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NEWSLETTER No. 71

APRIL 1994

Editor: John Jarrett

As forecast in the last Newsletter, the Environmental Impact Statement on the M25 widening in our area has been issued. This is the plan for inserting one extra lane into the existing boundaries. By the time you receive this, the official deadline for comments will have passed.

The LRA Committee had a long session on the problem and has decided as follows. First, a computerised letter will be sent (by now, will have been sent) to every household member saying what improvements we will ask our consultant to press for, and asking you to write as well.

That consultant's report has now gone to the Dept. of Transport on your behalf. It is very full and competent and we give its conclusions in this newsletter. We apologise if it is a little late but we thought the issue was of sufficient importance to justify delay. The report is twelve pages long and gives much technical and convincing argument, largely on the question of noise reduction. In full, it would take up several issues of the newsletter and might well be rather much for the non-technical, like your Editor, so we have tried to give below the gist of the nine main points it makes.

(The employment of a consultant was made possible by the generous support of many of you for our M25 fund, and a copy of the full report is of course, available to anyone who cares to ask Eric Tindall (776836).

The report starts with a statement we all agree on. "I am appalled that homes so pleasant should be blighted by pervasive traffic noise." It welcomes the proposed 4.5 metre high barrier for about 1000-1100 metres northwards of Junction 18, but (Point 1) requests extension of a non-reflective barrier to Micklefield Green overbridge, and to a greater height.

It queries the adequacy of research of the D.o.T.'s measurement of noise reduction and the 300 metre cut-off for these but also (Point 2) attacks the failure to recognise the potential cutting of noise by setting speed limits at 50 m.p.h. It recognises that this is outside the remit of the Environmental Impact Statement but urges the Transport Minister John McGregor to consider such a reduction generally in order to (a) reduce noise (b) reduce pollution as we promised at the Rio Summit (c) reduce accidents and (d) reduce wear on the carriageway. It suggests that the proposed lane width reductions and hard shoulder omissions will in fact increase accident risk.

It rejects (Point 3) the D.o.T. case against porous asphalt, namely that it is unsuitable for over 4000 HGVs per day per lane. (This statement, the consultant notes with some acerbity, is merely a repetition of an existing general D.o.T. ruling, and the E.I.S. for our section has not examined the case at all, leaving it to organisations such as the LRA to do and pay for real research).

The report states that porous asphalt (PA for short) has been used on trial sections of the M6 near Junction 18 since 1981 and, even though substandard by today's requirements, has performed satisfactorily for twelve years despite well over 7000 HGVs per day on that lane. On a trial section of the M18, under equally taxing conditions, PA has lasted so much that Cheshire County Council wants to re-lay the whole carriageway with PA. The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has said there is no appreciable difference in wear between PA and hot-rolled asphalt. PA is widely used in Europe. The point is also made that PA is easier and faster to lay than other surfaces.

The report then turns to the advantages of PA (Point 4). PA allows better drainage and therefore the surface produces less spray. The Minister has denied this but the Transport Research Laboratory says spray reduction can be as much as 50% which must therefore make driving less hazardous with better visibility and less driver fatigue. Another bonus may be a reduction in glare from headlights on wet surfaces.

It is, however, accepted that PA may freeze more easily and need more frequent salting but various EEC studies have said these are at best minor issues.

The report goes on to say (Point 5) that Transport Research Laboratory trials on the A38 and the M1 have given noise reductions from 3 to 8 dBA.

Lastly, the report draws attention (Point 6) to alternatives if the D.o.T. is obstinate enough to refuse to consider PA. That is "whisper concrete" technically known as exposed - aggregate concrete or EAC. This is in use in Austria and on trial in Canada and our M18 and significant noise reductions are claimed for it. It is more expensive than blacktop and the verdict overall is still not in, but at least the D.o.T. should consider it.

The report concludes "The D.o.T.'s objection to PA on the need for frequent maintenance is based on inaccurate notions... but, were resurfacing with asphalt at intervals of about 10 years to be considered unacceptable then the D.o.T. should consider EAC. In any event, prior to making final decisions on surfacing for the widening M25 18/19, the D.o.T. should carry out and publish an objective appraisal of the options including both PA and EAC and the combinations thereof (PA surfacing of concrete base or, as on M18, concrete overlay upon black top) taking full account of practical experience, in the UK, other European countries and worldwide".

The LRA has sent copies of this report to our MP and local councillors and expects them to urge its consideration. There is no doubt that the D.o.T. has been shaken by the volume of criticism of the details (and indeed the basic policy) of widening the M25 and the recent retreat by Mr McGregor on many of the widening plans is too clear to be disguised, as the Ministry is trying to do, as just "prioritisation". Members of the LRA who have backed the campaign both here and in supporting NORMAL (which in turn has given heart to other protest groups) can feel proud of their efforts.

