

LOUDWATER RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER No 9

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On several occasions recently, the LRA has been called in to try to help with objections to planning developments. Even educated and sophisticated people (as you all are!) sometimes do not understand how the wheels go round in local councils as far as planning is concerned. We've been asked to give some hints.

Planning applications are detailed in a list the Council publishes every week that it's in session. The list is on view at all public libraries and at the Council planning offices. (It's also usually published in the local paper). The official list contains only the details we always publish in the newsletter – number of the application, name of the developer, basic information on site and type of development. (Warning – the named developer may well be a builder or a local resident hiding tactfully behind some company name, or that of a relative).

This published list is all the Council is bound to offer – no legal obligation exists to inform even those directly affected. Three Rivers usually does better and informs those whose land marches with the development, which is good of them, but if they miss you, you've no grounds for complaint. (Our list does its best but as we come out only quarterly, some plans may by that time have passed the deadline for objection).

If you're concerned, you're entitled to see the full plan (outline at first stage, full later on) at the Council office. You're not allowed to make copies but they can hardly stop you making a sketch while you're making notes. Incidentally, it's far more difficult for a Council to stop a full plan if it's passed than an outline plan, so object early if it's the sort of development that has needed both stages, in other words a complete new building.

The first recommendation is made by the Planning Officer. They're in a touchy job and under pressure, so they're not out to look for trouble. If no real objection (Green Belt intrusion, new and expensive services, major amenity damage) seems to the Planning Officer to occur, the likelihood is he'll recommend acceptance – unless major objections are received. But the Planning Officer doesn't make the final decision. That's done by the Planning Committee of elected Councillors.

It may seem silly to have to say it but Councillors have jobs to do and homes to run, and their Council work is in their free (?) time. Now minutes and documents for Council committees may well

run into hundreds of pages and Councillors may get them only 48–72 hours before a meeting. Secondly, Three Rivers now covers such a vast area that it is impossible for any Councillor to know much about any area other than his or her own – a Chorleywood Councillor may never have seen most of Abbots Langley and a Prestwick Councillor is lucky if he or she knows much about Sarratt Bottom or Whisperwood. Moreover, the Planning Committee is just not big enough to have a member from every ward on it, so there might not be on the Committee at all, let alone on a particular night, any Chorleywood Councillor, who might be supposed to know a bit more.

But, of course, objections are considered. But officers and Councillors tend to be cynical. If Mr A wants to build, they're not surprised if Mr B next door objects – "He would, wouldn't he?". But if Mr C and Mrs D and Miss E and the LRA and lots of others object, then they might look more closely at whether the development is not perhaps opposed by a validly concerned group of the community, rather than just by those with a vested interest.

So, what do you do?

First, keep up to date with the planning applications lists. If you wish to protest, enlist as many others as possible to support you, preferably with separate letters, which carry more weight than round robins. (Don't settle for promises to write – nag till you see a copy of what's written). Tell the Troutstream Estate Board if it's in the gated area and the LRA wherever it is, but remember they can only support, not originate, an objection. Do send it early! Send a copy of your letter to your local Councillor, or any Councillor you know – even if they're not on the Planning Committee (which is the best, of course), they can still ask to attend and speak if they wish. If you think it will help, try to get them out to look at the site (often very difficult to visualise from words), and if they agree, try to help with transport, a cuppa or thanks – it is appreciated. Lastly, go to the meeting when your objection comes up. It'll cost you an evening but surely it's worth it for your home, and a voter there in the flesh, listening to what a Councillor says, doesn't half concentrate his mind on the problem.

If you do all this, your chances are pretty good. If you're too lazy, you can't grumble if you lose. If you knew it all already, I apologise, but I hope we've used this space in a good cause.

LOUDWATER BIRDS

Well, the Editor got some replies — three to tell the truth. One lazy so-and-so rang up to say he'd tell me what he'd got if I would take them down! Two others were good enough to write. Mr Fuller, of Trout Rise, added to my list the following birds which he sees on his land: Great spotted woodpecker, heron, swan, mallard, grey wagtail, marsh tit, dabchick, kingfisher, green sandpiper, redpoll, black-headed gull, little owl and a kestrel ("Made a kill on our lawn," Mr Fuller says proudly).

Mr Beharrell, of Loudwater House also adds swan, mallard, grey wagtail, black-headed gull, heron and kestrel (the same as Mr Fuller's perhaps?), but in addition he claims coot and moorhen (nesting), lesser black-backed gull, herring gull, green plover, tufted duck, shelduck, muscovy duck.

