

**MONDAY 9 JANUARY 2006**

**UPDATE ON PETITIONS AND ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST PELSALL AND RUSHALL LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP**

This report provides an update on petitions and issues raised at the last meeting of Pelsall and Rushall LNP.

**Petitions**

**Shelfield Library and the Four Seasons Public House**

A petition was submitted to the last meeting on behalf of residents by Councillor Rachel Walker asking that derelict sites at Shelfield Library and the Four Seasons Public House be cleared. The following response has been received from the Council's Property Manager, Asset Management.

**Shelfield Library**

Shelfield library was demolished recently and the site has been cleared. The Council proposes to market the site for development in 2006. Given the characteristics of the surrounding area, it is anticipated that the site will be developed for residential use.

In January 2006, residents who would be directly affected by development of the site will be consulted on the development guidelines. To be clear, this would only include residents who would be consulted as a matter of course was a planning application to be received for the site.

**Four Seasons Public House**

This site is in private ownership and will be redeveloped for residential use. The most recent planning application, for 19 residential dwellings plus associated garages and parking, was refused under delegated powers on 4 May 2005. The developer is appealing against this decision. The appeal will be heard at an Informal Hearing on 25 January 2006.

**Provision of Speed Bumps Outside the Free Trade Inn, Wood Lane, Pelsall**

A petition asking that two speed bumps be provided outside The Free Trade Inn in Wood Lane, Pelsall due to the amount of children playing there and on the Common; also the speed of vehicles and motor bikes using the road and car

park as a turning point was submitted on behalf of the licensee and customers of the Free Trade Inn by Councillor Clive Ault. The following response has been received from the Council's traffic section.

The Free Trade Inn is located along Wood Lane in a semi rural position towards the end of a cul-de-sac which was traffic calmed with speed cushions and a speed table in 2002. The licensee and regulars have requested for the construction of road humps along Wood Lane adjacent to the Public house Car Park. There have not been any reported accidents along Wood Lane In the latest 3 years data available (until July 2005).

The Council prioritises requests for traffic calming measures by applying certain criteria which help to determine the level of support for a scheme in a particular area or road. Any requests made for consideration for traffic calming, particularly in locations where the measures cannot be supported by accident numbers, need to be submitted in accordance with the following:-

- (1) The request needs to be supported by the majority of the residents from a particular road or area by way of a petition;
- (2) The request needs to be supported by the Local Neighbourhood Partnership;
- (3) The request needs to be supported in writing by at least two ward Councillors for the area.

There have been previous requests for the existing calming features to be made more severe; however, other sites with a record of casualties will take precedence over sites without a record of casualties. This request will be added to the list of schemes waiting funding.

### **Access for Emergency Vehicles to the Bungalows in Rowley Place, Rushall**

At the July meeting, local residents raised concerns about access for emergency vehicles to the bungalows in Rowley Place, Rushall. An update on this issue was reported to the last meeting and subsequent to that, the following interim briefing note has been received from the Council's Transportation Services.

Concerns were raised by the ten elderly residents of Rowley Place at the LNP meeting on 7 July 2005, over emergency access at weekends due to extensive parking in this road associated with the weekend activities at the adjacent park. It was their view that the emergency services would be unable to satisfactorily service their properties if ever there was an incident which required their attendance.

If there is a significant obstruction of the highway the police do have appropriate enforcement powers. Inconsiderate and unauthorised parking can be a cause of extreme frustration for residents and may also exacerbate existing road safety issues.

Members were advised that these properties together with the adjacent grassed area were in the ownership of Walsall Housing Group, to whom this matter had been referred, and that there were no funds in their environmental budget for the provision of a car park or likely to be for at least three years.

It was further reported that these were perceived concerns which although appreciated and noted were nevertheless replicated at many other locations in the Borough.

The Emergency Services have now undertaken a risk assessment. The Fire Service report that:

*'in their opinion there is no problem; they were able to easily drive a Hydraulic Platform, which is their largest vehicle, to the edge of the semi-circle of the ten bungalows and could have driven a fire appliance further between the parked cars. There are roads elsewhere in Walsall where access because of car parking, are more restricted'*

The Ambulance Service report that:

*'I have been and had a look and, to some extent, I would agree with the tenants in as much as, if cars were to be parked either side of the road then it would make access and egress difficult. Our vehicles do not necessarily need the space to turn around but access as near to any incident is fairly critical. This would also apply to any casualty on the park, e.g. a sporting injury. It may therefore be beneficial to restrict parking to either one side or the other at weekends.'*

Following subsequent discussions with the Ambulance Service they have now confirmed that they did not actually visit at a weekend and will always err on the cautious side but in the scheme of things Rowley Place was not considered a critical location.

Traffic officers have visited at weekends and similarly found the situation would not warrant any action.

There seems little to be gained from formally consulting the residents. There are currently no identifiable funds for providing any off-street parking facilities and in any event there are several residents who would not want the WHG green to be turned over for car parking use.

