



Beacon Street Area Residents' Association NEWS



Spring 2011

Email: bsara.committee@beaconstreetara.org

Friarsgate & City centre redevelopments – good or bad?

BSARA has invited John Thompson, Chairman of the Lichfield Civic Society, to contribute to this article because the Society cares about the character of the City, and its historic core in particular.

The District Council has now granted a five year extension of planning permission on revised schemes for both the Lichfield Friary Outer car park and the Friarsgate retail development. If this had not been done, planning permission would have expired and the compulsory purchase orders would have lapsed.



An artists impression of the Friarsgate shops

The Lichfield Civic Society's opposition centres around three points – (a) the **impact on the historic character of the City centre**, (b) the proposed **developments are not in sympathy with the appearance of existing buildings** and (c) the **impact on traffic congestion and car parking**.

John Thompson said *“the District Council has an unacceptable conflict between its conservation objectives and its financial interest in expanding retail and office space via a very substantial redevelopment of the City centre. We are particularly concerned that the height and overall appearance of the Friarsgate development is not in sympathy with the appearance of the historic City centre and is neither appropriate nor acceptable for a fragile historic environment.”*

(cont.)

Lichfield District Council, as both the landowner and the planning authority, must promote developments that are designed to enhance the City. This is not achieved with the current plans. Instead we are confronted with excessively high and uninspiring structures. The recent renewal of planning permissions for the modified Friarsgate and Friary Outer car park schemes does mean that they can, subject to market conditions, proceed.

What has been approved on these sites raises concerns about what will be promoted for the Bird Street car park site which is another very important and sensitive location.



Friarsgate is not in keeping with St. John's hospital, a Grade 1 listed building, which is opposite

The planning authority claims that:

*“The City of Lichfield will be a place which values and enhances its rich cultural, streetscape, architectural and archaeological heritage whilst **embracing visionary new landmark developments** serving all our residents”.*

The photographs above say more than a thousand words. The retail and property sectors are experiencing the toughest conditions in decades and the modified plans falls short of the standard that is needed to preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

(cont.)

In addition, the Civic Society remains sceptical about the adequacy of parking and traffic management in the City centre and points to existing congestion and the absence of a car parking strategy. John Thompson said *“We already experience frequent day-time queuing and delays on the Birmingham Road. This will worsen if the Friarsgate development is a commercial success. The current plan to synchronise pedestrian crossings and traffic lights is likely to prove inadequate.”*

The public have lost confidence in the planner’s ability to anticipate and manage traffic problems. Darwin Park is an example where expansion was allowed far in excess of the original plans. Narrow road widths have created problems for adequate access for the emergency services and other essential service vehicles.

The full Lichfield Civic Society submission can be viewed at www.lichfieldcivicsociety.org.uk

Please consider joining the Lichfield Civic Society

Telephone:

John Thompson on 01543 264140

Email:

chairman@lichfieldcivicsociety.org.uk

8,000 Houses in Lichfield District

Over the last couple of years BSARA has been involved with the Lichfield Alliance, studying the proposed Local Development Framework (LDF). This is supposed to decide how many houses will be built between the years 2006 and 2026 and will determine the commercial expansion by way of shops, industrial and office premises. To achieve this necessitates that Lichfield District Council has a vision that encompasses the needs of the local community and ensures that the infrastructure is in place to meet the aspirations of the population.

Friarsgate continues to roll on unhindered, with three hotels on its tail and no real plans on how people will get to them and park their cars or where the guests will come from.

When upwards of 8,000 proposed dwellings are added, generating a 20,000 population increase, how will arterial streets like Beacon Street cope with the extra thirty percent plus vehicles all seeking those precious parking spaces?

The answer is that they won't. Queuing traffic can already be seen at peak times and this will get considerably worse, with the likelihood of Birmingham Road being frequently blocked.

The tragedy is that the proposed homes will not help the young people of Lichfield to get a foot on the housing ladder. Nor will it help those, who want to downsize their property at retirement age, to find suitable accommodation.

Developers can make the most money by building big houses on Greenfield sites. This attracts commuters from Birmingham, clogs our streets with traffic and puts new houses beyond the reach of those working locally.

