

Leomansley Area Residents Association

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 22 November 2008

Venue: Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane

Present: LARA Executive Committee Members – Jeff Fry (Chair), Chris Hamilton (Secretary), Valmai Bowden (Treasurer), Patrick Martin, Mike Wall, John Thompson, Graham Edwards

Members of the Public – Approximately 40 people in attendance

Presentations: Cllr Terry Finn; Stephen Lightfoot, LDC

Apologies – Allinson, Jon (LDC planning officer); Brickley, Timothy (Technical Director, Persimmon Homes formerly Charles Church Homes); Coghlan, Sean (LDC Development Executive); Dawes, Nina (LDC Chief Executive), Dominic Harman (Managing Director, Persimmon Homes formerly Charles Church Homes), Ann Huggins (Customer Service Manager, Taylor Wimpey Homes); Richard King (Strategic Director for Democratic, Development and Legal Services, LDC); Ruth Plant (Director of Operational Services at LDC); Cllr Neil Roberts (Portfolio Holder for Development Services, LDC); Jonathan Staite (Police Inspector); Peter Young (Town Clerk); Roger Hartley (member, LARA); James Whitaker (member, LARA)

Opening Remarks – Jeff Fry asked that the meeting be conducted in an orderly manner with respect being shown to one another. This would facilitate an open and informed debate on the issues raised

1. Minutes of AGM 10 November 2007

1.1 Minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting

2. Chairman's Annual Report

- 2.1 Jeff Fry introduced members of the LARA Executive Committee and advised those present on how to become a member. JF also outlined LARA's role as to represent residents' views to official bodies. The Annual report was then summarised by JF in a PowerPoint presentation covering issues on play facilities and the development of other local facilities. In particular JF covered
- MUGA has been removed from the Darwin Park play area and remains in storage until a suitable location can be found
 - Facilities for young people in the Ward remains a key issue
 - Blair House – originally designated as open space but LDC changed its designation without any public consultation. LARA continues to oppose its development and LDC have refused planning permission for housing. The developer is appealing this decision and the view of the Planning Inspector is awaited
 - Amenities on Darwin Park – LARA has continued to press the developer to deliver on promised works such as lighting, footpath and road maintenance
 - Benches, bins and footpath lighting have now been provided although issues remain
 - Completion of Cathedral Walk onto Friary Road – LDC have purchased a strip of land through the site of 2 Friary Road so that Cathedral walk can be extended onto Friary Road. This work will be done alongside the development of the 2 Friary Road site which will hopefully take place fairly soon
 - Car Parking – there are issues with non residents parking their cars in the Walsall Road cul-de-sac adjacent Rose Gardens. Residents Parking Zones may be considered in 2009 when parking enforcement responsibilities pass from the Police to LDC. Parking is also an issue on Christchurch Lane and on Darwin Park, especially Whitehouse Drive and Deykin Avenue, where parked cars often

obstruct or restrict the passage of traffic. Local councillors were urged to work with Staffordshire County Council to put solutions in place.

- Darwin hall – the provision of a community hall has been a requirement of the local plan since 1999. Originally to be on part of the land now occupied by Waitrose its location was changed in 2004 to be at the southern end of Cathedral Walk. There have been several consultation exercises on the hall some of which show support for the hall and others which oppose it, particularly on the grounds of its location. LARA opposed the proposed large Hall feeling that its size was inappropriate for Darwin Park and has pressed the local authority to find an alternative site opposite Waitrose. The proposal for a large hall has now been withdrawn but the local authority hasn't been able to persuade the landowner Deltabridge to provide an alternative site. LARA has continually pressed the local authorities to carry out an estate- wide consultation on the hall through a questionnaire exercise, feeling that the consultation to date has not provided a real opportunity for all residents to have a say on the proposal. This exercise is now underway and LARA will support the majority view
- S106 – LARA has continued to express its concern over the use of S106 funds for what it feels are inappropriate uses that are not directly associated with the development
- Core Strategy – consultation begins next month. This is a very important strategic document as it will guide the way Lichfield District develops over the coming years and particularly the distribution of the 4000 homes earmarked for Lichfield
- Policing – JF thanked PC Simon Lawrence and PCSO Elaine Sneyd for their efforts over the last year
- Communication – LARA e-mails a variety of information and has a web site at www.tell-lara.co.uk

2.2 **Questions/Comments –**

- A resident from the Charles Church development advised that one of the issues on the site of the community hall was that because plans had not been approved back in 2003 when a number of the houses were purchased local searches did not reveal the proposed development of a community hall close to residential properties
- Alternative sites for the Community hall – questions raised as to why the LA did not purchase a piece of land that would form a more suitable site for a community hall eg land opposite Waitrose. Comments were made that the price would probably be prohibitive since owners would expect commercial or residential values and landowners would be unlikely to sell in the present climate
- Concerns raised over the developer not finishing off the estate and that more pressure should be brought to bear by all concerned

2.3 ***The Annual Report was adopted***

3 **Finance Report**

3.1 Valmai Bowden summarised the Financial Report that had been circulated. End of Year balance 30/06/2007 was £165.39 credit and this had now risen to £335.53. This increase was due mainly to the receipt of two grants from the local authority within the association's financial year. A number of donations had also been received

3.2 Although LARA does not have a subscription Valmai advised that any donations to LARA would be welcome.

3.3 ***The accounts were accepted***

4. **Election of Officers**

4.1 Chris Hamilton advised that all members of the Executive Committee were required to resign at the AGM but that the following had agreed and had been nominated to stand again

