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Campaign to save green belt land between Stapleford and Trowell

AROUND 150 opponents to a proposal to build 450 homes at Field Farm, Stapleford, packed into a public meeting at the Jaguar public house, Hickings Lane, Stapleford, on Saturday, January 14.

Westerman Homes has lodged a planning application to build the houses with Broxtowe Borough Council and, in view of the changes to planning law as the government insists space is found for new homes in Broxtowe, the Field Farm site, which is green belt, could find itself earmarked as prime development land.

The site, north of Ilkeston Road, Stapleford, has the potential to become one of Broxtowe Borough Council's 'preferred sites'. It was added to a list of sites *to be considered for consultation* at a Cabinet meeting in 2011, the council agreeing for the site to go forward to the next stage.

The process for Field Farm to be listed as 'preferred' is long and complex. There are still a number of stages to be addressed before it can be referred to the Secretary of State as one of Broxtowe's preferred sites in the hunt to find space to meet housing quotas previously discussed within the Greater Nottingham Partnership as part of the 'Aligned Core Strategies' talks first considered in 2009.

In the intervening three years, there has been a change of government and perceptions have changed, but not the fact that land still needs to be found for new-build housing.

The meeting at The Jaguar, with the Stapleford & Trowell Rural Action Group (STRAG) in attendance, was called to inform people about the proposed housing development and let them know how to object.

A number of Broxtowe's councillors attended and Broxtowe MP Anna Soubry chaired the meeting. Questions were taken from the floor, including those relating to issues such as additional congestion on Ilkeston Road, the lack of discernable amendments to the infrastructure, unsuitability of site drainage and the lack of benefit to the community.

One gentleman said: "This is our green belt. What benefits do we receive as recompense for handing it over?"

Another gentleman said: "A number of these houses are supposed to be 'affordable' but if you look at the plans, you'll see that they are four, five and six-bedroomed. Who is going to be able to afford houses that big? We know who won't be able to afford them – the very people that they're supposed to be being built for."

As angry voices were raised, Cllr Brian Wombwell, ward councillor for Stapleford North, said: "People are being told what they want to hear and some of it isn't actually correct. Field Farm was taken off Broxtowe Borough Council's Local Plan Review in 2003, when the council stated that safeguarded land – our green belt – should be reviewed 'at a later date'. This is exactly what's happening now.

"All councillors will say they don't want to build on green belt," he continued. "But the council has also been told by the government that they need to ascertain what the building requirements are within the borough, and these figures have to be submitted to the government."

He added that the council had examined all the land available within the borough for housing potential.

Before the meeting closed, Cllr Wombwell advised the members of STRAG: "When you write your letters of objection to the council's planning department commenting on the developer's application, make sure that you factually challenge the information contained.

"Huffing and puffing will be of no use whatsoever," he ended.

NET News

by the Editor

THE Beeston Express has been (expressly!) requested to keep Beestonians informed of what's happening with Phase Two Line Three of the tram now that contracts have been awarded and construction has, to all intents and purposes, started.

We've been renewing our contacts at NET and will do our best to make sure that the information we bring you is accurate and timely – if only for the reason that there can be nothing worse than sitting in the pub on a Friday evening listening to people – who think they know everything but actually know nothing – repeat rumours and unfounded hearsay. Remember that *The Beeston Express* is neither for nor against the tram, but what we do like is FACTS.

Can I say here that, if you are one of the people who enjoys repeating unfounded rumour, just remember that a number of Beeston's older and more vulnerable residents will have their lives changed beyond all recognition by the advent of the tram. They accept that and are ready for it, and we believe there's no need for the idle talkers amongst us to add to the existing anxiety levels of those older citizens who now find themselves living in the path of the tram – let's show them some respect.

This is where NET is at to date:

- Fences have gone up and trees have come down along the

greenway between Cator Lane and Inham Road, Chilwell, and on Eskdale Drive.

- Wilkinson's asked that their compulsory purchase order (CPO) be served by Nottingham City Council's NET Project Team. Rigid time parameters for vacating premises are imposed once a CPO is served and Wilkinson's wanted to get on with the process of re-locating their 56 Beeston-based staff. The Beeston store will close on March 31, 2012. *The Beeston Express* is given to understand that negotiations are still under way to see if there is anywhere else locally that could accommodate the store in the short term, but this would be a purely commercial undertaking by Wilkinson's and is nothing to do with the CPO.
- The multi-story car park will be closed on March 31, 2012. Alternative parking arrangements are likely to remain in place whilst feasible.
- Other affected businesses in Beeston's town centre will be served their CPOs in due course, also in preparation for preliminary town centre work to start in April.
- The tram route does not affect Argos, Post News or the betting shop. How these premises are dealt with once Wilkinson's has been demolished is, as yet, undecided.
- Service diversions will begin in Beeston in February.


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