

WGRA Westgate Residents Association, Chichester

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

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

KEY ISSUES

The lockdowns continued...

As last year's AGM took place on Saturday 14 November 2020 – by Zoom , we were beginning the second national lockdown. There was a brief respite of sorts at Christmas 2020 before we were locked down once again – for the third time - in early January 2021. This last lockdown did not ease until early March 2021 and was particularly irksome for everyone. People need people, and the long, dark evenings and cold weather were depressing. All plans were abandoned for our usual Christmas carols and readings, and supper at the *Crate and Apple*. Also, social distancing rules and regulations meant that once the third lockdown lifted in March 2021, we were unable to resume our regular programme of *Crate and Apple* events: coffee mornings, Monday morning knit and natter sessions, and French conversation until much later in the year in Autumn 2021.

However, our Zoom skills continued to improve and there was little let up in the amount of business which needed to be addressed including the following key issues.

The Southern Access Road

You will know if you have read our monthly *Bulletin* that Whitehouse Farm (WHF) developers, Miller Vistry, published their proposals for the Southern Access Road (SAR) in late June in a public online consultation in two-hour sessions held over three weeks. It is no exaggeration to say that we, the WGRA Executive Committee; you, the membership; our councillors and the adjoining Residents Associations and their memberships, were appalled. Put bluntly, the proposals are dangerous, do nothing to alleviate current capacity and congestion issues, and are based on dubious calculations about likely future use of the series of interchanges proposed for the area to the south of the current Sherborne Road roundabout.

We objected to these proposals on your behalf, and we encouraged you, the membership, to object as well. Objections also rained into Miller Vistry from the adjoining residents associations and their members. We learned that Miller Vistry put in a pre-application to West Sussex County Council (WSCC), probably in September. At this stage WSCC would have discussed with Miller Vistry and looked for answers to the issues raised by objectors. We understood that formal planning permission would be sought shortly after these discussions, but we have yet to hear anything from the developer or from WSCC despite our questioning of WSCC officers.

Traffic mitigation

The route of the SAR in phase 2 of the WHF development is of particular concern to Westgate residents. Some improvements (preserving the Orchard Street roundabout and some enhancements to the cycle route and bollards) were secured as part of phase 1 but have yet to be actioned. The current SAR proposals (for the SAR to join Sherborne Road at a T junction close to the college roundabout) are a recipe for increased congestion at the western end of the street and risk sending even more rat-running traffic down Westgate to the eastern roundabout interchange with Orchard Street, West Street, and the Avenue de Chartres. WGRA have also opposed the SAR plans for shared pavements for pedestrians and cyclists around the Sherborne Road junction, and have advocated on-road, segregated cycling provision for cyclists, given that Westgate is the gateway in and out of the city for commuting and leisure cyclists who should be firmly catered for on the road!

A small group of local residents at the eastern end of the street, in the 'Narrows', fed up with speeding vehicles, rat-runners, heavy vehicles shaking their properties and the problems they have just trying to cross the street or load small children into vehicles, came together with Executive Committee member, Richard Staughton, earlier in the year to pool their thoughts on traffic mitigation. This Old Westgate Group undertook an initial straw poll of the owners of properties in the Narrows which they later extended to all the properties in Westgate.

The western end of the street has its own traffic problems caused by speeding on the wider sections and the sheer volume of vehicles attempting both to enter and leave the city at peak periods at the beginning and end of each day through the array of roundabouts at this end of the city. Most days, from 4.00 pm onwards, for up to two hours home-owners find it very difficult to get their own cars in or out of their properties. Also, first thing in the morning, backed-up vehicles have to contend with Bishop Luffa pupils weaving in and out of the traffic on their way to school!

In parallel to our ongoing opposition to the SAR which cannot be compromised, this group have spent the late summer and autumn months looking at what might work on Westgate more immediately to mitigate the effects of traffic in our midst. Even partial road closures do not enjoy popular support. However, the group has identified a possible way forward which could, if agreed by WSCC, lead to significant traffic congestion and pollution reduction. It is based on an Automatic Number Plate Reading (ANPR) system which has been adopted successfully in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and is growing in popularity across the country.

