



# FOCUS

Newsletter from Rushcliffe Liberal Democrats.

Winter 2013

The clear message we have had from local residents is:

## Save Sharphill and the Wood



- *building nearer to the wood*
- *building around the wood*
- *spoiling the ridgeline*
- *building nearer Musters Road*

Residents are against the Conservative's plan for 550 more houses on the hill (45% increase). They say that building should keep to the 2009 planned area. The original plan for 1,200 houses is plenty and we do want the promised 30% affordable homes.

The proposals had been due to be put to a full Council Meeting on 31 October. However the Highways Agency (for trunk roads) had not had time to comment. So the steps ahead as we know them are:

26 November – those Councillors on a Local Development Framework working group meet (in private) to make recommendations.

**3 December** - Ruling Cabinet meet (starts 7 pm open to public).

**12 December**- Council meets to agree or not agree the plan (starts 7 pm open to public).



For other information: see inside pages. Also [savesharphillagain.org](http://savesharphillagain.org) & [westbridgfordwire.com](http://westbridgfordwire.com)

Rushcliffe Council's consultation period is over but you can always send your views to the Leader of the Council, Neil Clarke [Cllr.JClarke@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.JClarke@rushcliffe.gov.uk) and/or the Chief Executive Allen Graham at Rushcliffe Council Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford, NG2 5FE or call 0115 981 9911 and/or to the elected representatives for your area.

## Sharphill Plans – Present and Proposed

### The Assault on Sharphill. Extracts from the Resident's Association's timeline.

- 1993. Rushcliffe Council bought land on Sharphill (over £400,000) from Landowner Mr Wells. He could still farm and market the land. If planning permission was given for development, the 'uplift' in value would be shared. i.e. Rushcliffe Council bought land at Sharphill so that if it was planned to build on Sharphill, this would be to the mutual financial advantage of the Council and Landowner.
- 1996. NCC Structure Plan Review emphasised the importance of protection of the Sharphill Ridgeline.
- 2000. Rushcliffe Council Plan for housing included 1700 houses on Sharphill. The Plan was shelved when the Highways Agency objected. Highways' later study said that flyovers would be needed at the Gamston, Wheatcroft and Nottingham Knight Islands. The 4<sup>th</sup> Trent Crossing was seen as the long term solution to the problems with the A52.
- 2005 December. Landowner bought back the original land from Rushcliffe at the original price with a continued profit sharing deal if houses were built. Now Rushcliffe gets 40%. The Council stood to gain many £ millions from the sale of the land.
- 2006 February. A Planning Inspector recommended that "the Plan be modified by deleting the Edwalton allocation ...". Concerns centred on (a) the visual and topographical impact of the site in question, (b) the need for access and transport to the site and (c) the impact that this need will have on the already stretched transport infrastructure in the area. The Highways Agency objected because of the overload on the A52.
- 2006 May. Residents' protests about RBC proposing building on Sharphill was expressed by some 4,500 directly and by the Hands Across the Hill demonstration.
- 2006 June. RBC continued with the Plan including building 1,200 houses on Sharphill. It was defeated at a Council meeting. A Liberal Democrat amendment to remove Sharphill from the Plan was carried by 25 votes to 22.
- 2008. Wilson Homes and Mr Wells made a planning application for 1,200 houses on Sharphill. This time Rushcliffe Council Officers turned down the application. The developers appealed. 2009. The appeal and objections were aired at a Public Hearing. The Planning Inspector recommended and Government gave the go-ahead to the outline plans. The main reason for this was the urgent need for housing in Rushcliffe.
- The approved plan was for 900 houses and community facilities between the Melton Road and Sharphill Wood, 300 houses in a triangle between Melton Road and the ring road; a 35 hectare Community Park surrounding the Wood and on the northern slope of the Hill facing over Nottingham, green corridors in the estate and a barrier at the top of Musters Rd limiting traffic to public service vehicles only. A key condition was that a start be made on site within two years because of the urgent need for housing and affordable housing in Rushcliffe. Also 30% of the homes should be 'affordable'. All that has happened was that a cabin was placed, a hole dug, tarmac laid and nothing has been built in four years.
- **2013. RBC consulted on their proposed Housing Plan for Rushcliffe which includes a further 550 houses on top of the 1200 at Sharphill.**

