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DORRIDGE & DISTRICT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION




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184 SPRING
2009

THE NEWSLETTER

CIRCULATION
3,800

FOR THE RESIDENTS OF DORRIDGE, BENTLEY HEATH AND FOUR ASHES

Chairman: DAVID GLANFIELD ~ 779635 • Secretary: MALCOLM SHEPHERD ~ 773374 • Treasurer: PAUL DAY ~ 773936
E-mail: dorridgeresidents@googlemail.com • www.dorridge.org.uk

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 48th Annual General Meeting will take place at 7.30pm on Thursday 5 March 2009 at Bentley Heath Community Hall, Widney Road, Bentley Heath.

After the DDRA formal business there will be an interval when light refreshments will be served with the Association's compliments, followed by Question Time.

AGENDA

- 7.30pm – Apologies, Minutes of 2008 AGM, & Matters Arising.
- 7.35pm – Chairman's Report – David Glanfield
- 8.00pm – Treasurer's Report - Paul Day
- 8.05pm – Election of Officers and Committee – Malcolm Shepherd
- 8.10pm – **INTERVAL – Coffee, Tea, Soft drinks, Biscuits.**
- 8.30pm – Question Time.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU....

.....and thank you again to everyone who helped in the long battle to fight off **BOTH** Motorway Service Areas proposed for the M42. SAMSAG (Solihull Against Motorway Service Areas Group) was right to oppose both applications at the outset and it was heartening to see a joint operation involving MPs, Councillors, and community groups and individuals from Hockley Heath, Dickens Heath, Dorridge and Bentley Heath, Hampton-in-Arden, Catherine-de-Barnes and Balsall Common. At DDRA we enjoyed strong support from many of our residents, and as members of SAMSAG we were able to forward their views. The Inspector's report reflects his acceptance of many of the concerns raised locally. Well done everyone!

FOREST COURT DEVELOPMENT.

We need hardly say that the news from Sainsbury's has potentially launched the biggest changes in Dorridge that any of us can remember, and it also goes without saying that public response has been immediate. We have probably had more contacts from residents in the last few weeks than at any time since DDRA was born. Some of you will have read the website summary of our discussion at Committee on January 12, but for the benefit of people without internet access it is important to also record them here (see below), as well as expanding on the unfolding story. But first, a bit of history.



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DDRA began its attempt to improve Forest Court some 10 years ago by engaging with the retailers and badgering the then Managing Agents to smarten up the appearance of the precinct. Small improvements were made, but they were short term and short lived as it became increasingly difficult to encourage any spending by the owners.

In 2002 we contacted 5 supermarket chains with a view to encouraging one of them to move into the Spar units and establish a 'Tesco Metro' style store. We believed that if this happened, regeneration of the rapidly declining site would follow and a broader range of retailers would be tempted to move in. The idea was not attractive to any of them but one major retailer, Waitrose, was keen to move into Dorridge if a suitable large site could be found. Thus was born the idea of a Dorridge supermarket occupying the whole Forest Court area. Waitrose continued to pursue its ideal and remained in contact with DDRA until February 2008 before retiring. We, meanwhile, advised Waitrose that in parallel with their negotiations we were continuing our own attempts to get the existing premises refurbished, revitalised, and appealing to the range of individual retailers we hoped would arrive. Whatever the outcome, big store or little shops, we believed Dorridge would benefit. However, despite all our efforts, redoubled last year and with a totally fresh approach under our new Community Development Secretary Phil Smith, Forest Court continued its slide towards oblivion and our pleas to those who could halt the decline went unanswered. And then Sainsbury's spoke.

SO WHERE DOES DDRA STAND?

In the middle, really. Some residents would like us to vigorously support their objections, others would like us to promote the development. We cannot align ourselves with either side because our support for one section of the community would be a betrayal of the other. What we can do, and this is the line we

have chosen, is to encourage all those who have an opinion to make it known to Sainsbury's via the Freephone telephone number **0800 975 5299** or by returning the response card in their leaflet. Obviously written comments are easier to record than phone conversations, and we at DDRA would also like to know what you are thinking (e-mail: **dorridgeresidents@googlemail.com**, or write to **17 Westfield Close, Dorridge, B93 8DY**).

SO NOW WHAT?

If you haven't commented, please do so, preferably to Sainsbury's and to us. Committee members, and especially our Planning Secretary Ian Spencer, will reply to e-mails/letters where appropriate. Where there seems to be no need for a response we will store all your comments for use in future discussions with Sainsbury's. The team involved us at an early stage, have demonstrated a willingness to hear residents' views and, more importantly, seem ready to act upon them if this is feasible. They are feeding back to us results of their consultation and promise to meet with us as and when necessary. We have also discussed issues with our three Ward Councillors so that they too are aware of the comments we receive. Eventually, once the planning application has been received, the Council's Planning Department will receive comments in the usual way. As it is the council which has statutory powers to get Sainsbury's to make changes it is important for residents to be ready to comment on the planning application, even if they have responded to the Sainsbury's consultation.

