

# THE MOORPOOL DUCK

Residents' Newsletter

Issue No. 20

August 2006

## ALL CHANGE ON THE MOORPOOL ESTATE ?

### EDITORIAL

Since the last issue of "The Duck", the Working Party looking at upgrading the conservation status of the estate has had two meetings. This issue of "The Duck" will bring you up to date on the progress being made.

As outlined in the last edition of "The Duck", the Working Party comprises members of the Residents' Association, individual residents, Council officials including the leader of the City Council and representatives of Grainger Trust.

The first meeting held in early June was open, informative and friendly and formulated the approach to the change of conservation status. The second meeting in early July began to deal in detail with some of the issues facing residents, landlord and the Council. Again a meeting held in a positive atmosphere.

At both these meetings Grainger has suggested that there is a change of approach on its behalf towards the Moorpool estate, which if fulfilled will bode well for the future of our estate - and let it be remembered that it is our estate, for it is the sum total of the residents which ultimately gives the estate its character. Without the residents it is merely a piece of real estate - with residents it is a community and a vital force for our future.

### THE JUNE MEETING

The working party acknowledged that there was a clear mandate from the earlier public meeting to pursue an upgrading of the conservation status of Moorpool (an Article 4(2) Direction). John Bateman of Grainger said that Grainger Trust was fully supportive of this.

It is hoped that the early introduction of the additional controls applying to houses will take place within a few weeks, after which there will be a six month consultation period before a final decision on the 4(2) is made.

It was noted and agreed **by all** that the standard of management and general appearance of the estate had declined in recent years and was "scruffy" in places, and also that there was a need for covenants to be enforced as regards changes to houses and gardens. Both Grainger and the Council made a commitment to actively enforce covenants in the future.

At the meeting, the Grainger representative, John Bateman, was asked by Mike Frost, the editor of "The Duck", if he would write an open letter to Residents outlining the "new" approach of Grainger towards the estate which he had outlined to the meeting. We are pleased to print it for you here.

**Letter from John Bateman, Development Director, Grainger Trust**

### New Era for Grainger Trust on the Moorpool Estate

Dear Residents of Moorpool

First of all, I'd like to say a big thank you to Mike (Editor) for allowing me to introduce myself to all the residents of Moorpool Estate via The Duck.

I joined Grainger Trust a few months ago and have spent some of that time speaking with Moorpool

residents and Birmingham City Council about some of the issues of collective concern. It's clear to me that we have a lot more to talk about. Indeed, going forward, we want there to be far more dialogue, consultation and open communication between all of us. This is something we have not done regularly in the past, and we intend to change that immediately with your help.

Moorpool Estate is a lively, special community, thanks to you. It really is a treat to see a thriving neighbourhood, looking out for one another, connected across generations and interests, through social activities, the Residents Association, The Allotment Association, the Moorpool Players, the Air Rifle Club, the Harborne Society and all the other great things that are going on, day in, day out on Moorpool.

You're proud of the history of the Estate and no wonder – it has a rich history, which some of your parents and their parents were part of. Understandably, you are anxious to preserve and in some cases restore the distinctiveness of Moorpool as a place to live. Grainger has a real responsibility to help achieve this, along with the other custodians and guardians of the Estate, principally you, the Residents Association and Birmingham City Council. The great news is that we all seem to want the same thing: homes and facilities that are looked after properly and protected from future developments that will detract from rather than add to the existing and original architecture and infrastructure. I have been really impressed at the commitment and enthusiasm that Councillor Mike Whitby, Leader of Birmingham City Council and his colleagues who specialise in Planning and Conservation, notably Phil Crabtree and Chris Hargreaves are giving the project. Together, I know we can achieve a “win win” result.

I hope you will appreciate that it is still early days for me in my new position. However, I would like to share openly with you now some of the guiding principles that Grainger will be adopting in the management of the properties we own on Moorpool. I think it also only right and proper that I take the opportunity to outline what we'd like to do, pending consultation with you, in the areas that we have an investment in.

