

LRA's LOUGHTON LIFE Members' Edition

Loughton Residents' Association Newsletter
December 2015

LuXe - the end of the disturbances?

For nearly ten years local residents have suffered from noise, damage and violent disturbances from customers coming out of LuXe (and its previous incarnations) in the small hours. When the District Council spotted that LuXe doesn't have planning permission to operate as a "night-club", LuXe claimed that it was only a "late-night bar".



The LRA Plans Group (LPG) and local residents supported the Council's view. Eventually the Council took enforcement action against LuXe, which the bar then appealed. LRA Cllr Ken Angold-Stephens and LPG Chairman David Linnell were at the hearing, plus local residents and two other local Cllrs. Ken and David argued strongly in favour of a common-sense view of what makes a "night-club".

The Inspector turned down the appeal, accepting the views of the Council and LRA, and comprehensibly rejecting LuXe's arguments. The Council will give LuXe time to react and can then close it down if it doesn't stop operating as a night-club – LRA is waiting to see how LuXe will react.

Forest car-parks charges?

There has been a lot of publicity about possible parking charges in Forest car-parks, some of it ill-informed. LRA starts from the position that parking in Forest car-parks should be free to Forest users.



However, we understand the problems caused when commuters park in Forest car-parks to the detriment of Forest users, and the cost pressures on the City of London (which spends £5m a year on the Forest).

The present intention is to do a pilot charging scheme in two car-parks (neither in Loughton residential areas); if & when firm plans are revealed for these we will look at them closely, each on its own merits - particularly at their potential impact on Forest users & potential for creating extra parking problems for nearby residents, and will then make our views known. Read the details at <http://1drv.ms/1Nb1BhK>

Why does LRA have Cllrs?

The simple answer is "to look after our town & to improve it". Much council work goes on behind the scenes, and Cllrs have an effect from the earliest stages of proposed changes. Our Cllrs also work hard on problems raised by individual residents, and if you get our News emails you'll know about some of these.

LRA has 18 of the 22 Loughton Town Council seats, and our team of Cllrs work confidently to improve services for residents; these range from maintaining & renewing children's playgrounds to the hanging baskets on the lamp-posts. The Council is a "statutory Respondee" on every planning and licensing application in our town.

We are the second largest group on the District Council, which looks after council housing, refuse collection, street-cleaning & community safety, and decides on planning and licensing applications.

Our Cllrs are not an "Opposition" to the majority Conservative party. LRA Cllrs are independent and non-political. Unlike the national political parties, LRA doesn't dictate how its Cllrs should vote. If the Council is getting things right then, our Cllrs will support them. But when the Council proposes something which would have an adverse effect on our town, LRA Cllrs will challenge this and will work hard to achieve a better outcome. We also hold a seat on Essex County Council (which controls nearly 3/4 of your Council Tax).

If you care about your town, please think about joining our teams on the Town or District Councils next May.

To find out what's involved, please call Chris on 020 8508 2361 or Michael on 020 8508 4457 or email contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk

You can help us now!

Your £5pa subscriptions for 2016 are due in January and help pay our costs, such as printing newsletters & election expenses. Please pay now to the LRA Membership Sec, 14 The Hawthorns, Loughton, IG10 3QT (no cash by post).
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Membership information is held by LRA for its own purposes and is not made available to any other body.

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Planning & licensing matters

The LRA Plans Group (LPG) looks at all planning and licensing applications in the town. It consults residents and supports, or objects to, individual applications as appropriate. It works separately from LRA's Cllrs on Council planning committees. Here are some recent cases:

Langston Road shopping park

The District Council is pressing ahead with tenders for the highways work to make Chigwell Lane into three lanes, work will start after Christmas. It reports that strong interest in the shopping park continues.



Sir Winston Churchill and Oakwood Hill

Work has now finally commenced on both sites.

Oaklands School

The school on Albion Hill is proposing a new parking and drop-off arrangement, with an increase in the number of pupils permitted. LPG will put out a letter to residents when a formal planning application is published.

2 Connaught Avenue

A planning inspector has turned down an appeal against the refusal by the District Council of an application for eight flats and an underground car-park on this prominent site. Residents, the Town Council and LPG had argued that the proposal was wholly out-of-keeping with the surrounding houses and would have a harmful effect on the area. The District Council had earlier turned down an application for a block of nine flats on the site.



