

# St Leonard's Neighbourhood Association

## AGM 2024

7.30pm, Thursday May 16<sup>th</sup>

Coaver Club, DCC grounds

### Attendees

Chair: Nigel Fitzhugh, Treasurer: Craig Walker, Newsletter Editor: Norman Sheil

Committee members:

Cathy Moran, Bridget Shiel Juliet Stephenson, Maureen Lewis, Steve Halyard

Approx 70 local residents

### 1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

### 2. Matters arising

#### a) Magdalen Road improvement works

Issues had arisen when vehicles parked in the loading bays blocked the cycle lane and also obscured cyclists' sight lines. Our DCC Councillor had replied to concerns raised and reported that signage would be relocated and additional signage erected.

#### B) Bull Meadow Park

A *Friends of Bull Meadow Park* has been set up. There is a Facebook Book page and a QR code on the noticeboard in the park for those wishing to join / have further information about the group and its activities.

#### c) Weirfield Road

Serious safety concerns had been raised regarding the sole access to the care home and other buildings on the old Deaf School development site. This single access point from Weirfield Road could easily be come blocked leaving no access for vehicles, including emergency vehicles, to a site containing vulnerable residents. SLNA had raised this but Exeter planning department had received no objections from Devon CC and thus the plans remain unchanged. NF suggested that a sensible solution would be to have two access points, as required by the Dept. Of Health, one from Weirfield Road and a further one from Topsham Road. There have always been access points onto the site from Topsham Road, and the builders are currently using these. This solution has not been accepted by the builders or the planning department.

#### d) 5G Phone mast

SNLA had objected to the proposal to erect a large phone mast on the junction of St Leonards Road and Wonford Road on the grounds of it being inappropriate in a conservation area, and surrounded by listed building. The mast has now been erected in Barrack Road.

#### e) Boule Pitch

No progress had been made in establishing a Boule pitch at the Coaver Club. NF suggested that an opportunity might arise in the future, located on Mount Radford Lawn.

### 3) Agenda Items

### **a) Mount Radford Lawn**

NF welcomed Sylvan Dewing, Headteacher of the Deaf Academy, now based in Exmouth, their Comms. Person and one of their trustees, along with Ben Hunt of Heavitree Parklife who is conducting a feasibility study on the future of Mount Radford Lawn, on behalf of the Deaf Academy.

Sylvan, who joined the school in 2017, spoke about the school, its history, its links to Exeter, and its current cohort of students, their strategic aims and their recent successes and awards. He outlined the charitable aims of the organisation (to support deaf children, to educate the public about the needs of deaf children and to support integration between the deaf and hearing communities) and stressed that as a charity the field must support those aims. Using the field in partnership with the local community and organisations would do this. He also stated that Ben Hunt had been approached to conduct the feasibility study about the field as he was independent of the school and been successful in helping create and develop Parklife in Heavitree Park. The timeline for the study is:

Feb-April 2004: Ben talks to interested stakeholders, including SNLA,

April – June: Formulating ideas into a plan

June: Feasibility study and plan goes to the Board of Trustees for a decision

Discussion and questions were then invited. The overwhelming majority of the questioners stressed the importance of keeping the field as a green space and they were assured by the headteacher and the trustee that housing development plans were now no longer being pursued, as their financial position was no longer critical, and their commitment to retain a green space was genuine. It was unlikely that there would be a formal football pitch but rather a space for more informal games and community events. It was unclear when the feasibility plan would be made available to the general public and issues of funding, maintenance and ownership were raised. Ben stated that Parklife leased the land in the park on which the Parklife building stood, from ECC and their funding was totally grant and charity aided. Some concerns remained from SLNA that the 'option to buy' registered at the Land Registry was still in place. However the meeting welcomed the new way forward that the Deaf Academy was proposing and felt it was a positive option after several years of opposing housing development on the site. NF thanked the Deaf School attendees for their input and looked forward to further contacts and they then left the meeting.

