

UPDATE

on
Timeline.

Please note, this timeline was written at the request of a friend who was completing a degree at Derby University, and wanted a local residents viewpoint,--- as she put it!--- “warts and all” as to what had occurred in Osmaston over the last few years.

It is important to be aware that significant changes have taken place since this letter was written in 2011.

For example, OSCAR has negotiated, and been instrumental in obtaining funding and planning consent for the Tennyson Street play area.

Involvement in the proposed B.M.X. track to be situated at the junction of Cotton Lane/Osmaston Road.

Work is about to start on the building of OSCAR homes on the Elton Road, and Glossop Street quadrant.

Oscar is also involved in discussions and planning regarding turning the former Roll-Royce commercial block, (Marble Hall) into a major asset for the residents of Osmaston.

Installation of outer cladding on the “steel houses” in Elton Road is about to take place, again, this was made possible by the involvement of OSCAR.

It is to be hoped that the excellent working relationship that has emerged between OSCAR, and Councillors and Council Officers will continue into the future, as this has to be a perfect example of what can be achieved if the right people, and the right Councillors/Council Officers come together at the right time.

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Any observations made on the current situation in Osmaston since the disbanding of the original regeneration team would, in the interest of clarity have to include a "timeline" dating from the year 2000. The reason for this opinion is that many factors have come into play over the passing years, and to try and give a fair and unbiased view that is both coherent and easily understood by the reader would be extremely difficult without sufficient "background" being included.

In the summer of the year 2000, letters were received from the City Council by tenants and owners of the "steel houses" in Elton Rd, Glossop St, Hawthorn St, and Cotton Lane, asking resident views on the future of the houses.

Further consultation letters gave tenants three options -

1. Leave the houses as they were,
2. refurbish the houses, and increase the rent by approximately £8.50.
3. demolish the houses, re house the tenants and pay them £1.500.00.

At the time unemployment in the area was probably running at about 70/80% and obviously many tenants who had only recently moved into the area, or had no ties or interest in Osmaston, opted for demolition, in total 92 perfectly habitable homes were demolished whilst Government statistics claimed that there were 60.000 homeless in the U.K, which included those in bed and breakfast.

The reason given for this course of action was that, " a tenant in Glossop St had complained that there was asbestos in the houses" (sealed and safe). Strong protest were made by residents who possessed community spirit, and surprisingly some homes were left standing,

Demolition started on the 92 houses in October 2001 , and was completed by autumn 2002. An intensive series of consultations took place, and the decision was that local residents wanted "Open Space" and housing.

July/ August 2003, further consultation by Groundwork Erewash.

December 2003, Cabinet decided to sell the land to Derwent Housing/Lovells, Start on construction anticipated March 2005.

Spring 2004 Groundwork Erewash carried out further consultation

.August 2004, decision made that, 15 rented properties, 25 shared ownership, and 10 outright sale to be erected on the Glossop St site, with open space in the centre of the development.

Elton Rd to be open space with some housing to be on the northern part fronting Cotton Lane.

It is the writers view that up to October 2004, anti Council/apathy /anger in the Elton Road/Cotton Lane area was at a minimum, due to the fact that residents felt that they had contributed to the various consultations, and had actually been listened to over the planning and development of the vacant sites.

January 2002, Gypsy/Traveller's occupy the car park at St Bart's Church Addison Rd

August /September 2004, Travellers leave St Barts, some camp on Ascot Dve, main party leaves Osmaston and camps on land owned by Railway company on Bateman St.

October 2004, local residents predicting that the Travellers would break into the Glossop St site if Rail Company successful in removing them from Bateman St.

Late October 2004, Travellers removed lock of gateway to Glossop St site and took possession of land,

Very angry scenes took place, the whole episode was videoed, the police were told by the Traveller to "go away" but not in those words, and they did, much to the complete disgust of local residents who had gathered at the gateway in an attempt to stop the Traveller incursion.

The number of Travellers increased rapidly , from initially 8 vans, it increased to 13, then 18, and stabilizing at 30 plus, fly tipping started within days.

In the following months many complaints were made by residents who's homes overlooked the site about tipping , anti social behaviour, noise, Etc, it later transpired that non of these complaints had been recorded.

The general thought amongst resident was that the Travellers would move on once building work commenced on the site.

January/February 2005, residents informed that Travellers could not be moved from the Glossop St site before a pending court case due to be held in Leeds,

if the Travellers lost the case then they could be removed from the site.

