

'Woodcroft School celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2003'

POLICING IN LOUGHTON

I am Inspector Piers Quinnell and have recently taken over as Section Inspector at Loughton. I have been given this opportunity by the newsletter to highlight my priorities for policing in the area and outline future plans for the District. One of my main priorities is quality of life issues, which I feel are very important to the community. I have, therefore, begun to tackle anti-social behaviour in the area by designating

patrols in the evenings to problem areas. In the first five weeks, Officers have taken over 250 names of people causing anti-social behaviour and then have sent letters home, made home visits and are in the process of taking out anti-social behaviour orders on ring leaders which will enable us to place curfews on individuals, which if broken will lead to arrests. I am also in the process of highlighting drug dealers in the community and targeting these individuals with proactive raids on their homes to try and stop the supply of controlled drugs into the Loughton

community. Both these issues will be ongoing operations and although they are already proving to be very successful in combating these areas they will continue indefinitely.

I would also like to take this opportunity to ask local residents to come forward with any information they may have on crimes in their area so that we can act on this information and aim to build a better and safer community. I look forward to meeting many of you at the various community meetings around the area.

Inspector Piers Quinnell

THE LOCAL PLAN

Every Council has a local plan which guides decisions on applications for planning permissions for individuals and developers. EFDC's plan was published in 1998 and it is timely to have a review. The Council has recently completed public consultation on their proposals (you may have seen the questionnaire). The next step is formal consultation followed by a public enquiry by an inspector and adoption of the alterations. New legislation in 2004 will introduce a Local Development Framework. Details are sketchy but we know it will involve a lot of work by officers and Councillors. It is, therefore, important to complete work on the Local Plan quickly so that they can devote their energies into the LDF.

The subjects covered in the review included Sustainable Development, Housing, Transport, Town Centres, Community Facilities and the Green

Belt. The LRA recognises that some expansion in the district is inevitable but feels our priorities must be:

- Developments must be concentrated on previously used land as far as possible
- Housing developments should be targeted primarily for key workers
- New buildings should conform to high energy efficiency standards
- Infrastructure and community facilities should keep pace with developments
- The quality of life of existing residents should be preserved or improved
- The green belt must be protected
- Key frontages in town centres used

for non-retail purposes should be limited

- Policies should encourage alternatives to the motor car for some journeys

Detailed copies of the proposals can be obtained from the Council offices. It is clear that to meet the housing needs in the future even without the latest Government proposals for the Region (insufficiently developed to be incorporated in the Local Plan) the green belt is going to be under threat as never before and we will be fighting to preserve what makes Loughton a uniquely attractive place to live and work.

Dorothy Paddon

LRA IS ON-LINE

LRA's website is up and running - we tell you what is happening, you tell us what you think. Find us at www.loughtonresidents.com

LONDON BOROUGH OF LOUGHTON

County and Local Authorities in the East of England are facing a huge challenge in meeting Government future housing targets. With the exception of a few districts who have judged their allocations to be reasonable most Councils are opposed to the scale of the proposals, especially as little account has been taken of the infrastructure needed to support such an expansion. The situation is particularly acute in West Essex and Hertfordshire because of the proposals for the M11 corridor, the need for re-generation in Harlow, and expansion of Stansted Airport. Re-generation of Harlow is an undeniable priority but growth without attracting employment opportunities will only make matters worse.

Closer to home it is difficult to see how the proposal for 18,600 homes in the EFDC area (500 homes or more in Loughton) can be accommodated. This is a 675% increase over the original 2001 plan and by far the biggest in Essex. The suggestion of more industrial development to offer an alternative to commuting and to increase employment prospects in the Debden area flies in the face of reality. High land values and the magnetic attraction of better paid work in London will only serve to increase out-commuting rather than attract businesses to Loughton, and Stansted is too far away to have an impact on

employment. Loughton has little by way of brown field sites that it can exploit. The purpose of the green belt would be lost as would the identity of Buckhurst Hill, Loughton and Theydon Bois as separate, attractive towns in a country environment outside the urban sprawl of London. We do not want the town to become the London Borough of Loughton!

