

WGRA Westgate Residents Association, Chichester

Westgate, Henty Gardens, Mount Lane, St Bartholomew's Close, Tannery Close

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Acting Chair Sarah Quail highlights key events

After last year's AGM, life continued pretty much as normal for a few brief months. **We held Christmas Carols for the first time at Marriott House on Wednesday 11 December 2019 followed by a supper at the *Crate and Apple*.** While carols at Marriott House may not have had the atmosphere of St Bartholomew's Church, it was an occasion which was much appreciated by residents and staff, and in the light of what was to come, we must be grateful for what we could do that night for them because **by late March, the country- and Marriott House - was in lockdown because of Covid-19. This had a profound effect on our lives. Startingly, there was no traffic in Westgate to speak of initially! And there were no school children meandering twice a day along the street. The *Crate and Apple* closed and with it our Saturday coffee mornings, Monday knit and natter meetings, and French conversation sessions over a glass of wine.** Marriott House self-isolated and for many weeks our social highlight was Clapping for Carers with the rest of the nation on our respective doorsteps, and shouted greetings to neighbours and friends. However, ingenuity knows no bounds and soon our Thursday evening doorstep gatherings were enlivened by music from both the Higham family in Mount Lane and the Smith family's soloists and quartet halfway down Westgate. And we cheered the few vehicles making their way carefully along Westgate, particularly police cars and fire engines who all waved back cheerfully!

In the meantime, the officers and committee had business to do. **It was no longer possible to meet in one another's houses and we scrambled to master Zoom meetings.** In due course, as the evenings lengthened and warmed up, we met, suitably distanced, in our back gardens. The Westgate Helpers were established to help older and self-isolating neighbours, and their excellent *Newsletters* were a timely reminder that there is life 'Over the Rainbow' and beyond the pandemic. The *Crate and Apple* returned to business in late summer, freshly painted inside and with geraniums and pretty twinkling lights outside. Sadly, social distancing rules preclude our resuming WGRA activities there yet but as soon as we can, we shall do so.

Richard Brownfield retired as Chair in July 2020 and I should like to place on record here our thanks for all that Richard did to revive the fortunes of the WGRA over the last five years. His energy and enthusiasm have been key to creating this community of Westgate and its adjacent streets.

At our September committee meeting I agreed to take over from Richard as Acting Chair until the AGM. At that meeting, the committee also resolved to establish **a devolved system of governance.** Briefly, four sub-groups have been established to manage current business. They are Planning and Traffic, Community, Social (the Beaux-Belles!), and Communications. We have established these groups for two main reasons. Firstly, we want to better develop the way we manage and deliver our business and, more importantly, we want to encourage more of you to participate in the life of the WGRA particularly those of you who do not have the time or inclination to stand for the committee.

As I said in a recent Bulletin, we need more active members as the pressures on our community are growing: White House Farm Phases 1 and 2 including not only where the Southern Access Road (SAR) is likely to be aligned but also the spine road through the estate which has the potential to become a western bypass; the possible relocation of Bishop Luffa School to a site on the other side of Centurion Way and what this might mean for our street; other traffic issues including the perennial problem of speeding traffic on Westgate; the ChEm Route (Chichester to Emsworth cycle route along the A259) and its implications for both cyclists and pedestrians and, of course, resurgent Covid-19 issues. My colleagues discuss all these issues in their sections below.

Finally, on your behalf, I must thank the committee for the considerable amount of work which they do for you, and those of them who are standing down at the AGM. As well as Richard Brownfield, both Fin Letts and Anthony Quail have resigned due to work pressures. Fin has agreed however to remain as our website facilitator. Lastly, and by no means least, **we also say farewell to Penny Tomlinson who is giving up her job as Planters supremo**, again due to other work commitments. Thanks to Penny and her team of gardening assistants (and a grant from Chichester City Council), the planters on Westgate were replanted, kept trim and have provided us all with welcome, seasonal displays. I am delighted to report that Rosy Turner has agreed to take Penny's place.