He adds: "The most interesting are a second-year pair of hybrid ducks, certainly part mallard, the other Aylesbury or Muscovy. Loudwater House is a staging point for migrating martins and swallows in the autumn. Thousands appear for two or three days."

Obviously waterside houses get an extra population that I don't. I missed treecreeper from my list. Can anyone beat the totals of Mr Fuller and Mr Beharrell?

THEY MADE NEWS

Mr Beharrell was kind enough, when he wrote, to say that the newsletter was interesting. That has quite absolutely *nothing* to do with the fact that we lead off with an item about him. The local paper has reported that he has just been sworn in as Master of the Drapers' Company, an old City Livery. The paper also said that Mr Beharrell, Chairman of a city export company, has also been Chairman of the British Export Houses Association, a member of the National Committee on Invisible Exports and a former Chairman of the Institute of Exports.

Mr Charles Green of Whisperwood was the subject of a profile in the Christ Church parish magazine. Mr Green, a General Manager and the Secretary of the National Westminster Bank, was featured for his staunch work for Christ Church where his wife is a deaconess.

Mr Peter Tate, of Rooks Hill, was also the subject of a profile in the local paper, on the occasion of his first book, "East Anglia and its Birds". Now retired, he can follow his main interest of being a bird-watcher and naturalist. (What about your garden bird-list, Mr Tate?)

Less happily, the press reported the death of Lady Lambury who lived for ten years in the Old Mill House, L.Lane. She had been a widow for some years. Her husband, before he was given a baronetcy, was Chairman and Managing Director of BMC which he left after it was merged with Leyland in 1967. We also have to report the death of Mr Melville Richards of T. Way who was well known to older residents for his work in the arduous post of Secretary to the Loudwater/Troutstream Estate Board in the 60s.

PLEASE DON'T

. . . get a good smokey bonfire going when the

wind is blowing it all into your neighbour's windows. They may just have painted, or they may have in the house sufferers from asthma.

. . . leave your outside light on all night or allow a defective alarm bell to go unmended. I know we have had another rash of burglaries in the area, but the light may shine on, and interrupt the sleep of, people who draw their curtains at night (and the burglar can still go round the back); the alarm bell going off without cause not merely infuriates neighbours all round but also wastes the time of the police.

We have been asked by residents to make these points.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- 8/718/78 Side storey extension Dovecote, T.Way. H. B. Francis.
- 8/695/78 Permanent consent to garage Chess Cottage, L. Lane. Dr D. Martin.
- 8/701/78 Attached double garage, converting existing garage, Cranmore, Bridle Lane. Dr R. Cooke.
- 8/603/78 Single storey rear extension and car port Woodend, W.Wood. L. G. Glanfield.
- 8/592/78 Single storey rear extension Greenbank, T. Rise. C. Lawrence.
- 8/556/78 Two-storey rear extension Imber, Bridle Lane. G. Watt.

FROM THE COUNCIL MINUTES

The Council minutes note (Planning 734) the refusal of the creation of riding stables in Beechen Grove Wood: the dismissal of an appeal by Mr P. B. Cox against refusal of a first floor extension and conservatory in Chess Place, L. Lane: the dismissal of an appeal by Mr G. Kingston against refusal to erect two dwellings and garages on land in Dalilea, Sarratt Lane (both Planning 749): the withdrawal of a plan to build a house and garage on the island site behind T Rise (Planning 787 and 811). In all of these, the LRA, having been so requested, had made known its views.

The Council noted that its proposal for an experimental six months to prohibit commercial vehicles over 3 tons from L. Lane had produced queries from the County Surveyor. The idea is to be further considered.

The new road off Chorleywood Road serving the Rasehill development is to be called Rasehill Close.

The owner of No 1 Armitage Close has requested a low fence on the land between his boundary and the carriageway of L. Lane because of damage by heavy vehicles. Money being short, the Council will discuss further.

Housing Minute 865 notes that the Council is ready to administer the provisions of the Home Insurance Act 1978 under which a grant of £50 or 66% of costs can be claimed from the Council for thermal insulation. Applications to the Director of Environmental Health.

FROM THE EDITOR

We shan't be out again till 1979, so, early as it is, may I wish you on behalf of the LRA a happy and peaceful Christmas.

John Jarrett, Editor