Our consultant was deliberately given a concise, practical remit, tied specifically to Loudwater, but on the E.I.S. in general, there are some other points that should be noticed.

Some points that should be noticed. First, although the D.o.T. promised in September the E.I.S. for junctions 16-21, all they have produced is for Junctions 16-19 - in other words, a further attempt to push the schemes through as piecemeal as possible (a policy exposed on TV and in the press.) Secondly, although the D.o.T. originally said; "No public land will be taken" because, if it is, they have to face a public enquiry, the brochure now adds "except by prior voluntary agreement". Several pieces of private land have been acquired this way but the Dept. won't say what for. The Dept. spokesmen have stated flatly we will not get porous asphalt: there will be no improvements to Junction 18, the expectation of which was the reason Mr Page gave for not opposing the plan: noise levels, according to the Dept, will be generally less, but their chart shows that the places it will increase include the Chorleywood Road: nothing will be done to ease congestion on access roads ("Won't happen" says the Dept, "because the extra lane will smooth traffic flow"): extra planting will help reduce noise, it is said, in 15 years! : most lanes will be reduced by between 12" and 22" and hard shoulders will disappear in places such as the Berry Lane Viaduct which, with the concrete barrier going up to 6 meters, will be almost a tunnel: 300,000 tons of material will be taken out and 150,000 tons bought in, the job of deciding what roads these should use off the motorway being landed on the poor County Council: monitoring of air, soil and water pollution will be landed on the poor District Council: building, if it goes ahead, will start early in 1995. Lastly, Herts Council has just reversed its position on the extra lane. Previously accepted, this is now opposed by the County.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Peter Lough, of T Way, was to be seen in a charming Channel 4 television documentary about his father, the famous Ernest Lough, whose fame as a boy soprano will be remembered by all older readers. Ernest Lough's recording of "Oh for the wings of a dove" was an enormous record seller. Peter and his brother were seen revisiting the scenes of their father's triumphs.

Tony and Sheila Thompson were once again in the news with a report of the 120 Russian children who the Thompsons, of C/wood Road, arranged to come here for language lessons.

Mrs Carolyn Biro, of Lodge Drive, was mentioned for a Whitbread Volunteer Action Award in connection with her work for the Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association. Mrs Biro and her children all suffer from the condition which causes abnormal thickening of the heart muscle.

Miss Margaret McLeod, L House, announced her retirement from the headship of the PNEU school. Her successor, Mrs Marshall-Taylor is married to the Vice-Chairman of Governors of Christ Church School.

LETTERS

From Dorothy Francis, T Way

"There continue to be incidents of badgering at the door. One recently was 'on behalf of the Gas Board' another was a frozen food merchant, most difficult to get rid of. If you are badgered, tell the local police immediately-not to call them out but to inform them so they can record the problem.

"On another subject, I have been going to Troutstream Hall on Monday mornings for about two years to give the old people their coffee and to chat. The Warden, Eileen Eames, a lovely Northerner, would be glad if others could also offer help of this kind. Both the old people and the staff do delight in the extra stimulation of a new face or two from outside. If anyone has any talent in chat or whatever to help make life more varied for the old people at the Hall, many of whom have had fascinating lives, please ring Eileen (772708) and you'll be heartily welcome.

"Lastly, can I suggest that the growing rash of 'chi-chi' white verge stones is an eyesore. We all suffer from heedless motorists, so what else can be done? Wooden tree stumps that are moveable are, in my view, more in keeping with the nature of the Estate."

From another resident, anonymously

"Can I make a plea on behalf of those of us who suffer from high-powered external security lights, both continuous and intermittent? Would their owners please angle these lights so that they shine only in their own boundaries, and not through neighbours windows? It only needs a slight adjustment downwards."

ODDS AND ENDS

Three Rivers asked us for Loudwater's views on introducing wheely bins instead of collecting refuse in plastic sacks. The Committee was virtually unanimous in rejecting the idea. The Council had had a case made to it that the capital cost of bins would be offset by the reductions that could be made in labour and not having to replace sacks, of which tens of thousands go missing each year. We felt this calculation was faulty, that residents would object to having to clean the bins out, let alone hauling them up and down where there are steep drives, and that local lads would soon be using them for chariot races. However, we told Three Rivers we would ask you in this newsletter. But before we could do so, the Council had had so many objections that they are not going any further with the idea.

Your Committee is also returning to the pursuit of the local Highways Authority. After years of pressure, we did get L Lane, or most of it, centre white-lined and at that time we were told it would also be properly re-surfaced. Either it wasn't done or it wasn't done properly, because the surface is bad and potholes are appearing. We will keep nagging.