I must also thank you, the membership, for your continuing support of the WGRA.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary Bebette Jones reports

Committee - The following were elected to the Committee for another year at the last AGM on 23 November 2019:-

Chair:	Richard Brownfield
Secretary:	Bebette Jones
Treasurer:	Vince Waldron
Committee Members:	Brian Raincock, Julia Smith, Sarah Quail, Anthony Quail, Finan Letts

During the year Gabrielle Abbott joined the Committee on 31 January; Richard Brownfield stood down as Chair on 20 July, and Sarah Quail was appointed Acting Chair on 7 September. Fin Letts resigned on 2 September. However, he will continue as Website Facilitator.

Committee meetings - 7 meetings were held on:-
31 January; 16 March; 11 May by Zoom; 13 July by Zoom; 21 July (Extraordinary Committee Meeting);
7 September by Zoom and 26 October by Zoom.

Bulletins and Newsletters - In the course of the year we have sent out by email 10 WGRA Bulletins and 16 Westgate Helpers Newsletters.

We have 136 households on our Residents List who receive our emails at present.

PLANNING AND TRAFFIC

Lead Gabrielle Abbott reports

Whitehouse Farm Development

Phase I

Following a pause in construction due to Covid 19, construction work restarted in June and it is anticipated that show homes will be opened for viewing early next year.

Off-site traffic works relating to Westgate have largely been agreed. The main outstanding item is the Westgate/Orchard Street junction where the roundabout was to be replaced with traffic lights. With help from West Walls RA (for which we are very grateful) we have been opposing this for some time.

We are pleased to say that at the September meeting of the Infrastructure Steering Group alternatives to the traffic lights were considered. A Dutch-style roundabout was found to be the best option as it retains a roundabout (albeit smaller) but offers improved safety for both cyclists and pedestrians. This is subject to satisfactory traffic modelling. For plans and more on this please see the October Bulletin posted online on the WGRA website.

Phase II

Southern Access Road (SAR)

We understand from our councillors that the developers are now moving ahead with Phase II and an outline planning application is expected within the next 12 months. A key part of this will be the proposed route of the SAR which forms the southern section of the development spine road.

As well as serving the development this spine road will effectively act as a western bypass providing a through route for traffic between Old Broyle Road and south-west Chichester including the A27. We have been lobbying against the routing of the SAR along Westgate. To avoid this it seems that the SAR would need to link into Cathedral Way which in itself will have significant implications for the western end of Westgate.

We have asked to be given the opportunity to comment on the proposed plans at the earliest possible stage and will keep you updated.

Bishop Luffa Land Swap

A proposal has been put forward for a land swap between the developers and Bishop Luffa school. Under this proposal the developers would acquire the existing school site for redevelopment and a new school would be constructed for Bishop Luffa on land to the west of Centurion Way. The Bishop Luffa site would be redeveloped with 300 low cost homes. Whilst a new school would potentially bring significant benefits this proposal would lead to intensification of the proposed development and commensurate reduction in green space possibly including the proposed country park. We have expressed our concern about the significant impact of this additional development on Westgate residents.

Tackling speeding

We are pleased to say that initiatives are now underway to help counter speeding along Westgate and within our neighbouring communities.

David Thornley has kindly taken on the mantle of getting our Westgate community speedwatch programme up and running again. Parklands RA have put in a bid to Chichester City Council for a grant for a moveable Speed Indicator Device (SID) to help reduce speeding. They have also launched a crowdfunding project for a second SID. These SIDs would be deployed by community volunteers on a rotating basis across Chichester to tackle speeding problems in residential areas.

ChEm Route

Julia Smith reports

Discussions have accelerated recently regarding the ChEm route (the planned upgrade for the Chichester to Emsworth cycle route). This has been in the pipeline for over ten years and finally Highways England are funding this from 2021 with a draft design published and consultation planned for later this Autumn. Your WGRA Planning and Traffic group are already engaged with Highways England and the various Chichester cycle groups. From a Westgate perspective, we are trying to balance the ChEm route designs against the ongoing s106 plans whilst also trying to enhance the existing measures to control speeding, restrict the volume of traffic and protect the streetscape of our residential road.