1750 properties means houses: nearer to the wood; on the area which was to be the football pitches: nearer to Musters Rd; a road round the south of the wood parallel to the Ring Road and houses on the fields to the west of the wood i.e. round the 'road to nowhere'. Each of these green areas had been cited by the Inspector in 2009 as important environmental safeguards on which basis he dismissed objections and were the basis of the Government decision to approve building 1200 houses. If the extra 550 were to proceed, the community park would be much reduced and wildlife and regeneration in the Nature Reserve Wood would cease because it would be surrounded by houses, people and pets. The last green lungs of West Bridgford with its footpaths and views would be vastly eroded. Car dependency and distance from the Town Centre would increase. The Council continues to stand to gain many £ millions from building on Sharphill. **And next**
- 31 October and 26 November Councillors on the Local Development Framework working group meet to consider the issues and make recommendations.
- **12 December 2013. RBC Council is to decide on its Plan.**

*The full Rushcliffe Residents Association's timeline can be seen at [www.savesharphillagain.org](http://www.savesharphillagain.org)*

**Your Liberal Democrat Focus Team and Councillors have opposed the plans to build on this skyline and hillside from the start.**

## Focus Team Working for Local Interests



From 1 October 2013 all Scrap Metal Merchants must have and display a collectors licence. The Scrap Dealers Act also makes it illegal for cash to be paid. If you believe there is a collector without a licence or acting suspiciously tell the Police. Do not leave metal for random collection – this attracts people who remove bikes and other items.

### Bedroom Tax’.

There are an increasing number of residents unable to move because there are no smaller properties within a reasonable distance. Some are getting into arrears and other being forced into private sector properties which are more expensive to them and the benefit system!

So Liberal Democrat Cllrs Rod Jones and Sam Boote proposed this at the September Council Meeting. “Council resolves that residents of the Borough in social housing and in receipt of housing benefit should not be penalised when, as a result of the under-occupancy benefit capping (the so-called "bedroom tax"), they want to downsize but are unable to do so because no property of the appropriate size is available. Council recommends that an exceptional hardship fund be set up to ensure that housing association rent arrears which are not the fault of the resident are paid until the resident is offered a reasonable alternative property and declines it.”

The Conservatives voted this down en bloc.

### Transparency of Councillors’ interests.

Councillors are obliged by law to declare financial interests of themselves or partners. The previous national requirement to list all interests, such as membership of National Trust through to Freemasons, no longer applies; so Rushcliffe did not include it a local requirement. At the last Council meeting, Cllr Rod Jones proposed that “changes be made to the Councillor Code of Conduct so that Member’s membership of any external organisation or groups beyond those that reflect a ‘pecuniary interest’, should be added to the list of disclosable interests.”

Again this was voted down by the Conservatives en bloc.

## Leisure Centre Changes!

**Rushcliffe Council plan to close Rushcliffe Centre and build some facilities at the Arena by January 2016.**

You can see the plan in a report of the Cabinet meeting on 15 October (item 5) on the Rushcliffe website.

Centres at Leake, Keyworth, Cotgrave and Bingham will stay unaffected.

Musters Liberal Democrat Councillors will continue to press for equivalence. Any new provision should not involve less (or dubbed down) facilities and must enable continued provision for all of the many existing voluntary sport groups.

***We say the last thing a forever enlarging West Bridgford needs is less leisure provision.***

Will the sports fields and netball courts remain available? Which voluntary groups will have continuity of provision in the new build at the Arena?

### Uncertain times for sports facilities and sports groups in West Bridgford.



If you have a view about Leisure Centre provision make sure it is heard.

