

To: Harborough District Council Executive  
From: Bitteswell Parish Council

### MAGNA PARK PANEL GRANT

1. On behalf of the residents of Bitteswell, the Parish Council is disappointed to learn of the Executive's decision of 3 July, reiterating the Magna Park Panel's allocation of £10,000 to a woodland planting project, as originally determined in April 2000. We are concerned especially as our original proposals submitted in 1999 identified investment in traffic calming measures as our first priority. This was rejected both initially in 2000 and again more recently when we requested reconsideration in the light of adversely changed circumstances.
2. In the view of village residents, means of inhibiting excessive speed of an increasing volume of traffic is both an essential health and safety measure and a matter of ensuring compliance with the legal speed limit of 30 miles per hour which applies within the village boundary. The woodland project, on the other hand, is viewed as a desirable amenity, by no means essential to the well being of the community. This is particularly the case as our local landscape is already well-provided with tree plantations and the visual screening provided by the integral landscaping of Magna Park will enhance this further, when fully grown for the longer term.
3. Bitteswell Parish Councillors have consistently raised the problem of traffic control as a main priority. Our village is bisected by the main road between Ullesthorpe and Lutterworth and bears not only local traffic but also the additional volume of workforce commuting traffic using the road as a 'rat-run' to Magna Park. This is the most problematic consequence of the Magna Park development for Bitteswell, with the pressure of traffic through our village increasing substantially with every new site development. Residents endure not only significantly increased numbers of cars, vans and motor cycles, but also an increasing incidence of speeds in excess of 35 mph. We are especially concerned about our children and our elderly residents. The main road runs through our village green where young children play daily, our primary school is only about 30m from the main road, and there is a residential home for geriatric care nearby. There has already been one serious accident involving a 78-year old resident and the incidence of vehicle collisions is increasing.
4. While Leicestershire County Council has offered helpful advice on suitable traffic calming measures, their officers have had to refer the problem of funding directly back to us, as Bitteswell does not feature in the County's traffic planning budgets. The police are sympathetic to our needs, but are unable to give us a priority for speed monitoring and control, owing to other demands on their scarce resources for this purpose. In this context, we notice particularly that the danger of excessive speeds and increasing traffic through villages is a common concern throughout the County and that the County Council is stepping up means of monitoring and control. Given the increased demand for traffic calming measures, however, as a small village (population about 450) Bitteswell is unlikely to be accorded a higher priority ranking in the foreseeable future. We continue to believe, therefore, that

we have raise our own funding in order to respond to our community's identified needs.

5. Since the original grant allocation, we have consulted your officers about our concerns and were reassured that they found our request for re-consideration reasonable. The chronology of events relating to the grant are as follows:
  - October 1998: initial discussions with HDC Chief Executive about the funding provision for those communities most directly affected by the substantial impact of Magna Park development (Lutterworth, Cotesbach, Bitteswell, Ullesthorpe and Ashby Parva)
  - January 1999: submission of Bitteswell's proposals for funding (i) traffic calming measures, (£56,000 total) and (ii) Bitteswell Wood (£50,250)
  - June 1999: amplification of proposals
  - Dec 1999: Meeting with officers to discuss submissions
  - May 2000: following final meeting of Magna Park Panel, confirmed that traffic calming proposal refused, Bitteswell Wood funded at £10,000 (20% total cost, to be activated within 3-years)
  - October 2000: Parish Council meeting with officers to discuss means of drawing down grant
  - January 2001: Parish Council letter requesting total grant to be made available as initial lump sum, in order to initiate land purchase
  - March 2001; meeting between all Parishes and officers to explore landscaping / visual screening of Magna Park and disposition of funds
  - May 2001: Bitteswell problem of land acquisition and suggested grant funding to be re-allocated to traffic calming
  - June 2001: meeting with officers, when agreed that request to re-allocate funds was reasonable, subject to written submission
  - July and September 2001: Meeting of Parishes with officers plus Gazeley Ltd, on Unilateral Agreement funding re. Costco site, when agreed that re-allocation of funds to traffic calming was reasonable
  - August and September 2001: letters to HDC officers seeking clarification and confirmation (Costco funding)
  - January 2002: letter to officers formalising request to reallocate funding to traffic calming measures; Executive meeting finds request "inappropriate" and seeks further meeting between officers and parishes concerned
  - February 2002: letter to officers seeking meeting date and re-iterating request for grant reallocation
  - May 2002: meeting takes place, but only one member from Bitteswell can attend on the date fixed; agreed to seek further professional advice from landscape consultant
  - June 2002: letter to officers re-iterating request to utilise grant funding for traffic calming
  - 3/7/02: Executive meeting rejects reallocation of funding and requires work to start on Bitteswell Wood project by 31/3/03
6. Against this background, we feel frustrated that the views of our residents are not being heard or given the support that they merit. We believe, as others do locally (see Lutterworth Mail, 8 August), that attention should be paid to needs and

priorities expressed by the local community and that it is not reasonable to confine the additional funding pledged by Magna Park developers to visual screening of the site (which in any case should be adequately planned as a condition of development). In the face of this, we find it difficult to understand the Executive's decisions, denying the priority identified by our residents. The ultimate irony will be if HDC members seem to claw-back our grant allocation so that Bitteswell, as the closest settlement to Magna Park (which is only 1 mile away, the main part of the site being within our Parish boundary), achieves no benefit of the funding allocated for the alleviation of pressures on our community.

7. We suggest that reallocation of the grant to traffic calming measures is justified especially by the changed circumstances which prevail now compared to the situation at the time of your original allocation of this crucial grant. We seek, therefore, your reconsideration of this issue both in terms of the purpose of the grant and the deadline of 31 March 2003 now applied.

Shiela Carlton,  
Chairman, Bitteswell Parish Council  
9 August 2002