



Loughton High Road, by Ron Heath.

LOUGHTON LIFE

MAY/JUNE 2005

High Road Facelift Begins

LRA has been seeking to improve the High Road for years. Following lengthy consultation with traders, other groups and the public, the District Council has agreed a four-phase facelift for the High Road. Wider pavements will give pedestrians room to stand and chat, while stricter control of parking should give traffic an easier journey through the town. The provision of short-term parking in Station Road, and in the High Beech Road car park, together with the controlled on-street

parking, will help traders by providing more parking for shoppers.

The first part of the High Road project should be under way by the time you read this. As part of the planning permission for their Old Station Road store, Sainsbury's are funding the refurbishing, which will be similar to that already carried out in Old Station Road as part of Sainsbury's building programme.

Work on Phase 1, from the Crown to St Mary's Church, will mainly consist of paving works, with some parking in lay-bys. LRA District

Councillors have asked that the area around Standard Green should not be marked as another six bays, as the current arrangement works and allows more than six parking spaces.

The LRA Councillors have been trying hard to get the second phase of the scheme done as part of the same contract, and this has now been agreed. So Phase 2, from St Mary's Church to The Drive, will begin in the late summer, and we will see a greater change in the look of the High Road. The Centric Parade slip road will be removed, a wider pavement laid in front of the shops, with parking in bays parallel to the road. As Phase 2 is a large and complex project, it is planned that work will be halted for a month or so before Christmas to reduce effects on Christmas trade.

Phases 3 and 4, from The Drive to the lower end of Church Hill will follow as soon as funding allows, to complete the transformation of the High Road, a major district shopping centre.

For details of parking changes during building works, see p.3

Loughton split for County Vote

If you voted in Forest, Roding or Broadway wards, you will have noticed that you did not have the

option of an LRA candidate. This is due to new electoral boundary changes, which divide Loughton into three voting areas for county elections – Loughton Central, Loughton South & Buckhurst Hill, and Chigwell & Loughton Broadway.

The purpose of the exercise was to divide the county into voting groups of equal size, without splitting any wards. This was accomplished by creating some unlikely combinations, and resulted in the splitting of Loughton. LRA objected to the changes, but our objections were not accepted.

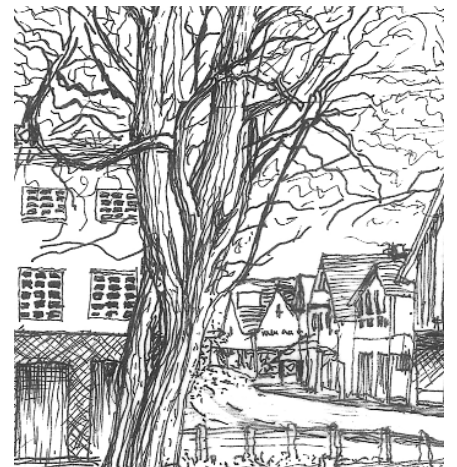
These boundary changes do not apply to the District Council voting areas. Next year in the District Council elections we will be putting up candidates for as many seats as possible in the Loughton area.

County Council Election Results

We are delighted to welcome Chris Pond as our new County Councillor for Loughton (Central). Here are the results:

| | No. votes | % |
|---------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Pond C (LRA) | 2734 | 35.23 |
| Conservative | 2175 | 28.03 |
| Labour | 1331 | 17.15 |
| BNP | 768 | 9.9 |
| Lib/Dem | 483 | 6.22 |
| Green | 269 | 3.47 |
| Votes cast: | 7760 | |
| Turnout: | | 61.61 |

[For details, see p.2]



Standard Green.

Seasonal Delay for Green Recycling

What a fiasco – said LRA Councillor Ken Faulkner when the District Council failed to deliver calendars and bags for the start of the green waste collection at the beginning of May. Other LRA Councillors agreed and added their strong protests. Late delivery of the calendars and bags disappointed residents who support recycling, and who were advised by EFDC to put out garden waste in black bags with landfill rubbish. All because of delays caused by inefficiency.

