activities, for example,

The planning and conservation group of the Wandsworth Society have written "there is little, except perhaps a little time, to be gained by objecting for its own sake: an appropriate alternative scheme or schemes must be put forward to satisfy both the applicant's financial interest and the need for recreational and visual amenities in the area. We would like to suggest that the idea of the fair-ground has more relevance to Wandsworth and England..... ...that a development based on the idea of a working museum of fairground architecture and design might satisfy our financial, recreational and visual criteria".

In other words a solution that would be like the present proposal in all important respects, but more pleasing to those who like their profits to have a more aesthetic quality. The theme would still be profit.

If the selling of this space was a political act, it may well in the end have to be bought back, this should be done, while at the same time reminding the ratepayers who it was that was responsible for the secret lease. There may be possibilities to get the land back cheaply because the Land Nationalisation proposals will mean that compensation will be paid at the Initial Development Plan value of the land i.e. open space.

The minimum requirement must be a public inquiry if only on the grounds that the proposed development will be a departure from the Initial Development Plan. The maximum demand must be that the use of the land should be determined by the needs of local people not tourists. If the national interest requires that such an amusement park exist, then let it be put in a national park, such as Hyde Park or Kensington Gardens. The use of the land must be determined in conjunction with developments on the riverfront and at Clapham Junction. It could well be that the best place for indoor sports facilities, disco's etc. is not in the park but at Clapham Junction, leaving the park free for activities which do not destroy large areas of open space.

Mr. Hopper has replied to criticism of the scheme by local groups by stating "if a man puts in a planning application for his own house he does not consult with all around him". Mr. Hopper must be forcibly reminded that he is not dealing with his own house but with a park that is of vital concern to us all.

This leaflet was prepared, printed and published by the Battersea Redevelopment Action Group, 28 Wendle Rd S.W.18.