The Regional Consultative Assembly, which has representation from all the Councils in the East of England, has voted for a plan that meets Government targets to the detriment of Essex and Hertfordshire, who were out-voted – not surprising as each Council fought its own corner and the least affected were able to gang up on Hertfordshire and Essex. So much for local democracy! The Government threat to introduce a non-elected Urban Development Corporation to impose its wishes if agreement was not reached almost certainly influenced those Councils least affected to bulldoze proposals through regardless of the damage that might be inflicted elsewhere. I took this up with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, who has ultimate responsibility. They confirmed that this option could be used as a ‘last resort’ in the event of an impasse at the Regional Assembly or a ‘failure of Local Authorities in growth areas to co-operate’.

The District is clearly in for a bumpy ride ahead and the LRA will give its full support to EFDC and the ECC in their opposition to the proposals although we all recognise that some manageable expansion is inevitable and, in the case of ‘affordable’ housing for key workers, even desirable, provided the necessary infrastructure is planned alongside and not after the expansion. The LRA is resolutely opposed to the loss of any part of the green belt but it is difficult to see how some marginal loss can be avoided whilst keeping the spectre of an Urban Development Corporation at bay. This is a subject that is set to roll on for years with public consultation now scheduled for 2005. It will affect us all and it is potentially the most serious challenge faced by West Essex in living memory. We need to be pro-active to make sure the residents of Loughton have a voice. Getting the balance right will certainly lead to some lively discussions within the LRA but at least we can all say we have the interests of Loughton as our primary concern.

From the Editors Chair

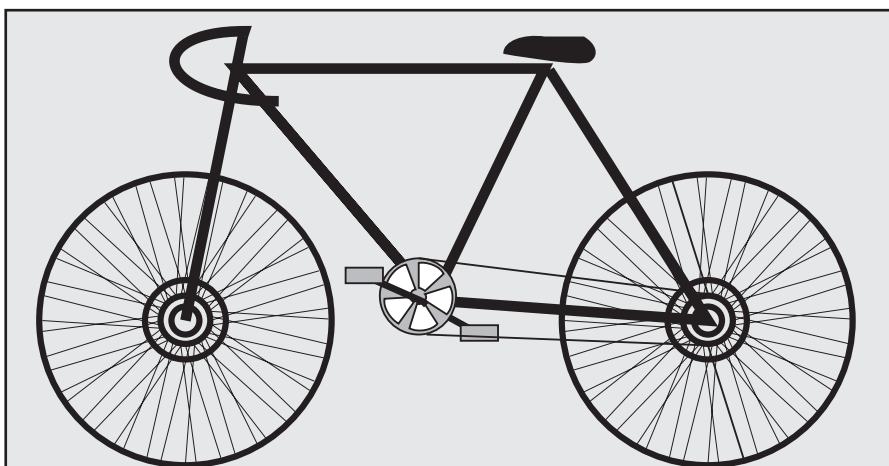
PLANNING “BLIGHT”

LRA is getting ready for a major battle about the Government’s plans to build thousands of houses, together with light industrial units and offices, partly on Green Belt land in Epping Forest District. The plans would affect the buffer land between Loughton and Theydon Bois and land to the south-east, south and West of Harlow, with a southern bypass road skirting the west & south of Harlow.

Regional Planning Guidance (which will drive this process) is currently in draft. In the Autumn, after further studies on the area covered and the impact of the Stansted expansion proposals, it will be put out for a consultation process which will last till 2006. However, once it reaches this phase it will be very difficult to change anything significantly. Make no mistake, despite local and County opposition the Government is hell-bent on covering large tracts of south west Essex with housing. Apart from the

impact on our surroundings, this will put a vast strain on the associated services - schools, roads, hospitals, GPs, dentists, etc.

County Cllr David Linnell



RE-CYCLE YOUR BICYCLE

Get rid of that old bike that clutters up your shed – “Re-cycle” is an Essex-based charity which ships bikes to a country where they will make a real difference to people’s lives, and teaches the locals how to fix and maintain them. Ring 01206 382207.

John Woods

GOOD NEWS FROM ANOTHER PLANET

Councillors are often disappointed when, having considered every aspect of a planning application and decided to turn it down, a later Appeal allows the development to go ahead. The most memorable example is, perhaps, the decision by an Inspector at Appeal to allow, contrary to the Council's decision, the extension to Safeway's store which also brought us the notorious five-armed traffic lights at The Drive junction.