Two thank-yous. The first to the Estate Board whose contractors have now cut and moved away the big trees that fell in the hurricane across the path through the T Way / V Way wood where so many of you walk dogs. That path is now clear again (and more daffodils are growing in the extra light) The wood still looks very sad.

Second, to Mr and Mrs Holding of L Drive, for giving the road a new sign. The last one, also a kind donation, was once more vandalised. It has now been replaced by a handsome new one, to which we wish long life.

The Parish Council did hold its "Adopt a Parish Path" meeting which, on a dreadful night, nevertheless got a reasonable attendance. The Council has now taken over responsibility for footpaths in Chorleywood, including ours, and will as soon as possible be clearing where overgrown, replacing signs, stiles etc. What they want is for anyone who fairly regularly (say monthly)

does walk any of Loudwater's footpath, to volunteer to adopt it and let the Parish know if new problems appear so that they can be informed enough to deal straight away. Some members have already put their names forward (once they were assured nothing more than a phone call was involved!) Volunteers please, to the Parish Council.

Two of our three local Cllrs. have resigned. Parish Cllr. Brian Gowshall of Chess Hill, has sadly because of ill health, announced his retirement from the District Council. Cllr. Tony Williams, formerly of Long Ridings, Sarratt Lane who was the successful Conservative candidate for this ward three years ago, moved out of the county shortly after his election. There will now be a by-election, probably on the same day as the District elections on May 5th.

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

Continuing our look back into previous issues, in 1979 we recorded that the veteran Labour peer Lord Fenner Brockway's autobiography told that he used to live at The Spinney, L Lane in the early 1920s, where he was host to the eventual Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. After Lord Brockway left, the house was bought by a Mr Tussaud of the waxworks family. He was on Air Raid duty with the late Cyril Brine when a bomb fell near The Spinney in 1942. We also mentioned that former residents included Jimmy Tarbuck. In the April 1979 issue we also printed the first full map of all the Tree Preservation Orders in L/Water, orders which have subsequently been extended to almost all the area. Lastly, in October 1979 we told of Yehudi Menuhin coming to stay with Mr and Mrs Bicknell of T Way. The late Mr Bicknell (survived by his musician widow Giacomina) was one of the stars of the then H.M.V. recording company. This year also saw the return of the argument about developing Lower Plantation. This scheme had had a history of conflict. The whole development was initially refused, the refusal upheld by a Conservative Minister at the Dept of Environment: it was relaunched with the same result from a Labour ditto: it was then given the go-ahead on appeal by a different Conservative Minister, although in a much reduced form from what was requested. Almost all the credit for the opposition and modification to an over-crowded scheme goes to Jack Rogers of Bridle Lane, who fought the battle for over ten years almost single-handedly.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

PLEASE NOTE, OUR AGM IS ON MAY 11TH AND THE M25 PLANS WILL BE HIGH ON THE AGENDA. 8PM AT LOUDWATER FARM AS USUAL. BE THERE!

Our Garden Party will be on June 26th. After last year's great success, the owners of that superb property The Wheel House L Lane, were kind enough to offer to accommodate us. We'll be giving more details later but book the date now.

PLANNING

- 8/673/94 Relocate porch and alterations Flats 1 and 2, Rose Gardens, T Way (Approved).
- 8/679/93 Bridle Path Cottage, L Lane. Detached double garage (Refused, Withdrawn).
- 8/705/93 Imber, Bridle Lane. Single-storey conservatory at rear (Approved).
- 8/731/93 Long Hedge, L Lane. Change of use of outbuildings to offices (Refused).
- 8/732/93 Long Hedge, L Lane. Change of use of outbuildings to self-contained unit (Approved).
- 8/745/94 The Shelling, V Way. Two-storey side and back extension (Approved).
- 8/781/94 Cariad, Sarratt Lane. Erection of boundary wall and gates. (Objected, Refused).
- 8/0043/94 Greenacre, T Way. Two-storey side and rear extension
- 8/0050/94 Wychwood, T Way. Two-storey extension. (T Way, Estate Objected).
- 8/0128/94 River View (Parkholme), L Lane. Two-storey rear extension
- 8/0150/94 Loudwater Cottage, L Lane. Detached garage opposite house.
- 8/0170/94 Chessway, L Lane. One-storey extension to former garage, convert existing garage to residential.

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN

With this Spring issue of the Newsletter comes the time to pay. The subscription remains at £3 (thanks to the people who've said "Take a fiver, it's worth it"). If you see your deliverer personally, he or she will be happy to take the sub - if not, please send your cheque to John Reid, our Treasurer, address as at top of Newsletter. Many thanks.