

Our Ref: MW

9 August 2013

Bob Smith  
Chairman  
Beacon Street Area Residents Association

Dear Bob,

### **Friary Outer redevelopment**

Thank you for your email dated 1 August 2013.

We welcome your interest and feedback in the Friary Outer redevelopment and would like to respond to comments raised in your email and subsequent blog post.

Developing a project on the scale of the Friary Outer redevelopment, which in its first phase includes 60 affordable homes (54 sheltered apartments and six affordable for-sale units) and a new 414 space multi-deck car park, featuring public toilets (including the first purpose-built Changing Places facility in the district) and the district's first electric charging points for vehicles, is without doubt complex.

We entered into a development agreement with S Harrison and Bromford to deliver Friary Outer scheme. Under the agreement, we anticipated the car park element would complete in spring 2013, but weather and other issues, such as utility service delays, have unavoidably delayed its completion.

The partners' primary aim is to deliver a development that will benefit the new residents, car parkers, visitors to the city and businesses for years to come, and this is what we are working to achieve. That said we keep S Harrison, the developers, under continual pressure to complete on the project as soon as practically possible, whilst not accepting any lesser quality than provided for in the specification.

In respect of the hotel element of the scheme, Lichfield District Council has no contractual responsibility to deliver this, and it is the responsibility of S Harrison. It is also important to note that the new hotel was never included in the first phase of the scheme. You are also probably aware that initially Travelodge was signed up as the hotel operator, but due to market conditions they withdrew, and had to be replaced. Together with our partners, we are delighted that Premier Inn was successfully secured, but obviously we recognise that this type of complex negotiation takes considerable time and cannot happen overnight. We are also pleased that the construction company who will build the hotel has been appointed by S Harrison and, we are told, works on the hotel site are due to start soon.

Having taken a major car park out of commission, understandably we have been concerned about the impact this could have on car park availability, which we know can impact city centre trade. Before work on the development started, we changed several short stay car parks to long stay car parks to compensate for the loss of the Friary Outer spaces, and also extended the temporary use of the University car park. Throughout the build we have regularly monitored the availability of car parking spaces in the city centre, and at no point has there been a shortage. We have also been in contact with, and worked closely with nearby businesses, to help address any impact of the works.

You are right to point out that the progress of the project and the timings of its completion have meant that changes have been made to our financial models and forecasts. That said the figure of £1.92 million for the car park element of the development has been within LDC's budget forecasts since March 2011, when we entered into the development agreement. The remainder of the funding is being provided by Bromford and the Homes and Communities Agency, who have contributed £2.4 million in order to deliver much-needed affordable homes in the city, both to help older residents but also young people to get a foot on the housing ladder. We will continue to proactively manage our budgets in line with the project.

With regards to the Friarsgate scheme, which you mention in your blog post, we are very fortunate to be working with Development Securities PLC, an international development company with a strong track record in delivering similar schemes. You will understand of course when the scheme was first conceived, and before the recession hit, that market conditions were very different. Unlike many schemes around the country which have failed as a result, we still hope to have the opportunity to deliver Friarsgate, and we will be formally reviewing progress with Development Securities PLC later this year.

Key councillors have been involved in the ongoing management of both the Friary Outer and Friarsgate schemes, and numbers of reports have been presented throughout the progress of both projects. Understandably, due to the highly commercial nature of both developments and our partners, some of these meetings have taken place in a confidential setting, but we have tried to be as open as possible to ensure people are up to date with the progress of the developments.

In addition to the Friary Outer website and updates on [www.lichfielddc.gov.uk](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk), we have included updates in inTouch our community newspaper that is sent to most local homes, in City Speak our traders' newsletter that goes out to city centre businesses, and in Headlines our partners e-newsletter. We have also issued a series of press releases about both projects. In relation to Friary Outer, we have also sent newsletters to local residents and to Bromford residents and hosted open days to allow interested people to tour the development.

Again, I would like to thank you for your interest in the Friary Outer and Friarsgate developments, and hope that I have managed to address some of your issues and concerns.

I would also like to thank you and BSARA members for your ongoing interest the development of our Local Plan.

Kind regards



Mike Wilcox  
Leader of the Council