

Leomansley Area Residents Association

Minutes of Public Meeting 21 November 2009

Venue: Martin Heath Hall, Christchurch Lane

Present: LARA Executive Committee Members - Jeff Fry (Chair), Mike Wall (Treasurer), John Thompson, Graham Edwards (Secretary), Rick Hill

Members of the Public - Approximately 40 people in attendance

Presentations: David Smedley (Leader, LCC) on Darwin Hall, Cllr Derek Love (LDC) on LDF, Craig Jordan, LDC on Core Strategy, Cllr Terry Finn (SCC) on Highways.

Apologies - Ann Huggins (Taylor Wimpey), Cllr Bob Awty, Jon Allinson, Cllr Neil Roberts, Neil Turner (LDC), Nina Dawes (LDC), Peter Young (LCC), Richard King (LDC), Sean Coghlan (LDC), Stephen Lightfoot (LDC)

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

A point of order was made by Howard Lawrence, Member, that some LARA Members had not received notice of the AGM in accordance with the Constitution, namely that a number of residents and members had either not received notice or had received it late.

JF confirmed that unfortunately some notices had been delivered late, approximately 7 to 10 days prior to the AGM rather than the required 21 days.

A number of comments were made that this all seemed ridiculous, no one had been 'disenfranchised', notice was sent out well in advance of the AGM by e-mail, it was posted on the LARA website etc. The general view was that LARA had acted reasonably and as a community based organisation had done all that could really be expected of it. Nevertheless, on balance, JF felt that it was important to be transparent and therefore accepted Howard's point of order and advised that the meeting would continue as an Open Meeting; the formal business of the AGM would be conducted at a rearranged date.

1 Minutes of AGM 12 November 2008

Deferred

2 Chairman's Annual Report

2.1 Jeff Fry outlined the area boundary covered by LARA. Key issues considered by LARA throughout the year included

- MUGA location - currently the equipment remains in storage
- Blair House - originally designated as open space but LDC changed its designation without any public consultation. LARA continues to oppose its development and

although LDC refused planning permission for housing this was overturned at appeal. Now apparent that the brook runs through a culvert underneath the site and negotiations continue with LDC and the Environment Agency on what is required

- Amenities on Darwin Park - LARA has continued to press the developer to deliver on promised works such as lighting, footpath and road maintenance; JF pointed out some of the successes including completion of the round-a-bouts to an acceptable standard
- Kensington Oval - lighting columns now going in
- Car Parking - there are serious issues with car parking on Darwin Park, especially Whitehouse Drive and Deykin Avenue, where parked cars often obstruct or restrict the passage of traffic. As the roads remain un-adopted the local authority is not in a position to put in yellow lines etc to restrict parking. Jeff has contacted a Staffs County Council Highways officer to enquire what is happening with the roadway deficiencies and was promised that TW would be made to follow through and complete the work shortly.
- Meetings with Taylor Wimpey - the developer now refuses to meet with LARA but has not given specific reasons for this
- Walsall Road - overhanging trees from the adjacent woods - taken up by LARA but no response yet from the landlords agent
- Leomansley View - issue of 'school run' parking.
- 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 pressed the local authorities to carry out an estate- wide consultation on the hall through a questionnaire exercise and this showed the majority of residents to be in favour of its provision with over 60% voting for the hall
- S106 - some £130,000 will be used to complete Cathedral Walk. JF urged local groups and residents to put forward ideas for the use of S106 funds. JF reiterated LARA's view that S106 funding support for 'projects' at the Garrick Theatre should not have been pursued until all matters affecting Darwin Park, such as unlit footpaths had been dealt with.
- Housing Growth - residents need to be aware of the likely growth in housing earmarked for Lichfield - some 10,000 homes
- Policing - JF thanked the local PCSOs

2.2 ***The Annual Report was accepted but will need to be formally adopted at the AGM***

3 Finance Report

Deferred

4 Election of Officers

Deferred

4 Motions

4.1 A late motion regarding the Constitution had been received. This would now be considered at the rearranged AGM. No motions were proposed at the meeting

5 Local Development Framework - Cllr Derek Love/Craig Jordan

5.1 Cllr Derek Love outlined what an LDF is and the importance of the Core Strategy which is part of it. Lichfield District Council's original submission had not been successful due to a lack of detailed evidence and supporting information

5.2 Cllr Love pointed out the links to regional strategies, particularly the Regional Spatial Strategy. This deals with the possible land uses for the West Midlands area and with regard to housing sets the targets for housing growth up to 2026

5.3 A number of options have been considered for addressing the housing growth agenda including the provision of new settlements and a focus on major urban areas

5.4 For Lichfield a target of 8,000 houses was set and taking into account housing completions already achieved (3,000) this meant the provision of a further 5,000 houses. Within these figures a proportion of affordable homes would be required and this has been set at 25%

5.5 Sites within Lichfield that have been designated for the housing growth agenda are to the south - near Shortbutts Lane, possibly land adjacent Cricket lane; there is also a further area of land to the north of the City

5.6 Following the examination in public of the RSS the target for housing growth has been increased to 10,000, 7,000 net taking account of achievements to date. Also, now want a focus of 1,000 houses in Rugeley and 1,000 in Tamworth

