

# LOUDWATER RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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Editor: John Jarrett

## TWO MORE LANES!

The news that the Government plans to widen the M25 by one lane on each side has shaken Loudwater (the news dominated the AGM discussion) and other local residents' associations. Many are appalled at the prospect of more noise, more pollution and more damage to the environment and property values.

The LRA now faces a problem. At the AGM, and subsequently we have been urged to take strong action. But which action should it be? Different people will have different views. So far, five views seem to emerge.

A. Total approval (although wanting the new lanes to be better built in every way.) Reason — M25 is major saver in time and money 90% of the time. New lanes will remove over-crowding.

B. Reluctant approval (subject to same demand for better construction). Reason — wish it wasn't necessary but suppose government plan can't be stopped anyway.

C. Indifferent. Reason — no action will make any difference/not close to the road/don't use it/will get well compensated if necessary.

D. Reluctant disapproval. Reason — don't think it will make any difference fighting but unless we appear to resist totally, there's no hope of getting road built as we would like it.

E. Total disapproval. Reason — extra lanes will just attract extra traffic to produce status quo in few years, ruin our district for no purpose.

The majority feeling at the AGM appeared to be for option D. But there has also already started a campaign in favour of option E. However, even though the AGM was so well attended, it is our duty to seek the opinions of as many of you as possible, because whatever we do, we will annoy some people and we have to be able to say we spoke for the majority. It's also clear that we don't have much time. Although the new lanes aren't scheduled for some years yet, we know from bitter experience that, while bureaucracy may be slow to get moving, it very soon acquires its own momentum. So IT IS IMPORTANT that as many members of the LRA as possible write or ring whichever committee member they wish to say which option seems best — and AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Meanwhile we have set up a joint meeting with the Loudwater/ Troutstream Estate Board, and we shall certainly be in touch with the Chorleywood Residents Association.

One word of warning. Any action whatsoever to influence the issue will involve a great deal of work, a full and well-documented case to be presented by experts who will cost a considerable amount of money.

P.S. Our MP Richard Page has said he welcomes the new lanes!!!

## OUR A.G.M.

Thanks to energetic work in spreading the word, our AGM on May 18 was packed — a few poor souls had to stand all the time. It was, said the Chairman, precisely the show of community spirit that was needed when Loudwater was under such threat.

John Jarrett said that few people probably realised how wide a range of activities the Association was involved in, or how largely successful it had been. The Thames Water Board, the S.E. Road Construction Unit, the Post Office, the Civil Aviation Authority, the D. of Environment, planning

authorities at all levels, the Tree Preservation Office and many others had all heard from the LRA in recent times on subjects ranging from stopping an airfield extension to changing the collection discs on our pillar boxes. And in almost every case, we had either won our point wholly or in part. Currently we were being consulted about the future use of Chorleywood House and the question of sleeping policemen in L. Lane.

Some people said the big battalions would always win. "The day enough people in Loudwater say that, Loudwater is doomed," John Jarrett declared. "As long as we reject that gloom, we will win." In fact, the biggest change in Loudwater in recent years had not been physical, but the ever-faster turnover in residents.

The main enemy, sad to say, was the Government policy of favouring developers on the ground that there was a shortage of housing in the area. Of course there was, a shortage of cheap starter houses for teachers, young doctors and nurses etc, but there was no shortage of the £400-500,000 houses that developers were packing in wherever they could, despite opposition from local councillors of all parties. The pressure must be applied on Mr Page, and on Mr. Nicholas (NIMBY) Ridley.

As regards the rest of the LRA's activities, the finances were healthy at about £1700-1800. The 1988 musical evening had unfortunately to be cancelled but the Garden Party was again a happy occasion. Several distinguished Committee members had left the district, notably Jack Cognet and Barnaby Osborne, but the Committee was recommending that three members co-opted during the year to fill the vacancies be elected as full members. Mrs. Margaret Homan, Mrs. Isabel Johnson and Mr. John Reid were duly elected. The reports by the Chairman, the Hon. Treasurer and the very clear statement by the Hon. Auditor, Mike Hill, were accepted. The meeting then heard a much appreciated talk by a spokesman for the Thames Water Board (Miss Lacon). When the formal meeting ended, the main discussion immediately focused on the plan to widen the M25 (see above). The packed hall then adjourned for wine and conversation until the Chairman had to ask them all to go home as our time was up. A very worthwhile evening.

One letter already received shows the concern.

I am writing with regard to the noise from the M25 that we all have to suffer. Attending the recent LRA AGM my wife was impressed with the wealth of feeling shown on this problem.

I believe a possible solution is to have a high concrete barrier on the Westbound side of the motorway, stretching from the Solesbridge Lane bridge to the slip road. The cost would obviously be substantial but we are all entitled to our right to peace and quiet. If all the Loudwater community and surrounding areas were to put their weight behind the project and presented it to the D. of E. with relevant facts to support the case, I feel we have a very strong argument.

Other points to consider if nothing is done is the detrimental effect on house prices and also with eight Lanes, noise can only get worse. The completion of this work could be three, five or eight years ahead and I don't feel we should have to wait that long for an answer to our problems. We should act to alleviate the noise as soon as possible.

W. George, Med Mills. T. Rise.

## WATER POINTS

Miss Lacon covered too wide a ground to report here. Two points that struck some members. One, how will the water rate be assessed after the community charge comes in? Answer — the Water Boards would like to know. For the moment it looks as though they will continue to be based on your old rate figure (interesting this, because for the Water Board to find some alternative way of charging may take ten years, so how will they allow for inflation?). Second, we hear a lot about saving money by having your supply metered. Water Board experience is that half save, but half finish up paying more!)

