

The times are a'changing

In the last few weeks there have been two

important events. The first was approval by Cabinet of consultation on a draft Core Strategy for the new Local Plan for Charnwood.

The decision was called-in to allow time for the Scrutiny Management Board to further examine the proposals.

Board Members decided they did not wish to comment on the draft Core Strategy. A full consultation for residents will now start on June 10 for six weeks before the document is submitted to Full Council in October.

While the draft does not mean an immediate change on making decisions on planning applications, it signifies a move forward to the resolution of present uncertainties on a range of planning issues.

The second event was the final revoking of the East Midlands Regional Plan. This had been forecast for some time, but it does mean that a tier of planning policy has now disappeared, to be replaced by the new National Planning Policy Framework and the remaining policies of

the present Charnwood Local Plan.

This will simplify decision making. It will also mean that reports to Plans Committee can be a little shorter!



View of Loughborough from Buck Hill



The early bird catches the worm

Planning work doesn't just happen between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, as we were recently reminded.

The Council received a complaint that a developer was working on a large housing development in a residential area each morning before 8am - the time permitted in their planning permission. This fell to our Planning Enforcement team to investigate.

The site was monitored on a number of occasions from 6.30am and 8am.

Breaches of the working hours restriction were noted and the developer was spoken to. He is now complying with the restriction.

The early intervention of the enforcement team meant residents and can now enjoy quiet in the early mornings!

Everything looks glamorous on TV

Did you watch the BBC2 series The Planners? We think it gave a very fair picture of how the planning process works. Did you?



New appointment

The Council's Group Leader for Development Management in Planning, Steve Lewis-Roberts (pictured below), has been appointed to the Royal Town Planning Institute's (RTPI) Conduct and Discipline Panel.

He was appointed to the seven-member panel, which investigates examples of misconduct by members of the Institute, from more than 100

applicants.

The panel has the power to strip RTPI members of their

membership.

Steve said: "I am delighted and proud to be involved. It may be a challenge but I am looking forward to it and having already attended my first meeting. I can see it will be very interesting."

Steve will carry out his role on the panel during his spare time, in addition to his job at the Council. He will attend meetings at the RTPI's offices in London.



More learning on the horizon

Planning permission has been granted for a new preparatory school at Ratcliffe College.

The college, situated on the edges of the Wolds, is more than 150 years old and features buildings that have been continuously enhanced.

It was built by Victorian architect, and designer of the Houses of Parliament, Augustus Pugin and first opened its doors in 1847.

The college has nearly 700 pupils, aged 3 – 18, and 100 boarders in the senior school. This demand has led the school to proceed with the most exciting project in its history: the building of a new Ratcliffe College Preparatory School.

This project will see the current nursery and junior schools merged into one Preparatory School, designed by Franklin Ellis Architects. State-of-the-art teaching rooms will ensure the highest standards in teaching and learning. There will also be a purpose-built laboratory, music centre, a lecture hall/theatre, library, ICT suite and art gallery, all centred on a courtyard garden to replicate the central square at the heart of the old school. Adjacent will be a sports centre with sports hall, indoor 25-metre swimming pool and two squash courts.

Planning policy supports the development of educational facilities and the recognition of architectural heritage in new development and these facilities will certainly benefit the future students of the senior school.



Design of the new preparatory school at Ratcliffe College

Recognising good development design

The Building Control team has put forward six local projects to the 2013 Local Authority Building Control (LABC) regional awards in May.



In 2012 the Old Magistrates' Court conversion in Loughborough and an oast house conversion with Turnkey Developments were highly commended at the awards after being suggested by the team.

This year's nominations are for the new science block at the Endowed Schools, the University sports stadium, a commercial building at Hallamfields, new housing developments by Barwood Homes in Woodhouse Eaves, Brunsleigh Croft in Hathern and the new surgery conversion at Rosebery Street School, Loughborough.