BSARA thinks the Lichfield District Council is mistaken in assessing a “need” for 8,000 new houses over the next twenty years. This forecast is based on a five year period leading up to the credit crunch. During this period reckless lending fuelled an unprecedented property boom, bringing the UK banking industry to its knees and lumbering all of us with higher taxes and cuts in public services. Why would any sensible person use this period as a basis for forecasting Lichfield’s future growth? While it is hard to believe, this is **exactly** what the housing requirement forecast in Local Development Framework is based on!

We hope that our local councillors will use the period after the local elections to review the LDF and align it more closely with the requirements of local people.

Over the next twelve to eighteen months there will be two opportunities to comment – firstly during a six week public consultation and secondly during an “examination in public” to be conducted by the Planning Inspectorate from Bristol.

We would implore all residents to **make your individual comments known to the Council when the final consultation appears**. It is your Lichfield and you should have a say on how you want it to be in fifteen years time, bearing in mind 1200 years of heritage can be destroyed by the stroke of a pen.

Write to:

Planning Policy Manager
Development Services
Lichfield District Council
Frog Lane
Lichfield WS13 6YZ

Telephone:

01543 308189 (Development Plans Team)

Email:

developmentplans@lichfielddc.gov.uk

Parking Changes & Double Yellow Lines in Beacon Str.

BSARA has worked with Staffordshire County Council (SCC) to ensure resident's views are considered in the two proposed amendments to parking and parking restriction in and adjacent to Beacon Street.

BSARA approached SCC and suggested that local residents contribute to the decision making process, which was welcomed and approved on an understanding that any representation was from the majority of residents. Once the amendments were imposed no further alterations would be considered for a number of years.

SCC have proposed additional double yellow lines on the approaches to various road junctions on and adjoining Beacon Street, which BSARA fully supports, as this will improve vehicular and pedestrian safety.

The second amendment relates to the 30 minute parking restriction currently imposed on the south west side of Beacon Street between the junctions with Beaconsfield and Greenhough Road, for a distance of approximately 80 metres. SCC has proposed to extend the waiting time to 2 hours between the hours of 09.30 and 16.30 Monday to Friday. This change would be further imposed on the existing restriction between Shaw Lane and Beaconsfield.

BSARA wrote to all residents outlining the amendments to the parking restrictions in March 2011. Residents directly affected by the parking changes were offered a vote on two prescribed options approved by SCC., namely: **OPTION 1 – Limited waiting bays** for 2 hours between the hours of 09.30 and 16.30 no return Monday to Friday, or **OPTION 2 – No restriction**.

98 homes on and adjoining Beacon Street were balloted, with 26% opting to return a vote.

58% of the voters expressed a preference for no parking restrictions, with the remainder choosing limited waiting bays.

BSARA will be forwarding the result to SCC in due course and their response will be reported in the next news letter.

A detailed map is available at <http://newsletter.beaconstreetara.org/parkingmaps.pdf>

Do we need three new hotels?

BSARA has put it to Lichfield District Council that we now have The George, Cathedral Lodge, the possibly

restored Angel Croft, and some on the outskirts, e.g. the Holiday Inn Express.

Planning approval has been given for a new hotel on the Kwik Save site and hotel space may be extended to additional hotels in the Friarsgate complex and the Friary outer car park site.

Our reasons for opposition relate both to the extra traffic which would be generated on the increasingly busy residential Beacon Street and also the commercial risk to the two existing hotels within our area.

For Lichfield to expand its tourism, more hotel beds would indeed be required, but this could be met by one new hotel. We believe in competition but if all these new hotels are built then The George and Cathedral Lodge might not survive and could fall into the same sad state as the Angel Croft.

We emphasized that, for tourism to succeed, Lichfield should maintain and nurture its conservation areas including the existing hotels.

Lichfield Historic Parks Project

"Casey", the main contractor, has requested an extra 10 weeks to complete the job i.e. work will continue until the end of July. One can only assume that the reason for this was the working days lost during the extreme weather conditions over the winter period.

Longer days and fine spring weather have allowed us to appreciate how much has been achieved. BSARA will be requesting more bins as the crowds attracted have left a lot of litter including broken beer bottles.