March 2006, Travellers lose Leeds case.

April 2006, residents informed by council officer that Travellers to stay on Glossop St due to the "Human Rights Act".

April 2006, to September 2007, questions and complaints made by residents at neighbourhood forum meetings regarding the state of the Glossop Street site.

December 2006 Travellers submit Planning application for Glossop St,

September 2007, A consultancy firm called CDNplanning instructed by the City council to carry out an assessment of 12 sites in Derby suitable for a Travellers site, 5

of them were in Osmaston!

October 2007, CDNplanning recommended the only privately owned site at Russell St, despite claiming that the site did not meet the Councils own search criteria!

--- also that if Government recommendations over size per pitch were followed, then the site was only large enough for 5 pitches!

Pitch size was reduced to enable 14 pitches, later I believe that there was a rethink on design, and it is now claimed that the site will accommodate 17 pitches.

November 2007 A.G.O. formed (action group Osmaston) by local residents who were outraged by the apparent lack of concern over the situation that had been allowed to fester in Osmaston.

E.G. ---impossible for tenants to obtain an exchange, Homeowners having difficulty selling due to illegal Travellers site, Conflicting answers from different council departments, which gave a distinct impression that, "the left hand did not know what the right hand was doing," most of the time.

It is the writers view that the events that took place in Osmaston between November 2004, and to date, serve as a perfect example of how to ruin any community spirit and eliminate any social cohesion that had previously existed in the area.

The final insult to residents was when a document entitled - CHIEF OFFICER GROUP, GLOSSOP STREET, ASSESSMENT OF SUITABILITY AS A TRAVELLERS SITE. Dated 9th March 2005 surfaced.

This 6 page document discussed in detail the suitability of the site for not just the Travellers who were camped illegally on Glossop St, but potentially using the whole site to include transit Travellers.

Any respect, confidence, and goodwill that might have existed with residents rapidly disappeared, it was obvious that some Councillors, and also Council Officers, over the last 2 years, had, to say the least, been "economical with the truth", --- we had been misled, "conned", deceived.

I think it fair to say that after this experience, many local residents had nothing but complete contempt and distrust for anything Council related.

And in all honesty ,----- Who could blame them?.

In October 2009 it was reported in the Derby Evening Telegraph that Medan Valley Making Places had been employed by the City Council, to work with local residents who, "had got it in for the Council".

Whoever had made the decision to put the regeneration team into Osmaston, obviously were completely out of touch with the current depth of feeling and apathy that the regeneration team came up against.

At this point it should be made clear that the "Osmaston Triangle" including Victory

Road and adjacent side streets should be viewed as 4 areas, each area having its "own problems".

For example, area 1, incorporating part of Abingdon St, Grosvenor St, Handel St, has problems with absentee landlords, plus the area is "blighted" by the imposition of the Travellers site, which will affect the selling potential of home owners.

Area 2, Elton Rd, Cotton Lane, Crowshaw St, Abingdon St, Witney Cls, is in close proximity to the illegal site on Glossop St, and residents lives have not been made easy over the last 6 years by the activities that have been allowed to take place there by the City Council.

Areas 3 and 4 have differing problems from areas 1 and 2, and due to distance were probably not aware of areas 1 and 2's problems, equally, it is fair to say that residents of areas 1 and 2 know very little of 3 and 4's problems.

This is the situation that Meden valley stepped into, initially there was a reluctance from any one from area 1 and 2 to become involved with the regeneration team, Plans to build housing on the land that residents expectations were, that the land would be "Open Space" and a play area, as per the outcome of the many consultations really rubbed salt into the wound.

However, it was obvious that at some stage that it would be sensible to become involved in the proceedings, if only to try and avoid mistakes that had been made in the past.

A visit by local residents to a regeneration development in Solihull took place, it has to be said that visually the houses were, in the main, very appealing, the down side was, the size of the rooms! The vision of a local resident laying prone on her back, arms outstretched, on a dust covered floor exclaiming "and just where the hell am I supposed to put the kids things?" is a memory that will stay with me for ever.

As time went on, taking into account different factors, for example, the imposition of the Travellers site in the "gateway" to Osmaston.