- Graham Edwards
- John Thompson
- Jeff Fry
- Chris Hamilton

Patrick Martin, Mike Wall and Valmai Bowden would be standing down after several years as Committee members and they were thanked for their time and effort over the last few years. Tim Shrigley had also resigned earlier in the year

4.2 Three additional nominations had been received

- Leigh Yeomans
- Teg Huxley
- Rick Hill

4.3 CH advised that Jeff Fry was prepared to continue as Chair if supported by members

4.3 ***All the nominations were accepted by the meeting. Including Jeff Fry's nomination as Chair***

5 Motions

5.1 No motions had been received and none proposed at the meeting

6 Darwin Hall – Cllr Terry Finn

6.1 Cllr Terry Finn gave a short summary of the actions taken by Lichfield CC in relation to the proposed Hall

- 7 councillors have formed a small committee specifically to consider actions in relation to the hall. (Darwin Hall Working Group). Of the 7 councillors 4 are from Leomansley, 2 from St.John's (Chesterfield Road development lies in the St.John's Ward) and the City Council leader sits on the committee
- Committee wishes to obtain a true picture of the task ahead and the S106 position
- Committee feels that too much money has been spent on progressing the Hall to date
- Committee wanted to consider the options for an alternative site and agreed to question senior LDC officers – Richard King, Paul Ansell and Craig Jordan
- The CC is tied in to the S106 agreement and cannot renegotiate
- There is a deadline of early 2010 for completing the Hall
- 3 basic options considered – pursuing a smaller Hall with no further consultation, not build a Hall and return the land and monies to the developer, consult residents on the provision of the Hall
- Now consulting with residents and following this consultation a recommendation on the way forward will be made

6.2 Question and Answer Session Plus Comments

- Why is there only one voting slip per household when occupants may have differing views? In answer it was agreed that one vote per household was appropriate
- Why have previous negative surveys been ignored? These surveys have not been totally ignored but it is felt that not all households have been given the opportunity to respond hence the current survey which has seen a questionnaire go to every household
- Has a proper business case been made to demonstrate the need and viability of a Hall? A business case had not been prepared at this stage. The business case

will be prepared once a decision is made on the provision of a Hall and once a more detailed design is available

7 Youth Facilities – Stephen Lightfoot

7.1 Play Area/MUGA – the MUGA is an intensive games facility and as mentioned earlier it has been removed from Darwin Park and placed in storage

7.2 Currently considering 5 potential locations

- Martin Heath Hall
- Playing field between the allotments and the Hedgehog PH
- St Foye Avenue adjacent the disused railway
- Putting it back in its original location
- Beacon Park.

7.3 Sites 1 and 4 are not really feasible and the favoured location is the St Foye site. Whichever site is finally chosen consultation with local members will be required and a recommendation will need to be made to Cllr Roberts as the 'portfolio holder'

7.4 Beacon Park has not been dismissed as a location but if this becomes the recommended site it will mean the MUGA staying in storage for longer whilst works to Beacon Park are completed. In addition it will mean that the facility will be some distance from the estate

7.5 **Questions & Comments**

- Could other sites be considered? It is possible to consider other sites but the ones identified are owned by the LA. Other sites would need to be purchased
- Could land between within the recreation zone be bought as a site for the MUGA.? In theory yes but there are issues of cost and the owners willingness to sell

8 General Question and Answer Session

- Real concerns expressed over the developer not finishing work on the estate. John Thompson outlined some of the actions that had been taken and commented that some items to be dealt with are part of the planning consent and can therefore be enforced whilst others lie outside formal consents and these are the problematic ones
- John Thompson reiterated LARAs concerns on the use of S106 funds for what it feels are inappropriate uses, such as the Garrick Theatre, but felt that more open mechanisms were now in place for deciding on the use of these funds
- SL outlined LDC's website on S106 and encouraged residents to get involved. Comment made that the underlying principle should be that the funds are targeted at the estate
- Question raised over the unacceptable state of current access onto Friary Road. JF advised that it was unlikely there would be any immediate change to this access but reminded residents that Cathedral Walk would be extended through the site of 2 Friary Road. It was hoped this small development would start in early 2009.
- Cars are parking on the pavement along Walsall Road forcing those with pushchairs or wheelchairs to use the road and therefore negotiate on coming traffic. It was pointed out that causing an obstruction is an offence but Simon Lawrence (PCSO) advised that he tried to deal with such issues through advice rather than getting 'heavy handed' PC Lawrence asked residents to contact him or his colleagues on the 0300 number when issues arise
- If LARA has taken a firm position to oppose the proposed Blair House development why cannot it take a similar position with the community hall. In addition, some residents may feel Blair House is a more appropriate location for

the community hall? JF responded by pointing out that the feedback from residents on Blair House is fully in opposition to its development whilst there are varying views with the Hall. This is why LARA has pushed for a more comprehensive consultation on the hall. JF also commented that on some of the questionnaire exercises conducted by local residents there were questions regarding the accuracy of the information provided

- Comment was made that the proposed Core Strategy pushed for the retention of the Western Recreation Zone and therefore concerns that the land allocated to the community hall would be developed if returned to the developer were ill founded. John Thompson commented that things were not so clear cut at this stage and there could be pressure on the WRZ for either housing or commercial development
- In relation to the WRZ if the community hall was developed on this land would it create a precedent that would support a developer's wish to develop non recreational facilities on the WRZ. JT advised that Richard King had stated that the development of the community hall would not create a precedent

9 Closing Remarks

- 9.1 JF expressed thanks to Waitrose for the provision of refreshments, to all those who had given up their time to make presentations and to all those residents who had attended and shown their support for LARA

NB £13.40 collected in donations