

The WEST PARK CHRONICLE

The Community Newspaper for West Park

December 2009

www.westparkresidents.org.uk

This is the fourth issue of West Park Chronicle in 2009. That this is fewer than in some previous years reflects the nature of the issues affecting the neighbourhood during the year. In some cases it's easy to define an obvious stance that WPRRA should adopt; in others it seems better for individual residents to respond from their own perspective.

Generally, no news is probably good news!

On the other hand some issues seem destined to affect us permanently, and that applies to two of the three main subjects for this issue. Curiously both result from the way major educational establishments choose to interact with their surrounding neighbourhood. One concerns chronic car parking problems (see box below) that are mostly a result of the self-centred way in which Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU) is permitted to run its campus. The other concerns neighbourhood trouble caused by the inability of Lawnswood School to curb anti-social behaviour by a minority of its pupils.

Parking — 'Them and Us'

The three photos on the left show the serenely car-free state of the LMU campus. Contrast this with the chaos in the streets shown on the right. Ancaster Road (top) and Caythorpe Road (bottom) are just two of the formerly quiet residential streets that LMU staff and students now use as a free car park.



Parking Problems

Background

Just over two years ago Leeds Metropolitan University decided to introduce their Green Travel Plan.

This had the disastrous effect of changing the previously quiet roads in West Park and the Glen Road area into parking lots.



Since then local councillors, WPRA, local residents and retailers have made considerable efforts to try and find a resolution to this problem. The police have responded to incidents wherever possible but this problem seems destined to be an issue which will not end well.

Following a recent Highways Board meeting, the introduction of a residents parking scheme for the areas of West Park adjacent to the Beckett Park campus are expected to be introduced in February or March. The exact time will depend on scheduling the job into existing work timetables, and of course the weather.

Kepstorn Road, despite the objections of the residents and WPRA, has not been given resident parking status. So inevitably Kepstorn Road nearest the fields will pick-up any displaced parking from the now-restricted end of Ancaster Road. Relocations of university facilities now means that fewer staff are based on Beckett Park, which might reduce on-street parking.

Meanwhile serious concerns have been raised about the reasoning behind the decision of the Highways Department's traffic engineer to disregard objections by residents. Advice is being sought on how this might be challenged. When this and other matters become clearer, it will be time to discuss the next steps to take.

The Real Villain Is...

Although problems with the implementation of the various schemes to control

street parking are mostly the responsibility of the Council, it's important to remember that the real villain in this saga is Leeds Metropolitan University.

When LMU announced their scheme to remove almost all car parking from the campus, local councillors met with the LMU's then Vice Chancellor, Professor Simon Lee, and later with the Acting Vice Chancellor, Dr. Geoff Hitchens, asking for a moratorium while alternative schemes were assessed. These requests were rejected and LMU went ahead anyway.

As soon as it was introduced the scheme effectively shifted most staff parking onto nearby streets. In turn this meant that students began to use the streets in West Park for indiscriminate parking, seriously inconveniencing those who happen to live there.

To add insult to injury, now that recent building work on the campus has been completed, each day there are typically over a hundred parking spaces lying empty on the campus (see box on previous page).

What Next?

The Council's current parking restriction proposals are not perfect and will still leave the area as an overspill car park, despite considerable effort by residents, local councillors and WPRA. The issue is still live and suggestions from residents would be most welcome.

WPRA has started to lobby the university's governing body to coincide with the arrival of the new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Susan Price, on January 1st. Talks are also taking place with other residents' associations to explore possible ways forward.



West Park Centre

At their spring meeting, the Executive Board of the Council asked their Strategic Assets Management Service to prepare a report on the future of West Park Centre (WPC). The preliminary report was tabled on December 10th at a meeting of the North West Inner Area committee (INWAC). The report included the following points:



- It assessed the state of the fabric of the building and estimated refurbishment costs.
- Following the departure of Opera North and the Northern Ballet Theatre, Education Leeds will continue to use the facility for the Music Service but that it will not be able to fund the necessary level of maintenance identified as being required for the building.
- Assets Management are still assessing the availability of other com-

munity space, if any. After doing this it will contact individual users of WPC to find out their usage and space requirements.