### **Voting Facilities in Rushall**

Local residents in Rushall enquired at the last meeting whether consideration could be given to transferring the polling station back to Rushall Community

Centre from New Street, Rushall. Many local people, particularly the elderly, had reported that they had difficulty in getting to New Street.

The Electoral Services Manager has responded that the use of Rushall Community Centre as a polling station will be investigated for the forthcoming May 2006 local election.

The other concerns raised by local residents about the possibility of voting facilities in Autumn Close being reinstated for High Heath residents are the subject of further investigation and will be reported to the next meeting of the LNP.

### **Parking in Springfields, Rushall**

Concerns were raised in Public Forum at the last meeting about problems of parking in Springfields, Rushall. Residents asked whether consideration could be given to removing some of the grass verge there to make parking easier. The following response has been received from the Council's Highways Section.

Further to a request from the Pelsall and Rushall LNP regarding parking in Springfields Rushall, a site inspection has been undertaken to assess the problem.

The inspection shows limited off street parking along the road. A number of properties could have vehicular crossings constructed allowing them to park on their own frontages. However, there are several properties between the junction of Lime Grove and Friary Crescent that may have difficulty parking outside of their property.

There are two verges fronting house numbers 74 to 88 and 109 to 118 where parking facilities could be made available.

The area available would allow up to 27 spaces to be created. However as only 14 properties front this area there may be objections raised if this is turned into a parking area, especially as some houses are now privately owned. As such, consultation would be essential prior to any decision being made. Alternative parking schemes could be considered. However, this offers the maximum number of spaces.

The verges identified are the only council owned sections of open space on this road. They are not at present showing signs of damage caused by vehicular use or any other damage and appear to be being maintained to a high standard.

To construct the maximum number of spaces available would be in the region of £65000.00. However, additional costs may be required for works to the adjacent trees and for any services running through the verge, i.e. electricity, gas etc. There is no Council funding available for this type of project.

This land is maintained by Street Pride.

## **Concerns about Parking in Pelsall Village Centre**

Concerns were raised in Public Forum at the last meeting about problems of parking in Pelsall Village Centre and whether any consideration had been given to introducing car parking restrictions in the village. The following briefing note from the Council's Planning and Transportation Section has been received in response to these enquiries.

Concern has been raised that vehicles are being parked for an excessive period of time in Pelsall which is preventing shoppers from parking near to shops and businesses in the village centre.

Pelsall village centre consists of a mix of residential and commercial premises and in common with many other village centres some of the streets are narrow and many buildings have no off-street parking. Parking on-street is therefore inevitable and the local authority faces a problem in trying to preserve the facility for residents and businesses as well as maintaining the through flow of traffic and ensuring that road safety is not compromised.

The issue as to whether parking restrictions are required in Pelsall village centre formed the basis of a report to the then Highways and Transportation Committee in March 2000 where it was resolved that no further action be taken. At the time it was found that car parks on Ashtree Road and outside the Library were not fully utilised and there was on-street parking available within a reasonable distance of the High Street.

It is the opinion of officers that the parking situation has not changed significantly enough in the intervening period to justify the introduction of waiting restrictions. There is normally sufficient on-street parking if people are prepared to park a short walk away from the village centre and money has been spent on improving the signage to, and the surface of, the two car parks in order to increase their attractiveness to shoppers.

In order to assess fully whether the situation has changed significantly over the last five years it will be necessary to survey the nature, extent and duration of parking in the village centre. The surveys will be undertaken by the Traffic Management Section and are programmed to take place in January 2006. Once the results are known the findings will be reported back to a future meeting of the Local Neighbourhood Partnership.

## **The Ring and Ride Service**

At the last meeting, Mrs Sheila Sheasby, the Elderly Issues Task Group Chairman, briefed the meeting on how increased use of the Ring and Ride Service could benefit many elderly people in helping them get out and about in the area and thus improve their quality of life.

The briefing note attached as Appendix 1 from the Council's Principal Transport Policy Officer provides detailed information on Ring and Ride Service provision.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the contents of the report and to indicate any further action they wish officers or task groups to investigate in respect of the various issues identified in the report.

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## **Briefing note to Pelsall & Rushall Local Neighbourhood Partnership**

**9 January 2006**

### **THE RING & RIDE SERVICE**

#### **What is Ring and Ride?**

Ring and Ride is the main door-to-door accessible transport service operating throughout the West Midlands. Set up in the mid 1980's, now, with a Grant from the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority (Centro), Ring and Ride in the West Midlands has grown to become the largest operator of such services in the United Kingdom.

For many people in the community with limited mobility, getting around independently is a big problem. This prevents them from living their lives how they want to, by restricting choice and opportunity. In response to this, Ring and Ride provides a door to door bus service, which is aimed at meeting individual travel needs. Being available 365 days a year, from 08:00am to 11:00pm means that people have a greater choice of when they can travel.