AND WHAT DO WE THINK OF IT SO FAR?

Our meeting of January 12 produced the following main points (full details on our website) :

We would welcome redevelopment of Forest Court. We have concerns about the inevitable disruption during demolition/construction. We are especially concerned at the impact on Forest Road residents.

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We stress the importance of sensitive management by Sainsbury's of the interests of retailers/businesses in the precinct.

Management of increased traffic will need careful consideration, as will the likelihood of increased parking demand. Approach roads on the Dorridge outskirts may become 'rat-runs'. The needs of shoppers and rail users might be addressed jointly by rail companies and Sainsbury's (park and ride to serve the store and the station?) A one way system around the site would be a benefit. Speed limits may need to be reduced to 20mph at key points. Successful local shops and businesses might benefit from an influx of new visitors to Dorridge.

Plans and artists impressions as presented create some concerns regarding design and size. This development will define how Dorridge appears and works for the foreseeable future, so residents have the right to expect that the utmost care is taken to achieve the best possible design for Dorridge as a whole – not simply for Sainsbury's. In our view the initial presentations do not yet achieve a satisfactory solution though we believe Sainsbury's are being genuine in their undertaking to address this.

The Sainsbury frontage and Station Approach will only be visible simultaneously from limited points, avoiding a severe clash of styles.

Need provision for cycle parking, and possibly trailers ("hods") on loan to carry weekly shop. Ensure ready pedestrian access front and rear, and front TO rear. Hope that residents within walking distance will shop more frequently to avoid using the car.

How will Sainsbury's view non-Sainsbury parking at the store.

Landscaping and 'greening' needs to be addressed.

Delivery/unloading schedules must take account of the proximity of homes.

Will access to the doctors' surgery be suitable for

limited mobility patients?

We note local desire for a Post Office; should this be full or limited service?

Café/coffee shop would provide community focus/socialising.

A community facility/meeting room is desirable but there would be issues around ownership/management.

The lines, as they say, are open, and we will continue to keep you informed.

FUN RUNS OPEN FOR BOOKING – TAKE YOUR PICK, KNOWLE OR DORRIDGE

Entries are already being received for this year's **KNOWLE FUN RUN** on May 26 and runners can register online at www.KnowleFunRun.org.uk. Charities benefiting this year are **Macmillan Cancer Support, Whizz-Kidz** and **Lions Campaign Sightfirst**, and the organisers hope that increasing the number of entries to 1900 will help to offset the effects of the credit crunch. Finally, if you know of a company which can help to make May 26 a great success please e-mail: info@KnowleFunRun.org.uk

And the 5th Annual **DORRIDGE FUN RUN** takes place a couple of weeks later, on Sunday June 7, when the organisers hope to exceed the £20,000 taken last year. This year the funds will go to Acorns and Air Ambulance. Route details and online entry at: www.dorridgefunrun.org.

FRIENDS OF DORRIDGE HALL

This small group has been formed to assist the Village Hall Committee with fund raising, and their next event is an Elizabethan evening on **Friday 4 April**. The group 'Lachrimae Consort' will play Elizabethan music on replica instruments of the time, and relate stories of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. **Tickets £10 from**

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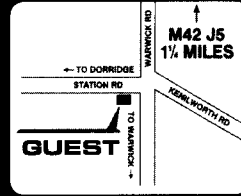
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FOOTPATHS AND FINGER BOARDS

If you use the newly laid Conker Lane/Chadworth Avenue footpath you will note that the edges have not been finished properly. The Council has gone back to the contractors and we hope to see the job completed satisfactorily without too much delay. And we now have the Dorridge Park fingerboard at the bottom of Arden Drive; this should put a stop to (westbound only!) drivers trying to find the park entrance in Beconsfield Close. And we are pleased to note that the playground in Dorridge Park now offers a wide variety of new equipment. However, as it is now unfenced parents must take account of the proximity of the stream, and note that children and dogs are no longer separated!

SOs LAUNCHED SUCCESSFULLY

Our request for people to pay subscriptions by Standing Order has had a very positive response, with 144 forms

received covering 258 members. It's convenient for you and beneficial to us so if you like the idea you can download the form from our website or phone Paul Day on 01564 77 3936. But you can still pay us using the form below so, one way or another, we look forward to hearing from you, particularly since – for reasons unknown – our paid up membership fell by 11% in 2008.

AND...THE BOTTOM LINE

Before the Sainsbury announcement our biggest post for years came from the item on horse manure in the last newsletter. To summarise, we now know that there are still folk who collect it for the garden, that riders would have difficulty dismounting and controlling their mount while clearing up the droppings, that the organic nature of the product puts it in a different category from dog dirt, but there are still those who find it offensive. Many thanks for all your comments.

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