

Possible Traffic, Congestion and Pollution Reduction (TCPR) in Westgate and neighbouring streets.

Note by Sarah Quail prepared originally but with some updating (on 11 November 2021) for the West of Chichester Group of Councillors and Chairs of Neighbouring Residents Associations at their meeting on 15 October 2021.

1. The problem

Traffic in Westgate, Sherborne Road and St Paul's Road causes a lot of problems for a lot of local residents and their properties.

The recent analysis (September 2021) of key messages from Chichester City Council's Neighbourhood Plan PLACE exercise actually makes the point that **the volume and speed of traffic along Westgate is an ongoing concern.**

This document chiefly concerns problems in Westgate but much of it is applicable to our neighbouring streets.

At the eastern end of Westgate, **the older properties, many timber-framed, set on the road, and dating back to at least the early 17th century, are suffering from vibration caused by unnecessary heavy traffic and pollution from particulates.**

We have also learned in recent days - and I am updating this document on 11 November 2021 - that **the gas main installed in 1940 at the eastern end of Westgate has been damaged by heavy traffic.** Repairs are underway on two joints, and it is feared that there is more damage to the gas pipeline further along the road where more gas leaks may have been identified. I am reporting this to all our local authorities.

This is bad enough but at the same time, the health and safety of residents and passers-by, cyclists, and young children is further imperilled by the cramped road conditions, speeding and noisy traffic and of course, **pollution.** Not for nothing is this particular stretch of road known locally as the Narrows!

Westgate is also a **national cycle route and a key connecting corridor** eastwards and westwards. It is the old Portsmouth Road and links the city centre with Bishop Luffa School; Chichester College accommodation, and the new Whitehouse Farm development as well as national cycle paths to the west (the Chichester to Emsworth ChEm route), the south (Salterns Way) and the north (Centurion Way).

Despite the many traffic calming measures introduced over the last thirty years, Westgate is still not an easy route for cyclists to navigate, particularly the not-so-confident cyclists, chiefly because of the amount of traffic using this street.

The western end of Westgate has its own problems. The road is wider, and most houses are set back from the road in their own gardens or in a *cul de sac*. They were built in the first and second halves of the 20th century, so vibration is not so much of an issue. **However, at peak periods of traffic movement, in the morning and late afternoon, traffic backs up the street from the array of roundabouts at the west end of Westgate, and owners cannot get cars in or out of their properties. This end of the street also suffers from vehicles speeding if drivers see that the road ahead is clear, chiefly at off-peak periods.**

2. Rat running

Much of the unnecessary traffic in Westgate is due to rat running. Drivers use Westgate as a cut-through, instead of using the main roads: the A250 Via Ravenna and A286 Avenue de Chartres. As I say above, this is a long-standing problem, made worse in recent years by the prevalent use of satnav systems directing arterial road traffic to cut through narrow residential streets. This is most noticeable during the morning and afternoon rush hours when commuting traffic uses Westgate as a cut-through to get to and from the A27.

3. Possible solution

To try and fix this problem not only in Westgate but also, possibly, in adjoining streets, the WGRA is keen to explore the practicalities of a **Traffic, Congestion and Pollution Reduction (TCPR) scheme.**

This sort of scheme, as developed successfully in South Fulham in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, would allow **residents whose vehicles are registered to a Westgate or greater Westgate address (whatever the defined area*) to access this area freely. Their visitors, carers, delivery services, or trades people with a permit (for which they can apply to work in the defined area) would also be able to access the area freely. Outside vehicles would not be allowed to pass through the area with impunity during operating hours (usually 6.00 to 21.00 hours). The TCPR system uses Automatic Number Plate Reading (ANPR) cameras to identify local residents and other permit holders, allowing them to travel freely through the defined area whereas non-permit holders are effectively prohibited by fines.**

- *The scheme has the potential to be extended to the whole quadrangle of streets bounded by Westgate, Sherborne Road and its hinterland, St Paul's Road and Parklands Road.*

4. How does this idea work?

Basically, **you set up a TCPR pinch point.** This could be a short length of Westgate with notices at each end and two ANPR cameras, one facing each way (possibly midway along Westgate by The Tannery). As I say above, the system works by using number plates to distinguish between permit holders who are allowed through the pinch point and rat runners from outside the area who are

not. As with other traffic enforcement systems, people who ignore the rules will be fined. This contributes to the costs of installing and running the system.

As in South Fulham, permits can be obtained from the borough council's website, by phone or by means of RingGo/MiPermit smart phone app.

5. Hammersmith and Fulham's Experience

This TCPR system was pioneered by Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Council. It has been operating successfully in South Fulham since June 2020 and has proved **highly effective in reducing rat running in the residential streets adjacent to the New Kings Road and Wandsworth Bridge Road which are both exceptionally busy arterial roads. Traffic levels in the defined area have fallen between 56% and 77% with a corresponding reduction in pollution, vibration, and noise.**

Permits are issued automatically to residents whose vehicles are registered to a local address, while couriers, taxi firms, and home delivery services can apply for permits as well as carers, and other visitors. The system even allows for visitor permits to be obtained retrospectively up to 24 hours afterwards should an unexpected visitor turn up on your doorstep!

Apparently, the installation has already paid for itself! Of course, we do not have the sort of traffic movements which South Fulham experiences, but we do have sufficient traffic to make life hellish for local residents - and enough to merit serious consideration of this proposal.

6. Conclusion

As for the wider picture, there is **potential in this scheme to make Westgate a significant entrance to this city which is leafy (as discussed in the PLACE analysis), relatively traffic-free and a safe haven for local residents including pedestrians, cyclists, and walkers.**

The scheme tackles both existing and likely future traffic challenges in the west of Chichester. In short, it alleviates rat running, congestion and pollution.

Potentially, this is a pioneering pilot project for Chichester and WSCC as the Highways Authority. The arterial roads are already in place, designed to serve the city but avoid the densely populated residential areas of Westgate, Parklands and even Whitehouse Farm.