**Sustainability:** We want to maintain a sustainable approach to all our investments in the future. We need to respect the environment, work with it and enhance it for future generations. As some of you know, we own and rent out the allotments on the Estate. We would like to upgrade the facilities for the Allotment Association and provide composting facilities, water butts and so on.

We also want to explore with you whether we can bring all of the allotment facilities together, so they're not so fragmented.

**Retaining originality:** Moorpool has some stunning buildings which need to be honoured and preserved. We will be looking to restore as many of our properties to the standard they deserve when and where possible.

**Part of the community:** Grainger, it's fair to say, has been somewhat of a passive landlord for Moorpool tenants in the past. We want this to change. We will ensure that there is a dedicated team who you can easily get hold of on a regular basis on the Estate who will be able to deliver decisions and act upon them. We own the community buildings, including Moorpool Hall and the tennis courts, and in the run up to next year's Centenary celebrations we intend to invest some TLC in these and will be sharing those ideas with you shortly.

We are also aware of the concerns about the state of the garage blocks and what our plans are for future developments. Grainger has no definite plans to discuss with you right now as to what we would like to do on either of these. It is highly likely, however, that we will want to further invest in some limited small scale development on Moorpool. We are particularly concerned about the need for some additional accommodation for older residents and are considering building some well designed accessible housing. We are also discussing with Birmingham City Council and Moorpool residents how we can help with the parking issue and create a children's play area.

I hope that we can all clear the air and pave the way for an improved relationship. We all have a vested interest in making sure Moorpool is an attractive and rewarding place to live.

If any of you would like to speak to me about any of this, please call me on 01235 433 520 or 077 300 74 235 or email me on [JBateman@graingertrust.co.uk](mailto:JBateman@graingertrust.co.uk).

I look forward to meeting more of you in good time and working with you going forward.

Kind regards

John Bateman

*At the same meeting Councillor Mike Whitby, Leader of the Council and Harborne Councillor was also asked by your editor to make a contribution to “The Duck” as to the Council's viewpoint. He wrote as follows:-*

I was delighted to Chair the first meeting of the Moorpool Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan Steering Group in early June. The mood of all the members, both the residents and Grainger was frank, open and friendly.

There is clearly a positive desire from everyone to move forward with the aim of ensuring that the unique beauty of the Moorpool Estate is maintained and that it remains a highly desirable area to live.

As we progress we may well have alternative views based on differing experiences. However, I know we are all determined to grasp this opportunity as the centenary of the Estate approaches.

As your local Councillor, and Leader of the City Council, I will ensure it plays its part through the planning process, the provision of services and the management of the public realm in working for the improvement of the area.

Cllr Mike Whitby  
Leader of Birmingham City Council  
Harborne Ward

*The general consensus at the end of the Working Party meeting was that it had been very positive and hopefully seemed to mark a new beginning in relationships between the landlord of the estate and the residents.*

### **THE JULY MEETING**

*The second meeting of the Working Party looked in some detail at the problems of allotment provision and use as well as at the condition and provision of garages. Two smaller groups were set up to look into these questions and report back to the September meeting.*

*The progress towards the Article 4(2) Direction being implemented continues. Chris Hargreaves, Head of Conservation (Birmingham City Council) explains the procedure in the following paragraph.*

### **Moorpool Article 4(2) Direction**

A draft report has now been prepared recommending to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration that the Article 4(2) Direction be introduced. As soon as the legal documents have been prepared the official notices will be published in the form of a Public Notice in the local press and in the London Gazette, the official government newspaper, together with a letter to all householders and property owners. It is at this point that the new Conservation status takes effect and the City Council will be in a position to take action and require planning applications for work covered by the Direction.