LRA Councillors want to know: Why could the green waste collection not start at Easter? Why were the bags and calendars not ordered earlier? Why did the Council not announce the delay in the press? What will be done to avoid a similar fiasco with the introduction of wheelie bins in October?

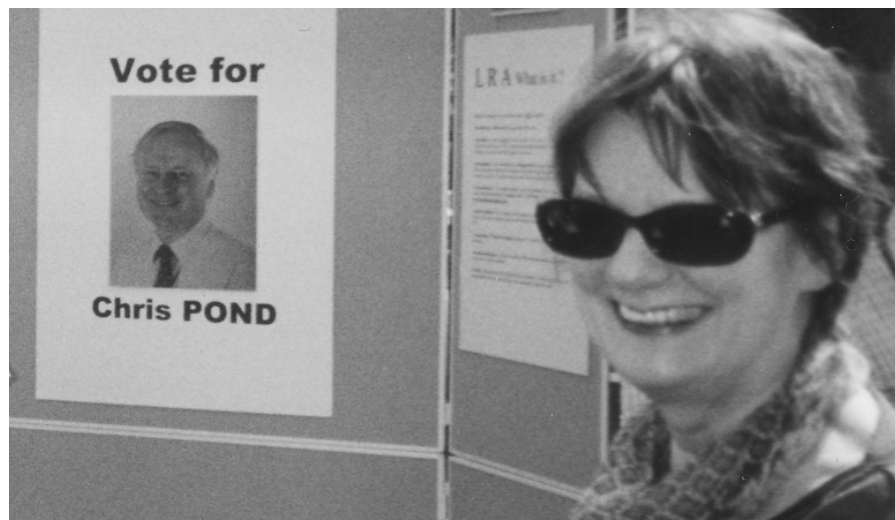
The Portfolio holder at EFDC said: "The most recent calendar provided to residents informed them that the garden waste collection service would not commence until April / May this year. A start date cannot be set until the special bio-degradable bags have been ordered, delivered to the council and then distributed to the residents. This could not be achieved this year ahead of the Easter Weekend, which this year was particularly early. A new calendar is in the process of being printed."

LRA councillors find this unacceptable and await detailed answers. Meanwhile, LRA members tell us that bags and calendars were delivered to most homes by mid-May and collections have begun.

First Thoughts from County Hall

First I would like to thank all those who supported me by canvassing, delivering and telling for LRA in the County Council election.

My priority as County Councillor for Loughton (Central) will be to represent residents and chase up problems with ECC officers. First impressions of County Hall are that the officers are inclined to be helpful - but budgets are always a problem, and the Conservatives hold the County purse strings, but like my LRA predecessors, I will try to ensure that Loughton gets a fair share of the County Council's resources.



Janet House surveys LRA's campaign stall at the May Farmer's Market,

On the Campaign Trail...

Every evening during the month of April LRA canvassers were out and about in Loughton, intent on calling at every home and meeting real residents. Even then, on polling day some people complained that they hadn't seen us. Sadly, there is no 'right time' to canvas. Long working hours and traffic keep residents out until late. Blocks of flats may be so secure, that nothing will get you to the door. And quite rightly, the big match or the favourite soap mid-evening on TV can take priority over an election chat on the doorstep.

People's worries were mostly about their local surroundings – the amount of litter left lying for weeks in residential roads (a District Council responsibility), and the condition of roads and pavements (which since 1 April 2005 is entirely the duty of the County Council). People complained that 'the district council doesn't do enough for young people', and were surprised to be told that youth services

are yet another County responsibility. This confusion between councils makes it hard for them to know who to praise or who to blame.

At the end of the day, LRA's man won the seat – by no means a foregone conclusion. New division boundaries this year, the presence of six parties contesting this county seat, and a General Election on the same day, meant that anything could happen. It kept our canvassers guessing, and keen! They can now rest awhile, as Chris's work begins.

Dorothy Paddon

Church Hill Road Markings

Following a long campaign by LRA District Councillors, a post-implementation safety audit will now be carried out on the new road markings in Church Hill. This should see the yellow lines in place and the completion of the works.