The possibility of 2 Incinerators in the area, one situated in Victory Rd, the other in Sinfin Lane, (under appeal).

combined with Rolls-Royce's concern that the Traveller issue had not been resolved as they had been led to believe that the Glossop St site was not suitable for a Travellers site, and,----- in Rolls Royce's objection to the Russell St planning application,----- "that the establishment of a Travellers site on a key frontage and part of the land to be released by R-R, must constrain the markets interest in embracing the area and creating imaginative, attractive and viable redevelopment options. This not only harms the interest of R-R but also sends out an inappropriate signal to those private sector parties which the City Council expects to take an active interest in the wide-ranging opportunities in the area."

Add to this mix a rapidly failing economy and it was "odds on" that the regeneration of Osmaston would have to be put on "hold".

And what of the future?

An honest appraisal of the area would be, that any attempt to regenerate Osmaston could be described as to trying to make a silk purse out of a pigs ear.

In saying that, I hasten to point out that the responsibility for this situation lies with Councillors from all three political party's, who have over the years, been more than happy to ignore the plight of Osmaston, and used it as a convenient dumping ground, aided and abetted by Council Officers,----- not exactly a praiseworthy state of affairs!

A view of Osmaston via Google Earth will show that Osmaston is enclosed by industry on 3 sides ,

The remaining "open view" or green corridor is likely to be lost to the Proposed T12 development, plus the 300 acre Chellaston Business park!. (now renamed Global Technology Cluster), If these proposed schemes come to fruition, the already extremely poor air quality, and linked health problems that a great many Sinfin/Osmaston residents suffer from will surely increase add to this the possibility that R.R.S could be successful in their planning appeal against the proposed Incinerator on Sinfin Lne, which would mean 400 Hgv's a day negotiating Victory Rd, Sinfin Lne, Wilmore Rd, and Osmaston Park Rd, in addition to the increase in traffic volume from the aforementioned proposed developments on Sinfin Moor.

With the best will in the world, the writer cannot visualize eager developers queuing up to invest in an area who's main attractions are likely to be, a Travellers Site, 2 Incinerators, the poorest air quality in Derby, the potential for major traffic problems, and to cap it all, the application to build a large supermarket on the Allenton Market site, which has the definite potential to cause "instant gridlock".

Occasionally , the expression "The lunatics have taken over the Asylum", comes to mind!

Ideally,---from the writers viewpoint, the future for Osmaston would see :

A new School, the existing one in Nightingale Rd is well past its "sell by date"

A Medical Centre, identical to the one situated at Coleman St.

The land adjoining the new housing on Elton Rd being used for a play area and recreational use, thus proving to local resident that they have been listened to.

Housing on the (hopefully) vacated Glossop St site, with decent size gardens, it is worth bearing in mind that gardens can be used for recreational purposes and not just for cultivation, there is no substitute for secure safe space with appropriate toys when babysitting young children, and this duty seems to becoming more the responsibility of Grandparents due to economic pressure on parents , plus the considerable cost of Childcare/nursery

Ideally more stringent management of housing stock, irrespective of which association manages the property!

Annual inspection of homes, damage to fixture and fittings through neglect or deliberate act to be charged to the tenant. also longer probationary periods of tenancy.

The one and only children's play area in the Osmaston triangle was closed in 2007, closely followed by the Community centre, and multi purpose sports area. It is of paramount importance that maximum effort should be made to supply somewhere for local "teenagers" to meet and socialize, other than on street corners, as is the situation at present

Explore the possibility of a bus service serving Victory Rd and Elton Rd, possibly incorporating it into an existing service.

Lastly, Exploring the possibility of a joint venture between Rolls-Royce and the City Council, to exploit Derby's "best kept secret" to the maximum.

The promotion of the R.R. heritage Centre into a world class tourist magnet.

The only positive and moral raising thing to have happened in Osmaston in recent years, has to be the formation of O.S.C.A.R. comprising of genuine local people who have only the wish to see Osmaston regenerated. All unpaid volunteers, freely giving up their own time with no thought of power, or financial gain, who, with the guidance of a former Council Officer and Derby Homes staff hope to make a difference in Osmaston, in fact , a big difference. In a relativity short time we have already seen the formation of a neighbourhood watch scheme, which will possibly be the largest in the U.K.

Moves are afoot to have fencing erected around an "oasis" of bushes trees on Cotton Lne, which has attracted "fly tippers".

The possible building of a much needed children's play area on land by Mowbray Gardens, is also attributable to O.S.C.A.R., all this achieved in under 6months!

It can only be hoped that the enthusiasm of O.S.C.A.R. members filters down to Council Officers, and Councillors, and that joint effort will lead to the improvement of Osmaston in the future.