Examples like this convince us that "Planning Inspectors are from another planet"!

But there is better news from the District Council's planning team this month. Over the six month period from April to September 2003, the Council received 83 decisions on appeals – 77 planning and 6 enforcement appeals. Of the 77 planning appeals only 6 were allowed, and two of the enforcement appeals.

Occasionally, Councillors in Planning Committees make a decision contrary to the advice of the planning officers. The officers watch these reversals with particular – but wholly professional – interest. Of the six appeals allowed, they report that three were in cases where Councillors had refused an application, contrary to officers' advice;

but the Inspector agreed with the Councillors in four cases, where they had decided to refuse in spite of officers' favourable recommendation.

Of course, this is not a competition, and officers work hard to defend all Council decisions at appeals, even when they may personally disagree with Councillors' views. This high degree of success at appeals is cheering for

Councillors and officers, who put much thought into the large number of planning applications they consider every month. In particular the EFDC planning Councillors Caroline Pond, John Markham and Tony Lee spend a great deal of time looking at plans, visiting sites, and responding to enquiries from proposers and opponents of plans.

Councillor Dorothy Paddon

WHY VOTE ...

...for LRA in the Town and District Council elections on June 10th? - Because the LRA can actually get things done...look at our record

- The Loughton Flood Alleviation Scheme - LRA was instrumental in influencing the Council to build the dam and flood reservoir on Staples Road to ensure that major flooding in Loughton would never occur again.

- Town Centre Enhancement - LRA is working closely with EFDC and ECC officers to create more attractive, safe and shopper-friendly shopping centres in the High Road and The Broadway.

- LRA has brought you the very popular Farmers Market.

- The children's playground by the library was entirely the result of persistence of LRA.

- The drinking fountain is back and soon will be working. If it was not for the relentless pressure applied by the LRA the space under the cupola would still be empty.

- Many fine trees in Loughton would be no more than stumps if it had not been for the LRA persuading EFDC to place tree preservation orders on them.

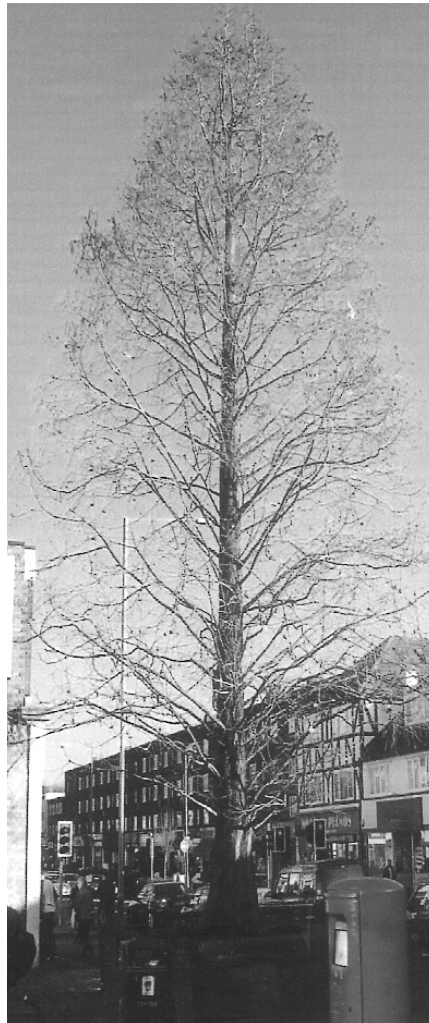
- LRA also supports other organisations that are working for Loughton – we assisted CAMROD with their campaign to make Thames Water admit that there was a sewerage problem in the Roding area and that it was their responsibility to find a solution.

- LRA pressure helped to set up the H1 "Hospital" bus route from Loughton to Harlow – we are now pressing for it to be extended into the grounds of the Princess Alexandra Hospital

**LOUGHTON RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
HAS ONLY ONE AGENDA
– LOUGHTON.**

WELCOME TO ...

A number of new committee members, Ken Angold-Stephens (a little belatedly), James Dean, Rose Brookes, Mitch Cohen, Jan Clow and Janet Woods - and our thanks to retiring members Barbara Gillings and Michael Kushner.