- Later, Assets Management will arrange a meeting with local residents associations and local councillors (Weetwood & Kirkstall) to discuss the way forward.

Some important aspects are:

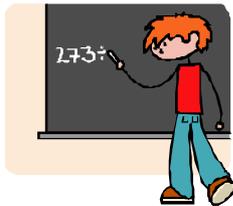
- WPC is large, requires a degree of upgrading and costs a fair amount to run. How will this be supported in the future?
- The large hall at the WPC is a unique feature, which is unlikely to be replicated elsewhere.
- WPC is a focal point for the area, and could play a greater role for the local community.

Because of the potentially high value of the site, there is likely to be pressure to

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Lawnswood School

Sadly last year's impression that things were improving in terms of anti-social behaviour by pupils has been short-lived. Incidents believed to involve Lawnswood pupils that have been reported to WPRA recently include:



- Wheelie bins overturned.
- Attempts to set fire to a wheelie bin.
- Damage to hedges and fences.
- A garden wall pushed over.
- Assaults on Abbey Grange pupils by Lawnswood pupils.
- An assault on a local resident by a pupil.
- Verbal abuse of residents.
- Large stone thrown through a house window.

- Stones thrown at windows of an elderly resident's flat.
- A series of attacks on a house occupied by a young mother and her three very young children.

Despite the new extension to the school dining facilities there appear to be more pupils leaving the premises at lunchtimes than previously.

**Assessment:
Could Do Better**

WPRA will continue to press the school to properly address the issue of pupil behaviour and its effect on the West Park area.

Coincidentally (or not) an Ofsted report in September made the school subject to special measures, identifying *poor student behaviour* as a significant factor affecting learning (see box overleaf).

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demolish and rebuild, but if this were to happen, what should or would be built in its place?

Apparently there is a covenant on the land which restricts it to use for educational purposes. However such a covenant might not withstand the efforts of determined lawyers to get round it should the council so wish.

All the members of INWAC, who are lib-Dem and labour councillors, are known to support the retention of community facilities at West Park, and the protection of the West Park fields.

We'll see what the new year brings.

Damaged Verges

The Council says: *"The contractor for Spen Croft (on Spen Lane) will ensure that the grass verges are re-instated once the building work is completed."*

Email Circulars Missing?

Every time we send out emails, a certain few bounce back due to an invalid address. If you know someone who expected to receive this Chronicle by email but didn't, please ask them to email a brief note to westpra@btinternet.com and we'll correct the mailing list.

Ofsted Report on Lawnswood School, September 2009

Limited space here means that we've had to selectively quote bits that deal with bad behaviour by pupils. After all, it's this aspect of the school that affects many WPRAs residents on a daily basis.

Inevitably this means we're giving an overly negative view of the school as a whole, so please read the full version at <http://www.lawnswood-portal.co.uk> to get the full story. For example, this is what the report says about the sixth form:

'The sixth form is a strength of the school. It provides good-quality education for students. The effective leadership and management of the sixth form helps to ensure that students are supported well, both academically and personally, and outcomes for students are consistently good.'

However, here are some less complimentary findings that reflect on pupil behaviour.

Extracts From Main Findings:

.. this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

<snip> ...the quality of learning is often severely affected by students' poor behaviour. Staff do not always manage behaviour well in lessons, and this, when combined with weak planning and generally low expectations, leads to too many lessons being inadequate. A significant proportion of students have poor attitudes to learning and are disrespectful to adults and to their peers, both in and out of lessons.

<snip> ...Attendance rates, although improved since the last inspection, remain below average and this has a significant impact on outcomes for students. The school has implemented a number of strategies to improve attendance, but these have not been fully effective and too many students fail to attend regularly.

<snip> ...Leaders and managers have been too generous in evaluating many aspects of the school's work. The monitoring of teaching and learning, including the management of students' behaviour, has not been effective enough, and so the school's policies and procedures are not consistently applied by all staff. Behaviour and attendance were highlighted as areas for improvement at the time of the last inspection and too little progress has been made in addressing these weaknesses. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is inadequate: this, combined with the school's inaccurate view of its effectiveness, means that there is insufficient capacity for sustained improvement."

Finally, in true journalistic tradition, we wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!