*It is hoped that this recommendation and subsequent procedure will take place in the next few weeks.*

*During the course of the meeting, Phil Nelson, (Grainger's Regional Manager for Harborne) explained some of Grainger's intentions as regards the future of rented property on the estate. The "Duck" asked him to explain in more detail. Here is his reply.*

### **Grainger announces 5-year Refurbishment Project**

At the meeting of the Moorpool Estate Working Party on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July, Grainger announced plans for the refurbishment of its remaining tenanted houses and flats on the Moorpool Estate over the next 5 years.

We have been working towards these plans over the last twelve months. Using the flats on The Circle as an initial project, we have worked with Steven King, the Principal Conservation Officer for Birmingham City Council, to agree external refurbishment works, including new double glazed timber window frames that retain the original character of the building and will improve the living conditions for our tenants. Work will commence on site over the next few weeks. Furthermore, the success of this project has enabled us to allocate funding for the refurbishment of our remaining houses and flats on the Moorpool Estate over a 5-year period starting in 2007, exactly 100 years on from the commencement of the original 5-year-build programme

that was completed in 1912. The refurbishment will be specific to each property, with tenants consulted on the works to be undertaken.

In addition, Grainger has been working closely with a provider of the Government backed Warm Front Scheme, which provides heating and insulation in homes occupied by qualifying tenants. Many of our properties on the Moorpool Estate have already been surveyed and some of our tenants are already benefiting from improved insulation in their homes. We are now entering into discussions with a provider of the Scheme to assess qualification for the provision of central heating and will release further details as they become available.

We believe that the reinvestment planned for our properties on the Moorpool Estate demonstrates our commitment to the area and our long-term tenants.

Our aim is to retain the character and design of our houses and flats, whilst improving the standard of living of our tenants and contributing to an overall scheme that will prepare the Moorpool Estate for the next 100 years.

*The remainder of the meeting was taken up with a consideration of the coming Centenary of the Estate. Plans and ideas for this are taking shape and the next issue of the Duck will tell you more. It will also report back on the third Working Party meeting.*

***and now ...***

***NOT ONLY*** Conservation News ....

***BUT ALSO*** .....

*Much ... Much ... More*

### **CENTENARY PLANS**

*The Centenary Celebrations of the estate we hope will cover the period 2007 - 2012 to match the original building of the estate from "first sod cutting" in October 1907 to the completion of the estate in 1912.*

*Many suggestions have been made as to various ways of marking this historic event including a Firework Display, an Oral History project to gather reminiscences, a traditional Summer Fair with Maypole, pig roast etc. It is hoped that Commemorative publications will be produced and that a permanent archive of photographs, memorabilia and memories will be created.*

*The Residents' Association would welcome any input from Residents (older and younger, newer and long established) as to any ways they would like to see the Anniversary be celebrated. We hope to involve the children of the estate in various ways. If you have children see if they have any thoughts and ideas to tell us. If you would like to help either practically or with ideas please contact the Duck's Editor (Mike Frost) at 1, Carless Avenue (Tel: 427 1235)*

### **DISABLED PARKING**

*"The Duck" has been asked to highlight the problem of parking for the disabled. For residents with a major disability, being able to park outside their houses is obviously very important, and the Council has marked out a few special parking places on the estate for disabled residents. Parking is not easy for any of us on the estate but a little thought and help for the disabled with this problem would be appreciated.*

### **MOORPOOL WEBSITE**

*The website is available on [www.moorpool.com](http://www.moorpool.com) but is not fully operational yet - "under construction" we believe is the correct phraseology. Hopefully by mid September it will be completely up and running.*

### **AGM**

*The Resident's Association AGM will take place in early autumn (see next Duck for date).*

### **FINAL EDITORIAL QUACK!**

*Conservation Progress? So far so good? Hopefully yes. The attitudes of the various parties are very positive - all seem to be working for the good of the estate. We have the right to be cautious about proffered changes but will support and work to the limit for those which truly benefit our estate.*

*The Duck wishes you a very Happy Summer to enjoy our lovely estate.*