The terms of the inspector's decision make us optimistic that any further proposals from the developer will be far more in keeping with the site's surroundings.

Parks Nursery, Pyrles Lane

Despite a previous rejection by a committee of local Cllrs (partly because of the narrow and dangerous access road), the District Council is pressing ahead with a plan for up to 36 flats and houses on this Council-owned site. Local residents, the LPG and the Town Council have again objected again because the District Council has failed to deal with the access problem (but it has transferred the case to a committee where local Cllrs are in the minority).

20 Ollards Grove

There was an appeal hearing against the District Council's refusal of planning consent for a change of use to a residential institution for offenders or defendants, attended by LRA Cllrs Ken Angold-Stephens and Carol Davies, David Linnell (LPG) and around 20 concerned residents – but not by the appellant, Mr Sanjay Raj! This left the Planning Inspector in some difficulty, and he will consider how to proceed in these very unusual circumstances. He acknowledged the depth of feeling among residents, and promised to come to a conclusion as soon as possible.

Telecoms masts

There have been a number of proposals to upgrade existing masts. On balance LRA considers that this is preferable to having new masts erected elsewhere, as past experience indicates that the proposed sites will be on attractive green areas of the town.

However, there is also a proposal for a new mast on land close to the Westall Road/Burney Drive junction. The District Council has already turned down a proposal for a mast and cabinets on the pavement. The new location would be 6.5m (7yds) to the rear of the pavement in a grassland area.

Co-op site, Church Hill (next to the ESSO garage)

LRA has heard from the Co-op that, because of the approval on appeal of the Sainsbury's Local development on the old car-park on the other side of the garage, it will not be proceeding with a Co-op store but will be putting the site on the market. LRA expects that in due course there will be an application for block of flats here.



Monitoring Forest changes

Epping Forest is a major amenity for Loughton and all its people. For the last 130 years, it has been looked after by the City of London Corporation at absolutely no cost to residents in this part of the world. The Corporation currently spends about £5m pa from its investment income on it. It is a world-renowned habitat and an open space second to none.

The City introduced a Private Bill in Parliament at the end of November, which will allow it (amongst other things) to increase fines for fly tippers, and to rent out of disused keepers' lodges. Separately, they want to charge for the use of some car-parks at certain times (they already have the power to do this) – see page 1.

Refuse collections

If Biffa fails to collect any batteries, electrical items or textiles you put out, please report this to the District Council (erefuse@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or 01992 564608). These are items that Biffa are contracted to collect, but sometimes their operatives need some more training. (LRA's understanding is that if any of the compartments on the vehicle is full, the driver should contact a supervisor to come out and collect the items, and empty the compartment.) Please also note that energy saving light bulbs can be put in the small electrical equipment collection.

Meanwhile, a number of residents claimed financial compensation from the District Council for missed refuse collections - and were refused. One pursued the claim with the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), who decided not to investigate it (and so no compensation will be paid).

E-MAIL LRA AT CONTACT@LOUGHTONRESIDENTS.CO.UK

Round and about

LRA's Christmas Quiz 2015

It wouldn't be Christmas without us asking you and your families to put your thinking caps on and solve the LRA Christmas Quiz. This year it's about villages, towns and cities in England and Wales. Answers by 5th January to Les Harris, 32 Upper Park, Loughton IG10 4EQ, or by email to lesandsueharris@aol.com

A book token or some fizz will be presented to the first correct answer out of the hat. Happy quizzing – and season's greetings.

1. Find a crop here (3)
2. Dark stream (9)
3. Home of a ukulele player (6)
4. Go round the dock (7)
5. What the bank robber said to do with the money (7)
6. Sounds like a rusty, old car (6)
7. Make sure you leave things long enough in the oven (8)
8. You might get to play cards here (4)
9. Central store for organs (9)
10. Bonded notepaper (8)
11. Feeling good around town (14)
12. Awful actor, but quite funny (6)
13. Could be on Park Lane (10)
14. Paint the town green (7)
15. Sounds as if it's the bottom of the boat (5)
16. Prepare strawberries here? (4)
17. Oliver takes the biscuit (4)
18. Carry on decorating (8)
19. Another one made for Noah (6)
20. Wide steps here (11)
21. Lawn or water? Both (8)
22. Top of a five-barred one (9)
23. Sounds like a famous jockey (9)
24. Clues the detective wants (5)
25. Kept going here? (7)
26. Stately bird in the main (7)
27. Where cattle are boarded (9)
28. A weighty span (9)
29. Duke or Dwight? (4)
30. Pasture for Jamie or Gordon (9)