Judging will take place in March and the team is already on the look-out for projects to be considered for the 2014 awards.

We were all young once

Since February 2012 it has been the Council's responsibility to decide on where to allow student accommodation, in the form of Houses of Multiple Occupation, HMOs (class C4) in Loughborough.

Under an Article 4 Direction, which restricts permitted development rights in the town, houses used by families and groups of up to six people (class C3) cannot be used as HMOs. An HMO is a property used by three or more unrelated people living together as separate households, in our University town this is most often as students.

The Council has previously been able to control certain types of student accommodation, but this is a new situation and policies are not as clear as they once were.

Policies and guidance recognise that a concentration of HMOs can cause problems including noise, disturbance, car parking, poor property maintenance and loss of community cohesion, but this does not mean all student occupied homes are harmful to the neighbourhood.

When collecting evidence to make decisions on permitting these homes it can be difficult, there is considerable interest in the topic and many different opinions are aired, all of which need to be weighed up.

Recognising the difficulties, the Council has set up a Scrutiny Panel to see if there is any way in which the decision making process can be improved.

At a recent meeting the Plans Committee struggled with these decisions, judging each case on its own merits. All HMO developments put forward at this meeting were permitted.

Superstore is not quite 'Open All Hours'

In late 2012 the new Costco development at Thurmaston, covering an area of 4.12 hectares, was opened for trading.

The building has 12,852m² of floorspace and has 600 car parking spaces, trolley bays and cycle spaces, a tyre installation and sales facility, an in-house bakery, butchers, photo processing plant and café (to name but a few).

Access to Costco is restricted to businesses and limited to individuals who fall within specific groups. Trade members are the most important for the business, accounting for at least 65% of turnover in the UK. Due to the target market of the outlet, products are sold solely in bulk.

When assessing this proposal, the Council took the view that, whilst there were concerns about the effect on local business, the opportunity for employment, convenience for local businesses and the fact that the proposal brought economic development and the regeneration of a vacant brownfield site were in its favour.

The use of the development is controlled by a binding agreement to ensure it does not become a superstore for the public, without the Council's agreement.



Costco Wholesale, Thurmaston

Have I got old news for you...



Development site Iveshead Road, Shepshed

Just after the last edition we received the decisions on two appeals relating to major housing developments on the edges of Shepshed and Loughborough.

In both cases the appeal inspector recognised the landscape and other impacts but concluded that the shortage of housing land in the borough, and the time it will take meant the need outweighed the harm the developments would cause to the area.

In neither case was the inspector persuaded by very strong representations by the Council and the local communities, despite lengthy debate about landscaping.

This may be old news, but these decisions show the determination of the Government to address the shortage of housing.

This signals the need for difficult decisions to be made in the coming months when applications for development begin to be submitted. The signs are that there are going to be more applications of this type to deal with in the next few months.

HOT OFF THE PRESS...

An appeal against refusal for Planning Permission for housing on Melton Road, East Goscote, has been allowed.

Again, the need for housing outweighed the landscape impact.

Homes to emerge from scrap yard

In March, the Plans Committee agreed a redevelopment scheme which will see a scrap yard transformed into a housing haven.

The site at Windmill Road and Moor Lane, Loughborough, is also currently home to a waste transfer station and skip hire business and sees the Grand Union canal cut through the land.

The development will bring improvements to the local environment and also deliver recreational space, which is much needed in the area.

A new community development is also proposed for the scheme, which will see a feasibility study carried out before a planning application is submitted for the development.

The Plans Committee agreed that due to the nature of work needed to be undertaken at the site, as a result of its current use, the scheme does not need to include social housing.



An artists' impression of proposed development of Loughborough scrap yard

Permission to promote

It's not just bricks and mortar that require Planning Permission, outside advertising, such as billboards and letting signs, often requires permission.

Guidance and more information on Planning Permission for advertising can be found on our website, visit www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/advertisement_consent