Essex Countryside

If you have not received the brochure of the Essex Festival of the Countryside 2005, and would like lots of inspiration for wonderful days or weekends out and about in the county - try the website www.realessex.co.uk.

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I will also remind other councillors that Loughton exists in the corner of the county adjoining London, and that we have special problems. A new cabinet post, for "localism" has been created, what that post will cover is has yet to be seen, but if it provides a place to apply leverage to solve local problems, then the LRA is very well placed to exert pressure.

It's early days yet, but I am confident we can work within ECC structures to make Loughton, step by step, no matter how gradually, a better place for all its residents.

County Councillor Chris Pond

Pain before Gain – Parking in the High Road

Not surprisingly, the parking problems at the south end of Loughton High Road have increased during the M&S works and will not improve until phase 1 of the High Road enhancement is completed in the autumn. LRA councillors have made every effort to minimise problems for shoppers and traders during the building period.

When M&S and phase 1 of the Town Centre Improvement are all finished there should be more short-term parking in the south of Loughton – at Station Road, Sainsburys, High Beech Road, The Green and M&S. This will make the parking provision at the southern end of the High Road equal to the northern end. (Cabinet have asked that arrangements be made to halt the enhancement over the Christmas trading period.)

In the mean time, the District Council Cabinet has approved parking proposals, which are part of the Town Centre Improvement work. This includes the following:

STATION ROAD: The Cabinet has agreed under pressure from LRA councillors to make Station Road a '1 hour, no return for 2 hours' parking restriction area. This is currently being drawn up for the necessary public consultation. The current limits are all day with 1-hour restriction between 2:00 and 3:00 to prevent commuter parking.

HIGH BEECH ROAD: This small long-term car park is to be made short-term. We hope this will be a permanent arrangement and will be implemented as soon as possible.

SMARTS LANE: This long-stay car park

will be used as a base for equipment, staff facilities etc. during the High Road Improvement works. For long stay parking drivers can use the Traps Hill car park or the Sainsbury's car park. LRA Councillors knew this would cause problems. They did suggest alternatives but none were suitable. Sainsburys were concerned about safety aspects if their car park was used. In general, we prefer car parks close to the High Road to be short-term, suitable for local shoppers.

TRAPS HILL AND SAINSBURY'S: There are plenty of long-term spaces in these car parks and they are never full. Long stay parkers are encouraged to use these spaces, leaving the spaces on or near the High Road for shoppers.

M&S: When M&S opens (due August) the car park, which will be owned and managed by M&S, will remain open in the evenings until 11.00pm (which will allow Lopping Hall users to park off street) and daytime use will not be restricted to M&S customers

Who Should Run Our Leisure Centres?

On 19 April the District Council agreed that negotiations be opened with a private company to run all the District's leisure services. The LRA councillors opposed this, as did Labour and the Liberals. But they were out-voted by the Conservatives, supported by the three BNP councillors.

'We are not against bringing in outside management, but the final choice after tendering was not sufficient and had several flaws,' explains District Councillor Ken Faulkner. 'We are concerned that only one firm (SLM) remained out of five that were originally being considered. We are also worried that the original objectives of out-sourcing were not being met – to reduce the burden on council tax, and to alleviate the financial risks and release the council from the threat of VAT penalties. It still leaves us with the possibility of having to stump up £140,000 of business rates, the eradication of which was one of the main reasons for going outside. LRA has always favoured the option of a separate trust, which could raise more money for inward investment through tax. But it seems that party political dogma regarding privatisation has been allowed to exclude fair consideration of other options.'

The position for EFDC leisure services is the same for councils



throughout the country. By manipulating taxation, the government has put local authorities in a position that if they hold onto these services then they can be criticised for not operating at their most economic level. Some have disposed to private contractors, but most have gone to charitable trusts, because private contractors almost certainly will not be able to claim the tax savings and if necessary obtain external funding for future development.

A report will be made to the next cabinet on 6 June on whether SLM have any changes to make to their proposal, and the original options may be reconsidered.