A detailed presentation with opportunities to ask questions will take place at the AGM on Saturday 20 November 2021. In the meantime, Sarah Quail presented a paper on the subject to the West of Chichester Group of City and District Councillors and Chairs of local Residents Associations. The paper was warmly received, and she was advised to send it to WSCC. WSCC have distributed the paper to the relevant section heads, and we await their comments.

Neighbourhood Plan *PLACE* Assessment

Chichester City Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The consultants employed by the City Council are using a tool – an analytical method – which asks communities to record what matters to them under the acronym *PLACE*: Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Culture and Engineering. Put together, these different assessments will be the Neighbourhood Plan: a shared vision for the city which will shape development and growth in our respective areas. It will sit alongside the Local Plan and be used by Chichester District Council to determine planning applications. WGRA members completed our *PLACE* assessment in June, and we must record our thanks here to those who did the work, principally Secretary, Bebette Jones, and Gabrielle Abbott.

Besides the above, the Community Group and the Beaux Belles continued to meet:

COMMUNITY

Lockdown

Lockdowns in the winter months were not so much fun as the months we spent in the first lockdown during the Spring of 2020 as the evenings lengthened, our gardens sprang back into life and our Thursday evening clapping for the NHS turned into an Italian *passaggiata* enlivened at both ends of the street by the musical Higham and Smith families. However, we knuckled down, we zoomed, and the Westgate Helpers rose to the occasion once more and provided much-needed shopping assistance for those who were house-bound for one reason or another.

Advent Windows

There was one highlight however, organized by Kathryn Kellagher: the Advent windows! The eastern end of Westgate lends itself to such a project and for the month of December a different window was illuminated each day with a different illustration of the Christmas story. There were gleaming stars, angels heralding from lofty windows, and even the little town of Bethlehem, fully lit, which won our Westgate window cleaner, Dave's, prize!

Kathryn is organizing an Advent Window roster for Christmas 2021 too. There were still one or two gaps in early November so if you are keen to join in, do get in touch with her.

BEAUX BELLES (SOCIAL EVENTS)

Cancellations

The Beaux Belles were forced to abandon one date after another in the early months of 2021 as we learned that the pandemic was not going away any time soon. The Great Relief from Lockdown Party did however take place in the back garden of the *Crate and Apple* on the day of the summer solstice, Monday 21 June 2021. It was a glorious, hot evening (and there were not too many of those during the summer). There were also a good number of people present which added to the jollity of the occasion. The Christmas Carols and Readings will take place in the *Crate and Apple's* back garden once more on 14 December 2021 followed by our traditional Christmas supper there. All details of this event will be out shortly in a flyer. Plans are also afoot to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee next summer on **5 June 2022**.

And finally, we have the Secretary's Report

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Committee

The following were elected to the Committee for another year at the AGM on 23 November 2020:

Chair: Sarah Quail

Treasurer: Vince Waldron

Secretary: Bebette Jones

Committee Members: Brian Raincock, Julia Smith, Richard Staughton, Gabrielle Abbott

During the year, Gabrielle Abbott resigned on 19 June 2021, and we thank her for her valuable work on the Planning Sub-Group. Kathryn Kellagher was appointed as an Associate Member to serve on the Communities Sub-Group. Louise Higham resigned as an Associate Member of the Communications Sub-Group when she moved away from Chichester.

Committee Meetings

Five meetings were held by Zoom on 27 November 2020, 11 January 2021, 8 March 2021, 10 May 2021, and 12 July 2021 and two were held in person on 27 September 2021, and 8 November 2021.

Bulletins and Newsletters

In the course of the year, we have sent out by email three Westgate Helpers Newsletters and 11 WGRA Bulletins.

Membership

We have 140 households on our Residents List who receive our emails at present.

Sarah Quail

Chair

WGRA

20 November 2021