REDWOOD TO GO

The magnificent Dawn Redwood tree outside Woolworth's will sadly soon be no more. It is bursting out of the planter and becoming top heavy, while its roots are interfering with cables, pipes and the culverted Loughton Brook. This is a distressing case of a beautiful, fast growing tree in the wrong place, for it is still a baby, and in maturity could be 200ft tall, so it has to be removed before it does huge damage to the surrounding area, both above and below ground. After removal of the tree, the site will be cleared and a form of simple planting put in its place, until the High Road Enhancement plans come to fruition.

John Woods

MARKS AND SPENCERS UPDATE

The long-awaited planning application was submitted last month. Councillors deferred a decision until after a site visit partly to investigate complaints from some residents of Station Road who felt they would be over-looked by the car park. There were also concerns about the proposed closing time of the car park and the offer made by M&S for highway improvements and its rejection of a Council proposal for a project manager during the construction period. M&S has offered to keep the car park open until 10pm but the Council, and LRA, view is that this is not late enough to cater for late diners or users of Lopping Hall.

The Council also has concerns about the substantial loss of income from the current car park, at least until, and if, the Town Centre Enhancement project is implemented. A decision in favour of M&S is not yet assured. The LRA is broadly in favour of the development but agrees with the strong negotiating stance of EFDC.

Ken Angold-Stephens

COUNCILLORS ROUND-UP

Loughton Pool Christmas Closure: the following response has been received from EFDC following concern about the closure of Loughton Pool over the Christmas period.

When the pool was completed a number of tiles around the pool edge were found to be damaged and needed to be replaced. In order not to delay the opening any further it was agreed that as they did not represent a safety hazard the tiles would be replaced at the first annual maintenance closure.

The work was scheduled over Christmas as this is traditionally a less busy period and it is a gap in the school swimming programmes. The rest of the building was open for customers using Shapes Fitness Centre, the Movement Studios and Café.

Borders Lane: having pressurised Laings to finally carry out work on the footpath from the Synagogue to Traps Hill and to prune the trees along that stretch, County Cllr David Linnell has now turned in the other direction, and EF College has finally acknowledged that it is responsible for the stretch nearer Debden. Hedges along this section also need pruning, but the College is pleading poverty.

Langston Road Lorry Park: This Lorry Park closed permanently on 22 January and LRA Councillors joined with other Councillors in response to residents concerns, to insist that an overnight parking ban on lorries be imposed on all HGV lorries over 5 tonnes between 8pm and 7 am Monday to Friday and at any time on Saturday and Sunday. It applies to a clearly defined area of North Loughton which is closest to the Lorry Park. If any residents feel that this restriction is being ignored or want to know exactly which streets are in the area, just give one of our Councillors a ring.

A minor success: Last November, David Linnell took up with the District Council the concerns of residents of Rowans Way about the speed of traffic along Traps Hill, which makes turning out of their cul-de-sac very dangerous. At his request, the District Council has now re-painted the "SLOW" markings on Traps Hill. However, more protection is still needed, and David is continuing to pursue this with the Council.

Roding Centre: County Officers are currently meeting with all the users of Roding Centre. County Officers will recommend to the County Finance Portfolio holder that the deadline for groups should be extended by another year (to 2005, except for the rifle group), to give groups notice to find alternative accommodation. However, there is still much dissatisfaction.

Youth Strategy Groups: the local group involves EFDC. It is responsible for:

- identifying the needs of young people in its locality, in partnership with district/borough councils and Connexions and other agencies;
- developing a joint strategy for addressing gaps in provision, and
- ensuring that Youth Service resources are deployed efficiently and effectively to address national Youth Service and Connexions priorities in a local context, avoiding duplication.

We hope it will have a positive impact on the ECC project for a Youth Centre in Loughton (see above).

Countryside: The Countryside teams do a fantastic job which is only made possible with the help of volunteers. Since 1986, over 100,000 volunteer hours have been clocked up. Anyone who can spare a few hours to help their local countryside would be most welcome. Volunteer projects take place every Thursday and the first Tuesday and Sunday of every month. Interested? Contact Paul Hewitt on 01992 788203.

FREE OFFER!!!

If any fitness enthusiast can offer a good home to a treadmill (electrically operated, folds up for easy storage), please contact Carol Murray (details on back page).

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