Councillor Ken Faulkner

Loughton Cricket Festival

Loughton will have a traditional feel on Sunday 3 July 3rd, with cricket on the green and food, drink, music, and other entertainment. The event is a one-day festival on Sunday 3 July, hosted by Loughton Cricket Club to promote cricket in Loughton and recruit young players.

The centrepiece will be a match between the Essex Under 13s vs. the Surrey Under 13s, scheduled to start at 1 p.m. This will be a very good display of cricket, as the players are the best under-13s in the two counties. It is hoped that some of the Essex County Team will also be coming to give some coaching to youngsters. Supported by Town Centre Partnership, the festival plans to have a steel band and Morris dancers in the afternoon, and a jazz band in the evening. Shops and restaurants in the High Road have also been invited to take part, so 'village green' atmosphere should be buzzing.

Litter Snippet

As I was walking along the High Road, I saw food wrapping thrown out of a car window stopped at the traffic lights. Feeling bold, I said to the driver: "Do you mind not throwing your rubbish out here?"

He looked surprised. "But it's only a bit of paper and plastic."

I suggested that if it was only a bit of paper and plastic he should keep it in his car until he got home.

He looked even more surprised: "But I don't want that in here!"

Sheila Shillitto

Around the Town

Valley Hill Speed Trap

Excessive speeding along Valley Hill and Loughton Way was investigated by Councillor David Linnell. Over the past three years there have been three serious accidents, one resulting in a fatality. There is currently one mobile camera location, on Loughton Way near the junction with The Rise facing southwest. The whole road is being reassessed for use of speeding cameras, from its junction with Roding View up to its junction with Roding Road. This may result in additional mobile camera sites near to the locations of these accidents.

Hillyfields Road Rebuild

LRA Councillors David Linnell and Chris Pond followed up complaints of traffic vibration from Hillyfields residents. The Highways Division found that the road foundations have been degraded by 'cracking' and severe movement has occurred, making a complete reconstruction necessary over part of the length. This part-rebuild has been costed at £260,000 and is included in the draft maintenance programme for 2005/06. Whilst the message refers to the 'draft' programme, we are very hopeful that the work will go ahead quickly.

High Road Stop to Go?

There is a long history of problems at the High Road bus stop outside the Lincoln Almshouses, and LRA Councillors have been seeking to get the stop moved. Apart from anti social behaviour by those waiting for buses, a bus standing at the stop can cause tailbacks across the min-roundabout at Old Station Rd/Ollards Grove in the morning and evening peak periods.

Recent changes to the bus services may now bring relief, as passengers can board on Old Station Rd (Crown Building and Sainsbury's), and at Loughton Station. The County Council is now discussing removal of the stop with Transport for London, EFDC and local councillors.

Goldings Hill Danger

LRA councillor Margaret Chalk heard about a heavy overhanging branch on Goldings Hill, which could be dangerous for drivers. Not a driver herself, Margaret got on the local bus to check it out, and then reported it to the District Planning office, which passed it on to the Epping Forest Conservators, and the branch has duly been removed.

Sainsburys Bottle Bank

We were rather surprised to hear further complaints from people living close to the Sainsburys car park bottle bank about the noise when it is being emptied. Why is anybody taking their glass there rather than putting it out to be collected? We have asked the District Council to let us know how often it is being emptied and at what times of day. Residents of Meadow Road might be the best judges of that.

Spinney Garden Short Cut

LRA Councillors reported to the District Council that the garden of The Spinney, a group of sheltered flats on Borders Lane, is used by young people as a shortcut to Colson Lane where some park their cars, and also a private spot for anti-social activity. Following discussions with the Warden, the Council has agreed a list of works including improved lighting, the installation of fencing and the removal of the old enclosures where youths tend to congregate. These works are now under way, and improved fencing, with gates to Borders Lane, are planned when funding is available.

Southview Road Lamp

When a street light went out, creating a danger zone for a partially-sighted resident, Councillor Margaret Chalk followed the bureaucratic trail to County Hall to get it replaced.

Alzheimer's Carers

Epping Forest Branch of the Alzheimer's Society is celebrating Carers Week with a Grand Fete at Trinity Church, Mannock Drive on Monday 20 June, 10:30-12:30.

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