The wall and railings along Minster Pool have been completed. The path is currently being prepared for resurfacing.

The Garden of Remembrance should be finished by the end of May and the Museum gardens by mid May.

There have been delays in completing items and in having materials delivered to site. For example, the Café is still awaiting windows and doors and the Bowls pavilion roof is awaiting coping.

Projected completion dates in other areas are as follows:

PLAY AREAS	– EASTER HOLS
CRAZY GOLF	– MAY
TENNIS AREA	– END MAY
KIOSK & HORTICULTURAL AREA	– END JUNE
BUILDINGS	– JULY

Local Crime

BURGLARIES CONTINUE — BSARA is monitoring local crime, as it is a matter of concern to householders. We are therefore, highlighting a summary of crime, as reported by the local police in February, for the area of Lichfield. Burglaries in the district continue to be well above normal.

The majority of cases occur during daytime or early evening, with large TV's, laptops, games consoles and jewellery being stolen. Entry is typically made at the rear door of the property, and offenders may well call at the door first to see if the house is occupied. Please lock any side gates, if possible. However, other incidents involve blatantly forcing the front door.

Crime free areas, such as the Abnalls, have been targeted and so have Burntwood and Boley Park. Residents should take care with security, and keep their eyes open during the day when the offender is much more likely to be seen.

SCAMS AWARENESS — Government figures show that nearly half of the UK population has been targeted by a scam – 3 million adults fall victim every year, losing £3.5 billion. Recently, an elderly Lichfield resident received a telephone call telling him he had won £80,000 on an American lottery. Unfortunately, he believed it, and sent off a cheque for £2,000 to cover administration. Treat any telephone calls or e-mails with caution. Do not give any personal details. If it sounds too good to be true, it is!

BSARA'S activities

BSARA was formed ten years ago, primarily to combat yobbery and traffic speed. On the latter we have failed so far, but helped with the installation of two crossings. The Police presence in the area has increased and, in the last eight years, total crime recorded by the police in Lichfield District has fallen 33% though yobbery has risen 12% — refer to the article above for more details.

One member most kindly had her front wall withdrawn a few feet to enable push-chairs, trolleys etc. to navigate the famous lime tree in Beacon Street.

Litter problems remain but we have gained extra bins.

BSARA is involved with the Beacon Park Friends group which acts as a conduit to park management.

In the year ahead BSARA expects to be heavily involved in the consultation regarding the Local Development Framework — refer page 2 for more details regarding the proposed 8,000 new houses. (cont.)

Thus BSARA can achieve worthwhile objectives, both through lobbying and as a group voice — known now to local councils, schools, businesses, the police, the press etc.

Joining BSARA

Should you wish to join the Association as a new member please complete the form below — the subscription of £2 per household per annum will cover your membership to 30th Sept. this year. Please complete and return this form with the subscription to 60 Beacon, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 7AT (junction of Beacon St. and Anson Ave.).

Membership application form

I/We wish to become member(s) of Beacon Street Area Residents' Association and to receive future newsletters and communications.

Name:

Address:

.....

Post Code :.....

And (if you wish)

E-mail address:

Telephone Number.

Contact us

We are interested in your views. Please send your comments to:

Email:

bsara.committee@beaconstreetara.org

Post:

The Chairman
Beacon Street Area Residents' Association
2A Nether Beacon
LICHFIELD
WS13 7AT

Lichfield Parks Project Update

Now the weather has improved, it has enabled the contractor to make vast strides forward towards the completion of Beacon Park, Minster Pool and Walk, the Garden of Remembrance having been re-opened in 2010 in time for the 11 November commemorations. The play area in Beacon Park has been completed and opened following RoSPA approval however benches, bins and planting are still outstanding in this area but will be installed at the earliest opportunity.

Work to Minster Pool Walk is on schedule with the final decorative surfacing being laid in late May as the weather has to be dry and warm for this surfacing to be successful. The Museum Gardens are progressing well, the statues having been conserved, and the fountain restored. The fountain is due to be recommissioned later in April and the final surfacing to all the paths in this area is due early to mid May. Again, as with the surfacing in Minster Pool Walk, this is a weather dependent operation.