### **b) Devon County Council Asset Sales**

#### *Larkbeare House*

Exeter Civic Society are in the process of getting this listed and have also undertaken a tree survey in the grounds. Tenders for the purchase of the house and grounds were submitted at the end of January and from those DCC have sold the house to someone who says they wish to occupy the building as a family home.

#### *Matford Lane*

Old buildings have been cleared from an area of County Hall grounds that border Matford Lane. Many objections were raised to the proposal to sell this plot for development, including representations from SLNA. The decision to sell was deferred and the proposal is going back to Cabinet in the autumn. Concerns were raised that the change of Leader at the Council may see a more determined commitment to sell assets to meet budget needs. SNLA will continue to monitor proposals for the site.

### **c) Development of St Lukes Campus**

A major, long-term development of the campus is proposed by the University to enhance its Medical and Research facilities. NF attended the presentation on the plans, as did many residents. The plans and presentation can be seen on the SNLA and University website. Although consultation is now formally closed it is still worth commenting as it is a massive redevelopment of the site. Residents of Baring Crescent are particularly concerned and members of their resident group expressed their dismay at the height and mass of the buildings. It was pointed out that there is a huge increase (from 25, 000 sq mts of building to 40, 000 sq mts) within a residential area and any development needs to be appropriate to the surrounding houses. Currently the proposed 6 storey blocks would be a similar height to the John Lewis building and represents city centre development in a residential area.

### **d) Christmas Fair**

The Christmas Fair was held in December and although successful is now very popular and hence very crowded. It is a small fund raiser for the SNLA but is mainly to support local shops, mostly small independent traders, as well as being a community event. SNLA also helped in the road closure procedures for several local street parties.

### **e) Cedars Road 'Garden'**

Locals residents attempts to create a garden in a small area of disused DCC land ran up against DCC bureaucracy and has not progressed.

### **f) Community Builder**

St Leonards and Newtown currently has no community builder as they have been moved to another area of the city.

### **g) Energy /Recycling Facility visits**

These have proved to be interesting and informative and so the SNLA may organise further visits for local residents.

## **4 Treasurers Report**

SNLA has two accounts – a HSBC account and a newsletter account.

The savings account has a positive balance of £25.000. It has made a few small grants to local young people to support various enterprises. Those given a grant are required to write an account for the newsletter. A donation was made to the RD&E Kidney Unit in memory of a long-serving and active committee member Dave Parsons.

Full details of the accounts are available on the SNLA website.

## **5 Newsletter report**

Norman Shiel, the editor, reported that for the first time he was seriously concerned that advertising revenue might not cover the printing costs of the magazine. The options were to increase the price of the advertising or find more advertisers. He urged the meeting to encourage any businesses that may be interested to place an ad in the newsletter. He thanked an ex-pupil of his who undertakes the design and layout of the magazine without payment – a great contribution to keeping the magazine financially viable.

NF thanked Norman and Bridget for their work on the magazine and also thanked the 74 street deliverers for their volunteer help.

## **6. Election of the committee**

The current committee were all re-elected unopposed. Nigel was thanked for his continuing commitment and hard work in chairing the association.

## **7. AOB**

Exeter Civic Society is in the process of revising the guide to St Leonards. The old one is now 40 years old and much has changed in the neighbourhood in that time. They hope to publish it in the autumn. Meanwhile the old one is available to download of the Society website.

Ian Maxted showed copies of his recently published, illustrated booklet tracking the history of all the buildings on Magdalen Road, and in particular the parade of shops. His research shows the many, many changes of use over time including intriguing discoveries such as the location of a rollerskating rink. The booklet costs £10 and the money goes towards the printing of the new Civic Society booklet mentioned above. Copies can be purchased from The Sandwich Inn or by contacting [ianmaxted@hotmail.com](mailto:ianmaxted@hotmail.com)