Epping Forest College

At the moment the playing fields and old Middle Site are protected by covenants restricting their use to education & NHS purposes. The College want the District Council to release these so they can build housing and a sports centre. As we went to press, LRA Cllrs were considering a "call in" to preserve this space for future school use, because all Loughton schools will soon be at or over capacity.

Highways and parking

Drain outside Roding Valley School on Alderton Hill

Although LRA worked hard last year to get County Highways to clear this after years of problems, it has become blocked again. LRA will pursue this with the Council.



Speed humps

LRA Cllr Chris Roberts responded to a resident's request for action in Bushfields because of excessive vehicle speeds threatening child-safety. Chris has been trying to get traffic-calming in this area, but the County Council is currently anti speed-humps as they are massively expensive to install and maintain, and bus operators strongly oppose them.

Alderton Hall Lane

LRA Cllr Chris Pond has taken forward a request for a change of the speed limit in Alderton Hall Lane, due mainly to the need for safety near the school.

Burney Drive reconstruction

LRA Cllr David Wixley has confirmed to a resident who is concerned about the dreadful state of the road surface that this is on the list for the current financial year, but has warned that the work cannot be carried out during poor weather.

Ollards Grove bollards

LRA reported a missing bollard at this busy High Road junction and followed it up when nothing happened. The Council plans to replace the existing illuminated bollards with reflective ones.

Potholes

Essex County Council has issued a press release saying that the number of potholes on all categories of Essex roads fell over the three months to September 30th this year, by 15% on its Priority 1 routes, by 32% on Priority 2 routes, and by 5% on local roads, compared to the previous quarter.

The County Council Highways department has fixed maintenance standards, which it follows for pothole (and other) repairs. Because of an enormous backlog of work, it is trying to concentrate on only the worst cases. For potholes, it has set a minimum depth of 75mm (about 3"), which LRA thinks is too deep. In the meantime please continue to report potholes and other Highways problems at www.essex.gov.uk/Pages/Report-It.aspx

Not getting LRA's local news bulletins by email?
Email contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk

LRA's Farmers Markets

As well as our Farmers' Markets on the first Sunday of each month on Centric Parade (9am – 2pm), there will be an extra Christmas market on December 20th, but without the usual LRA stall.



There won't be a market on January 3rd, but the market and the LRA stall will be back from February onwards.

We have two market stalls available free for charities and other local voluntary organisations – contact us about these at contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk

LRA Cllrs in action

LRA Cllrs have continued addressing and dealing with issues on behalf of local residents. David Wixley has followed up a complaint from a resident about overhanging vegetation along the path bordering the playing fields on Roding Valley recreation ground. This area is looked after by Loughton Town Council, who have been asked to sort it out.

Following complaints from residents about dog fouling in several streets around Loughton, notably The Avenue and Staples Road, Ken Angold-Stephens has asked the District Council to check these roads. He has also suggested a publicity campaign in local schools.

Ken also followed up a complaint that waste wasn't being collected from Shelley Grove. The Council said there had been problems because Biffa's vehicles had difficulties with the steep gradient. They have now changed their vehicles.

Bus routes threatened

LRA Cllr Chris Pond is pursuing the threat to bus routes 167 and 20, which connect Debden, the High Road and Buckhurst Hill, from proposed County Council cuts to the £580,000 annual subsidy it gives to Transport for London.

Loughton Tube station

TfL is currently carrying out work for at Loughton Tube station as part of its plans to modernise the Tube. The ticket office has closed, and staff are meant to have moved into the ticket hall to help customers.

The station will continue to be staffed between the first and last train times. Incidentally, public Wifi is now available at the station.

Pavements renewed

After applying a lot of pressure, LRA Cllr Chris Pond has secured the renewal of some pavements in the High Road and The Drive, under the County Council's Market Towns fund. Part of The Drive was done in November - the first time these footways had been renewed since 1966.

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