

# **Leomansley Area Residents Association**

## **Bulletin No. 2: March 2005**

We have arranged to meet senior officers from Lichfield District Council on March 15<sup>th</sup> to discuss various concerns including the provision of social and community facilities within the area. We are also planning a meeting with County Council officers and politicians to discuss traffic and highway issues. We shall let you know the outcome of these meetings in our next bulletin - alternatively, you can keep in touch through our website.

### **Mail boxes and public transport**

A Darwin Park resident has written to express her concern at the lack of mail boxes in the area. We are taking this up with Royal Mail. She has also pointed out the total lack of public transport for Darwin Park. Please let us have your comments on these or any other issues. You may contact us by phone, post (if you can get to a postbox) or email (see website for details)

### **Local Development Framework. - A framework for your future.**

As predicted in the January LARA bulletin Lichfield District Council has now published for formal consultation development proposals that form part of the Local Development Framework. This newsletter highlights some issues directly relating to the Leomansley area.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the existing Lichfield District Local Plan and County Structure Plan. When the consultation and public inquiry processes are completed, the LDF will become the local policy context for town planning and development control for the period to 2011. It is therefore very important that comments on the current proposals are sent to the District Council by the Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

A series of public exhibitions were held between 19<sup>th</sup> February and 2<sup>nd</sup> March. A newsletter entitled "A framework for your future" is available and was issued as a supplement to the Lichfield Mercury. The newsletter summarises the process and the Council's 'Preferred Options' for development. They are said to represent a sustainable solution for housing, employment, town and city centres facilities, recreation, leisure, tourism and culture.

The LDF documents are available to view at the District Council House, public libraries etc. and are also available on the District Council's web site [www.lichfielddc.gov.uk](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk)

The documents include:

1. Core Strategy Background Paper 1
2. Draft Statement of Community Involvement
3. Employment Land Review

### **Proposals for employment land on part of the recreation zone at Darwin Park.**

The Council's proposals for allocation of additional employment land have a direct impact on the Leomansley area. As part of increasing the amount of land available for employment purposes in the District an area of 3.2 hectares of land at Darwin Park is to be allocated for office/business uses. The area concerned is at the western end of Darwin Park, close to where the supermarket will be built. If you would like a detailed plan of the area please contact me.

### **The current allocation status of the proposed employment land site.**

In 1998, the District Council's Local Plan allocated a "western recreation zone" on land located south of Walsall Road and east of the proposed Lichfield Southern Bypass. The proposed employment land use allocation in the LDF is within the southerly part of that recreation zone allocation.

The Local Plan included the following statements: -

**"Policy L.35**

**Recreation Zones**

***The District Council will encourage the establishment of recreational uses within the recreational zones, shown on the Lichfield Inset Plan, in particular those which attract use from a wide catchment area, subject to normal planning requirements".***

***"Land between the proposed housing site and the proposed bypass is identified as a recreation zone (see Policy L.36). This land is proposed to remain open for recreation uses and the District Council's policy is that this should remain so even in the long term, so that there will be no encroachment of housing development into this area." (From paragraph 11.17)***

***"This zone is not included within the Green Belt since the bypass is considered to be a boundary which is capable of definition at this stage, whereas a firm green belt boundary on the edge of the proposed housing site could not be defined until details of the housing proposals are finalised. However, it is intended that the land should remain open in the long term and the District Council will not therefore contemplate the extension of the urban area of Lichfield into this recreation zone". (From paragraph 11.78)"***

**Comments**

1. The Council claims that the 'Preferred Option' is to concentrate new development including employment land on previously developed land in Lichfield and Burntwood. The redevelopment of City Wharf and the Birmingham Road/bus station site is consistent with that aim. To use the landscape buffer zone between development and the open countryside green belt of the Darwin Park development is entirely inconsistent with the stated aim of protecting our local environment. Having facilitated a 69% increase in the number of houses on the development the need for this area to remain as an open area available for recreational uses is more important than ever.
  2. At two Local Plan public inquiries the Council sought to progress the Walsall Road development. Having failed at the first inquiry to persuade the Inspector that there should be 800 houses and a business park they modified the proposals. The outcome following the second inquiry was that the Council agreed to 400 houses with a maximum of 650 and dropped the business park. Great emphasis was given to landscape and environmental concerns and the recreation zone was part of the package used by the Council to persuade the Inspector to recommend the reduced scale of development.
- This proposed encroachment into the recreation zone is a fundamental change in strategy and ignores the environmental, amenity and landscape impact of this proposal. It also ignores the substance and context of the public inquiry commitments and the formally adopted policies of the Council in the Local Plan.
  - We are not aware of any action by the Council to implement the Local Plan commitment to encourage the establishment of recreational uses within the western recreation zone.
  - What the Council should be doing at this stage is redesignating the western recreation zone as Green Belt. The main reason for its removal from the green belt was because no firm boundary line could be defined before the development took place. That is no longer the position.

- If the Council consider that part of the site no longer needs to be a recreation zone what is the situation for the remaining area of the recreation zone? Although no change is currently proposed for the remaining open buffer area between Limburg Avenue and the housing development the current proposal would be a powerful precedent for similar development on the remaining area of the recreation zone
- Additional traffic to a new business site will add to the traffic congestion and delays already occurring in Lichfield.
- The site is described as just off the Lichfield Southern Bypass. To date the link beneath the railway line and construction of the remainder of the route through to London Road have yet to be secured. With the current rate of progress, it must be doubtful that the Lichfield Southern Bypass will be completed within the LDF plan period i.e. before 2011.
- As proposed, the employment land will be on three sides of the proposed community facilities which are to be located at the end of the central Cathedral Avenue. Is this the appropriate setting for the community facilities or would it be preferable to retain the original commitment to an open recreation area?
- There are potential implications for the Darwin Park development arising from proposals concerning the existing Eastern Avenue industrial and commercial sites. The Council are proposing at Eastern Avenue that existing industrial and commercial development be allowed a change of use to accommodate bulky goods shopping. The need for the Darwin Park employment land allocation is based on assessment that there is a shortage of such land. If this is so, it is not clear why encouraging a reduction of an established industrial and commercial area is being promoted in favour of shopping. In addition, it is well known that Central Government policies are now opposed to edge of town shopping provision. If this change is permitted at Eastern Avenue how long will it be before the Council decide to allow alternative uses on land at Darwin Park?

**Make your views known.**

The Executive Committee of LARA consider it important that residents make the Council aware of their views on the proposals which have now emerged as the Council's 'Preferred Options'

Comments for the Lichfield District Council should be sent to FREEPOST WV370, Development Services, District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield, WS13 6YZ by Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

The Executive Committee will be meeting to agree representations concerning the LDF consultation proposals. It would be most helpful to receive your comments on the proposals and any of the points in this newsletter. Currently, the Executive Committee is not convinced that a case for development of this site has been made. We are also concerned inconsistencies within the proposals and the fundamental departure from previous policy commitments of the Council.

Please send any comments for the LARA Executive Committee to:

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