5.7 At the moment the Western Recreation Zone is not included as land suitable for development. LDC will, however, shortly issue a document - Allocation of Land - and developers may apply for land to be considered for housing development. It is important that LARA considers this document and puts forward ideas for the use of the WRZ eg the field adjacent Walsall Road might be suitable for use as allotments

5.8 Craig Jordan then gave an update on the LDF & Core Strategy and pointed out that the inspectors request for the increase in housing numbers is still subject to ratification by government

6 Question and Answer Session

Local residents raised the following points

- Real concern was expressed over the provision of additional housing without increasing the capacity of the local infrastructure eg local secondary schools were already over subscribed and without the simultaneous enhancement of local infrastructure such housing growth was unsustainable. CJ accepted the point and said it may well be one of the issues LDC includes in its response to the increased housing requirement
- Source of the evidence used to justify such an increase in local housing? CJ confirmed use of ONS data
- WRZ - pointed out that there have already been significant encroachments into the WRZ - Waitrose, Darwin Hall, some housing - and therefore we must all be vigilant in checking future development proposals for Lichfield. In response, LDC representatives confirmed the written commitment to the preservation of the WRZ. Cllr Ian Jackson also confirmed his commitment to the longer-term protection of the WRZ
- Comment that no land, including 'green-belt' seemed protected from development these days
- John Thompson - commented that in his role as Chair of the Lichfield Civic Society a detailed study of a proposed new settlement at Fradley had been requested. This was felt to be an important part of the strategic discussions.
- MUGA - CJ summarised the problems with the original site and confirmed the equipment remained in storage. Priority is to find a suitable site accessible to young people from Darwin Park. Favoured site now is adjacent the by-pass near the new bridge. Several residents pointed out that those living close by would be subject to the same issues that led to it being dismantled on its original site. Not only that, safety was a major issue for the site adjacent the by-pass and in effect locating it there would simply be 'an accident waiting to happen'. Surely Beacon Park, which is just as close, is the obvious place to put the MUGA. In response it was pointed out that 'electronic 'speed indicators' and a pelican crossing would be provided. One resident also felt that parents should take more responsibility for the behaviour of their children and that there are few things provided for young people on the estate and we should be careful not to take these away.
- Mel Mason (MM), a resident of The Whytmore, spoke to the issue of the MUGA and its proposed location. Mel noted that there were problems with anti-social behaviour from youths late at night when the MUGA was previously installed on the Play Area. He expected the same problems if installed in the location being proposed by the LDC (which is just off the roundabout where the bridge for the Lichfield Southern By-pass is being built). MM questioned whether this would be a proper location for the MUGA due to the nearness to houses. He also cited the danger that vehicles travelling along Sainte Foy Avenue would pose to children wishing to get to/from the

MUGA. Another resident objected to this noting that he wishes that there be a MUGA for his children to use. He pointed out that his children are not participant in anti-social behaviour and therefore should not be disenfranchised by those who are.

7 Darwin Hall - Cllr David Smedley

7.1 The hall is under construction and ahead of schedule; residents concerns are being actioned wherever possible

7.2 Hand made bricks to match as close as possible the brick used on nearby houses are being used

7.3 The roof will be covered in zinc so that the roof pitch can be kept as shallow as possible

7.4 A ground source heat pump will be used for heating and cooling

7.5 Natural ventilation will be used

7.6 The hall has been moved over to the side as far as possible to retain the view

7.7 An enclosed area will be provided so that it can be used by nursery/toddler groups

7.8 The area will be landscaped

7.9 Internally there will be a meeting room and main hall plus normal facilities eg toilets etc

7.10 LCC now looking for local residents to volunteer to form a management cttee - contact LCC direct if you are interested

Questions/Points of Concern

The key concern raised was car parking. Provision on the site was inadequate and the agreement with Waitrose was impractical. The inevitable consequence was that adjacent roads would be used creating problems for those living close by. Cllr Smedley agreed that this was a key concern and would be something that would need to be managed although he also accepted that it was something the management cttee would not be able to control

8 Parking on Darwin Park and Surrounding Area - Cllr Terry Finn

8.1 Cllr Terry Finn reiterated that as yet the roads on Darwin Park have not been adopted and therefore the County Council cannot act

8.2 He then gave an update on the yellow lines to be provided near the bowling green island and on St Foye Avenue

8.3 Residents Parking schemes - Lichfield is not well served by these and will be pushing for greater provision

8.4 Cllr Terry Finn also gave an update on road crossings

Questions/points of Concern

- St Foye Avenue is already designated a Clearway so the provision of yellow lines wasn't required - what was needed was enforcement of the Clearway
- Although the County Council cannot as yet act to control parking on Darwin Park could the police not take action where cars were parked dangerously close to junctions, round-a-bouts or are causing an obstruction or forcing passing traffic into dangerous positions eg middle of road just before a corner. Police officer, PC Simon Lawrence (SL), confirmed they can and will act but that in the first instance they would prefer to give a warning.
- John Thompson reiterated the view that S106 funds should be used to improve local footpaths and associated lighting. Cllr Terry Finn confirmed he is pursuing this and is awaiting an officer's response

9 Close of Meeting

9.1 JF closed the meeting at 12.10 and thanked everyone for attending and again thanked all those who had made presentations and answered questions raised by local residents

9.2 JF pointed out that the association does not charge a membership fee but that voluntary donations would be appreciated

9.3 A sum of £46.90 was collected