**You have until the 5 December** to get your comments in writing to Rushcliffe Council. If you prefer, you can go to [Rushcliffe.gov.uk](http://Rushcliffe.gov.uk) and complete the online survey or email: [consultation@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@rushcliffe.gov.uk)

**Being local matters to us**

# Liberal Democrats Keeping You Informed

## **Congratulations- Community Award for The Friends of Sharphill Wood.**

The Rushcliffe Community Awards event celebrates the work of volunteers throughout the Borough. It was held on 7 November. The Friends of Sharphill Wood were winners amongst the shortlisted groups under the category 'protecting and enhancing our environment'. For information about the Nature Reserve and the Friends see:



[www.sharphillwood.org](http://www.sharphillwood.org)

*Friends of Sharphill Wood on a break*

**Why not join Green Line Friends?** Next Working Party is on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January at 10 am. Contact Gary at [GCragg@nottswt.co.uk](mailto:GCragg@nottswt.co.uk) or at Notts Wildlife Trust at 0115 958 8242.

**Melton Road Xmas Market** is on Sunday 8th December between 12 and 5. Santa's raffle in aid of the Friary is at 4.0 pm followed by a lantern parade.

**The Friary** (46 Musters Rd). Donations of clothes and non-perishable and canned food are welcome. The next Bargain Sales is on Saturday 11 January.

**Rushcliffe School** gained planning approval to build a 6<sup>th</sup> form centre. Some changes were made to respect the neighbours.



Site of proposed 6<sup>th</sup> form building is on the right.

**Boundary Road Closure** from Selby Rd junction uphill for a distance of 40 metres to the north-east. The closure is from 9:30am Monday 13th January to 23:59 on Friday 24th January for gas works. This information is from the County Council.

**Crime** in your area can be seen at [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk). The **Police & Crime Commissioner's** Report can be seen at [www.nottinghamshire.pcc.police.uk/Document-Library/Newsletters/The-Beat-October-2013.pdf](http://www.nottinghamshire.pcc.police.uk/Document-Library/Newsletters/The-Beat-October-2013.pdf)

## **Liberal Democrats support working for change from within the EU.**

We are opposed to those right wing politicians who dream of a lost world of global empire:

- UKIP are the party of "Out"
- The Conservatives can't stand anything European and many, in their hearts, want out too.
- The Murdoch Press campaign against the EU.
- Labour used to be internationalist but have lost all the courage of their convictions.

It is too easy to take for granted that we have been free from war between the European Powers which are now tied together. We are an integral part of a major trading block. The EU needs reform and democracy is laborious. Liberal Democrat MEPs, and our Bill Newton-Dunn's attendance and action in Europe is very high.

### **Liberal Democrats want the UK to remain in the EU because**

*"Three million jobs depend on it."*

*"Around 50% of our trade is with the EU."*

*"Firms like car manufacturers are based in the UK to access to the EU market."*

*"Many problems like climate change & pollution can only be tackled if we work together."*

*"Crime including people trafficking crosses borders: justice should too."*

### **Liberal Democrats do NOT want more powers to go to the EU and are in favour of a referendum if that were proposed.**

Liberal Democrats have been central to cutting red tape for small businesses, establishing an EU wide patent system, establishing the EU-USA trade agreement. They actively fought for many green measures such as carbon reduction, cutting phosphates in detergents which damage water. The EU reduced phone roaming charges. Liberal Democrats have successfully fought off crazy Tory and UKIP proposals to withdraw the UK from the European Arrest Warrant.



**Councillors Khan and Jones**

**We welcome contact from any resident and your views, suggestions and comments. We issue Focus three times each year to keep residents informed about what we do and what we stand for. An increasing number of people also now receive occasional Community News updates by email. If you are interested - contact Rod Jones. 0115 914 6616 [cllr.rjones@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.rjones@rushcliffe.gov.uk)**