#### **To qualify:**

To qualify to use Ring and Ride clients must:

- have a mobility problem which makes it difficult or impossible to use conventional public transport
- be resident in one of the seven urban Districts of the West Midlands
- can be any age
- complete a form declaring they have a mobility problem
- may be asked to provide a Doctor's Note if there is doubt about qualification to use the service

#### **Fares:**

Depending on the type of pass held, Senior Citizens pass holders and Half Fare Permit holders can travel free or at half fare. Centrocards and other passes can be used too. Non pass holders pay fares equivalent to those charged on other local bus services in the area. Children over 5 without passes normally pay half fare. A companion either pays a fare, or if they hold a Centro pass, it will be accepted in full or part payment. Dependent children are normally charged at half fare if they do not have a pass.

#### **The Service:**

Ring and Ride focuses on enabling users to get to local destinations in their neighbourhood and up to half a mile into an adjoining area. A limited 'cross-boundary' service enables users to travel beyond the half a mile limit, to anywhere in the operating areas adjoining their own. The service is not designed to take people to work every day.

Ring and Ride also links up with other passenger transport services including local trains, the Metro and the cross-boundary bus of another Ring and Ride operating area. This enables journeys to be completed from door to door across the West Midlands. When travelling, users can take a companion with them provided they are booked in advance. Users may also take dependent children with them. The service uses minibuses with ramps or lifts, so that people who use wheelchairs or find steps very difficult can use the bus.

**Efficiency:**

As regards efficiency, there are many comparative indicators relating to trip cost, vehicle utilisation etc which demonstrate that in most respects (if not all) Ring and Ride in the West Midlands is the most cost-effective both nationally and internationally (figures can be supplied on request).

However, much remains to be done: despite running two million trips a year the Charity knows that for very many individuals the availability of the service is insufficient to meet all their travel needs. Also, the population is ageing and despite the appearance of low floor buses, most users find it impossible to get to bus stops.

**Trips:**

There are currently some 57,000 registered Users, of which about 32,000 are "active" (i.e. they regularly use the service - the rest may only make occasional use due to health reasons etc). As Ring and Ride run 2,000,000 trips a year that works out that on average each active user gets 62 single trips a year (or put another way, 31 return trips a year or 1.19 return trips a fortnight). In 1995 they ran 1,494,000 trips but then there were only 44,000 registered users and 30,000 active users so that each active user in 1996/7 got on average 49.8 single trips a year or 24.9 return trips a year or 0.96 return trips a fortnight.

Therefore, even though Ring and Ride has increased the number of trips by 34% (506,000 trips) the impact on the average number of trips has been small because of the rise in the number of Users (currently increasing at over 14% a year) and is still well short of the one-return-trip-a-week average that the Charity considers should be the norm for all active users.

**Funding:**

About 64% of the Charity's costs are met by the Grant and the number of vehicles funded by the Grant has remained unchanged since 1996. Despite this, the number of trips has increased in the past 10 years by 34%, mainly because the Charity has utilised its Contract fleet to supplement Ring and Ride provision in the middle of the day, evenings, weekends and during school holidays, and has paid for that extra provision from its earnings from other activities.

**Problems with telephone booking:**

Consultation has revealed that many people feel frustrated with Ring & Ride's telephone booking resulting in many respondents being unable to access Ring & Ride's services as often as they wished to. Ring and Ride were invited to comment:

"It is a problem which *all* dial-a-ride operations encounter worldwide and arises simply because there are insufficient resources (ie. buses and hence trips) to satisfy the demand from all the Users and therefore Users inevitably try to get to the head of the queue by ringing at the very start of the booking period - hence the congestion.

To make the issue clearer we often refer to Supermarkets: one rarely sees people queuing at opening times for tins of baked beans because people know that whenever they go into the store there will always be a tin on the shelf (ie. the supply of the product is effectively unlimited) and so they see no need to queue. However, at certain times (notably Christmas Eve) you will see queues of people at supermarkets waiting to buy bread because they know that only a limited amount will be available. Similarly there were only queues at petrol stations when the supply of petrol was thought to be restricted. In neither situation were the queues there because the Supermarket or the petrol station was inefficient.

The only way the problem can be avoided is if there is a sufficient supply of the product (in this case, trip availability) so that people know that whenever they call they will get the trip they want. Then they will not feel the need to call when the lines open and so will even out the call pattern."

**Advisory Groups:**

District Advisory Groups (DAG's) exist in each of the operating areas which allow Users and other interested organisations (eg. Age Concern, Disability Groups, Social Service representatives etc) to discuss the provision of the Ring and Ride service.

**Introductory leaflets:**

Introductory leaflets are produced in several formats and community languages which can be supplied on request.

**Contact details:**

Ring and Ride, 218/220 Windsor Street, Nechells, Birmingham B7 4NE  
Telephone 0121 333 3107, Fax 0121 333 3345  
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