There will be around 50 large specimen trees being planted within Beacon Park in the next month with species including walnut, sweet chestnut and river birch. Paths within the park where they have been worn due to contractor traffic will be mended, and bare areas of earth, seeded. The District Council is also currently working on a series of interpretation panels which will be installed throughout the park before the summer holidays. Further interpretation in the form of self guided leaflet trails and podcasts are also due to be produced later in the year.



The woodland paths



The fountain stonework



For more information call the
Historic Parks Team on
01543 308869
www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/historicparks

Beacon Park Events 2011

Dawdle at Dawn

Sun 1st May 4am– 6am

Marvel at the wonders of the dawn chorus on this early morning walk led by local expert Bob Russon. Dress for the weather and bring your binoculars if you have any. £2.50 per person. To book your place, please call: 01543 308183.



Mini-monsters Bug Hunt

Tue 31st May 10-12pm or 1-3pm. FREE family pond dipping and bug hunting as part of National Family Week. All children must be accompanied. Meet at the Pavilion in the middle of the Park.



Paint a Bird Box

Sat 30th July 10am-3pm

Join the rangers and paint your very own bird box (while stocks last). No need to book, just turn up. Head for the pavilion in the middle of the Park. £3.50 per box.



Fairy Walk

Sunday 28th August

Hear the story of the Beacon Park fairies, then wander through the Park. FREE. Fancy dress encouraged. All children must be accompanied. 11am, 1pm & 3pm. Lasts up to 1 hour. No need to book - head for the tennis courts and look for the bunting.

Beacon Park History Walk

Tue 10th May 11:00am

As part of Local and Community History Month, learn all about the history of Beacon Park, Minster Pool and The Garden of Remembrance. Lasts approx 1.5 hours. FREE but please book your place on: 01543 308869.

Minute and Magical

Fri 3rd June 10-12pm or 1-3pm

Enter the magical world of fairies, goblins and elves through games, play, stories and crafts including wings and headbands/crowns. £2.00 per child. Booking essential: 01543 308869. Most suitable for children aged 4+, all children must be accompanied.



Beacon Park Fun Day

Thurs 4th Aug 11am-3pm

Enjoy a wide variety of games, sports and outdoor activities in the new look Beacon Park. And don't forget your picnic & teddy to join in the **Teddy Bear's Picnic** (photo 2pm). Free entry.



Lichfield Proms in Beacon Park

Sat 3rd Sept

Lichfield District Council's free annual outdoor concert for the whole family. Now in its thirteenth year, the event is an opportunity to enjoy a late summer evening of al fresco dining, live classical music and fireworks. Lichfield City Band from 6:15pm. Main Concert from 7:30pm.

Moth Recording Mornings

Thurs 19th May, 16th June, 21st July, 18th Aug & 22nd Sept.

From 8:30am. Join us first thing to try and ID moths caught in the trap from the night before. Presence of moths cannot be guaranteed. Ring 07931 891 086 from 8:00am to confirm. FREE.

Tree-mendously Useful Summer Tree Walk

Wed 27th July 11:00am

Tree Officer Gareth Hare will lead a gentle walk around some of Lichfield's most interesting trees highlighting the specific uses of certain species. £2.50 per person. Approx 1.5-2 hours. Please book: 01543 308869.



Bat and Moth Night

Fri 26th Aug 8:30pm til late

A fascinating evening discovering the secrets of night-time wildlife in Beacon Park. All children must be accompanied. Wrap up warm. Torch recommended. £2.50 per person. Please book: 01543 308869.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED...

Would you like to learn new skills, meet people and help the Park? Volunteers wanted to help with various conservation tasks and at events.

Please email ruth.witczak@lichfielddc.gov.uk for further information.

Also in Beacon Park:

Lichfield Greenhill Bower

Monday 30th May

<http://lichfieldbower.co.uk>

Cars in the Park

Sat 2nd/ Sun 3rd July

<http://www.carsinthepark.com>

FUSE

Fri 8th/ Sat 9th/ Sun 10th July

<http://www.lichfieldarts.org.uk/fuse.asp>