We have responded so far to Highways England to highlight this position, in particular that Westgate is the gateway for cyclists and pedestrians to and from the city of Chichester and is much used given the walking and cycling links to Centurion Way, Salterns Way and ChEm route as well as the links to Whitehouse Farm.

We have opposed any concept of shared cycleway and pedestrian paths on Westgate and amongst other points have flagged that any ChEm route planning should not indirectly support any subsequent proposal to route the Southern Access Road along the western stretch of Westgate. We are also using our Westgate Traffic Principles to campaign that any cycle paths, signage and other infrastructure is designed in sympathy with the residential nature of our neighbourhood, part of which is a conservation area.

COMMUNITY

Lead Kathryn Kellagher reports

Back in early March, my family was looking forward to my parents' visit from Leicester to watch our girls perform in their school musical, *Sister Act*. By the weekend of 14 March, it was clear that none of this would happen. Although we were not yet in full lockdown, things felt like they were closing in and I seemed to spend much of my spare time cancelling or postponing. Shop shelves were emptying and suddenly just doing the weekly shop became a challenge.

I remember reading the Sunday paper on 15 March and hearing about community groups that were popping up all over the country to help their more vulnerable neighbours. It made sense to me that we should establish our own community group as an offshoot of the WGRA, which was already known and trusted by our residents. Our WGRA committee was very supportive and, within a couple of days, we had put together a flyer and set ourselves up as the Westgate Helpers, with around 30 residents signed up as volunteers.

We see Westgate Helpers as a friendly helping hand to offer local and trusted support when people's usual networks fall through. Neighbours were contacted by email (where possible) and hand delivery of

flyers, where we promoted our dedicated email address, westgatehelp2020@gmail.com and telephone number, 07731 198693. I worked with a tireless and loyal core team (Bridget Hicks, Louise Higham and Julia Smith) and together we worked on a daily rota to take calls and answer emails, matching up volunteers with requests for help. At our busiest, we were helping 15 households with shopping or prescriptions. We are incredibly grateful to our wonderful volunteers who responded positively to all requests; they quietly and kindly set about helping their neighbours, some for several months.

It became clear to us that the need for this practical help would diminish as our neighbours became more successful in securing on-line deliveries. We saw our role evolving to be more about morale-boosting: keeping in touch with our residents and being their connection to the wider community. To this end, we decided to create the Westgate Helpers Newsletter. We wanted this to be informative, practical, community-based and, most importantly, positive. We put together 16 editions over the course of the lockdown. Our final one went out on 28 August and showcased the results of the sunflower competition!

As things begin to close in once more, please do contact us if you need help. We are still here.

SOCIAL

Lead Brian Raincock reports

With the shortest report on record because due to the pandemic nothing has happened since the Christmas festivities last year and whilst a booking has been made at the Crate & Apple for Wednesday 16th December 2020, we are not sure whether this will be possible and what form it might take – more in due course! Thereafter, regrettably, nothing is yet planned, other than the Street Party on The Queen's 95th Birthday, Saturday, 12th June 2021.

The BB's remain optimistic however that life will return to normal sometime in 2021 and are looking for new opportunities for enjoyment. One or two people have kindly offered their support to the team but at present there is little opportunity for us all to get together.

COMMUNICATIONS

Lead Louise Higham reports

After the July committee meeting and prompted by the success of the Westgate Helpers Newsletter, a small group of committee members and Westgate Helpers was deputed to look at how we might better address the whole issue of communicating with members. Recent experience suggested that what members wanted to know about was essentially information relating to planning and traffic issues as they affect Westgate and its adjoining streets, community issues (Westgate Helpers) and social events (the Beaux-Belles). This in turn informed committee thinking and we have not only redesigned and repurposed our publications into a more substantial monthly *Bulletin* and an *Annual Report* but have also played our part in introducing the devolved system of governance discussed in the Acting Chair's introductory section.