## OUR DEADLY GARDENS

The most startling fact to arise from the discussion of the M25 extension came from Isabel Johnson. In urging everyone to use unleaded petrol (Rob now carries it), she revealed that she had become worried about lead deposits and sent some vegetable leaves from her garden to be analysed. These were vegetables she had been feeding her family. She was told that the permitted limit of lead for baby foods was 0.1 parts per million — hers were 40 parts per million! She was told these vegetables should not be used for anyone. Her soft fruit, although less polluted, was also well over and the analyst pointed out that adding sugar and boiling for jam made the lead easier to be absorbed. And the Johnson's house in T.Rise is well beyond that distance from the motorway at which we have so far been told pollution ceases to matter.

## THE FUTURE OF RICKMANSWORTH

Rickmansworth and District Residents Association have recently published a questionnaire, asking people how they wanted the town to develop and last month they held a public meeting attended by some 400 people to take the matter further and to give the results of the questionnaire. It was a really praiseworthy piece of organisation with a lot of work involved, even if (predictably) no consensus came from the meeting.

For instance, some people at the meeting wanted better roads and more car parks as well as central Ricky pedestrianisation and measures to cut down vehicles. All wanted a supermarket, but nobody wanted it anywhere else than on the old Tesco site which is the one place it cannot be, because the property company that owns the site does not want a supermarket there. And so on. Many views fly in the face of facts nothing can change. Let us clear these up.

1. There are complaints that too much of the centre of Rickmansworth is being taken by offices, especially financial institutions and that the Council should ensure that small shops providing basic services are not squeezed out. FACT. Most prime sites in Rickmansworth are owned by a property company who rent to the highest bidder. Local Councils, of various politics, can and have expressed concern at the loss of small shops but have absolutely no legal powers to interfere in any way except one. If what is proposed constitutes a legal change of use, the Council can object — if, for example a fish shop becomes offices. But the developer can appeal and unless there is strong evidence that a fish shop wants and is able to take the tenancy, the Council will lose. FACT. Very few small shops want to come into Rickmansworth because they feel, rightly or wrongly, that the catchment area is too small for them to cover high rents and rates. The same problem exists over the Council's other option, that is a compulsory purchase order on a site. One, it costs ratepayers' money, two, it has to be strongly justified as a social necessity, and three, someone has to want to take on the tenancy.

It is said that the Three Rivers rates are a disincentive. But the major rate charge is set by the County Council. Hertfordshire has traditionally been high-rated but it is claimed that the services, too, are of high quality. Certainly, no possible reduction in the District rate would offset the higher rents now being asked.

2. There are complaints about the change of direction of traffic in Rickmansworth and the shortage of parking space. The background here is also important.

Some years ago Three Rivers District Council decided unanimously that it was inefficient and uneconomic to have its various departments in different offices scattered widely throughout the area, many expensive to maintain or to rent and none designed for office needs. To avoid the cost of new building falling on the rates, the Council made a deal with a development company would build new Council offices free in return for a Council-owned site — the Homestead Road car park — on which the company would build profit-making offices. A condition was that the developers provide on this site car parking space at least equal to what was there previously.

During the time this important commuter parking was lost, equivalent parking space was provided at sites around the town centre. At the same time, a long-felt ambition to take heavy traffic out of the town centre, plus concern at the heavy construction traffic involved in the new Council office and the Homestead Road development, led the Council to decide to reverse the traffic flow, a proposal that had long been advocated by the Rickmansworth Residents Association who wanted heavy traffic out of the High Street.

All these decisions as far as policy went were endorsed by all parties, though there were arguments about methods of achieving them.

There are other interesting questions — should all traffic be kept out of the town centre, should commuters pay to park, should better public transport by bus be provided/subsidised etc. etc?

Lastly, the Editor is grateful for a number of letters already received about what's happening in Rickmansworth. Because (a) space is tight and (b) I'm sure there'll be more, I'm holding these over till our next issue, when a number of points will have been settled. However, those who have already written are assured that their points have been passed on to the Council. Many thanks.

## OUR MUSICAL EVENING

Once again, our musical evening was almost perfect. I say almost because we weren't very bright in fixing it so close to a Bank Holiday with the result that, instead of, as usual, having to turn people away, the hall was only about 80% full. But Neil Grant Richardson and his two friends gave us a delightful evening of music old and new, humorous and serious in the elegant hall of Loudwater Farm. The letter below says here what many said at the time, namely do it again, do it more often, tell more people.

From Mrs E. ('Tiny') Thorndick, Jasmine Cottage, Rooks Hill

May I through your Newsletter express my thanks to Neil Richardson and his friends who gave us such a lovely concert on April 30. I am sure I speak for all those who were there in saying how much we enjoyed the playing and singing. I know I did. Thank you once more and I hope we shall be lucky enough to have another happy evening with Neil and others at some date not too far in the future.

## NEWCOMERS

Welcome to Ruth and David Maxwell, in Troutcote, T. Way

## PLANNING

8/0320/89 Keruing Cedar, Chess Hill. Part two, part single storey rear extension.

8/0330/89 Fursehill. Lower Plantation. One-storey rear extension.

8/379/89 Barton Lodge, Bridle Lane. Two-storey and one-storey extension.

8/389/89 Bantry Cottage, Sarratt Lane. One-storey rear extension.

8/292/89 Cob Cottage, T. Rise. Detached dwelling. (Opposed)

8/396/89 Long Hedge, L. Lane. Detached dwelling.

8/405/89 Davemaur, Whisper Wood. Erect detached garage.

8/414/89 Chess Bank House, T. Way. One-storey side extension.

8/419/89 Sarratt House, Bridle Lane. One-storey rear extension.

8/458/89 Broad Oaks. T. Rise. Two-storey extension.

8/459/89 The Cottage, T. Rise. Two-storey rear extension.