



Westwood Heath Residents Association

A Voice for Our Community

August 2020

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter from Westwood Heath Residents Association (WHRA). Much has been going on, following up on all the changes that are planned for our area. This Newsletter aims to bring out some of the more relevant local activities.

Planning

The most significant planning news recently was the joint announcement by Warwick University and Coventry City Football Club (CCFC) for a new 20,000 - 35,000 seater stadium to house CCFC, on land provided by the University adjacent to the campus. This would fall in as-yet unidentified agricultural land. The news came without prior warning or consultation and was a surprise considering there is already a stadium in Coventry, not occupied by CCFC because of long running disputes.

The RA conducted a poll of residents on Facebook and over 90% of respondents were against the proposal, with reasons ranging from traffic chaos, destruction of Green Belt, parking & antisocial behaviour concerns amongst others. We have raised this and discussed it with our MP Zarah Sultana who originally publicly supported the announcement.

On the very local plans for 425 houses to the South of Westwood Heath Road, there is no clear indication of when building will start, although the planning permission and Section 106 agreements were completed some time ago.

In nearby Kings Hill, planning permission has been granted by Warwick District Council (WDC) for a development which could extend to 4,500 homes adjacent to the A46 Stoneleigh junction. Although permission has been granted, the formal process to conclude this is not yet complete and we are fighting it on several grounds. Those who have been following this will know that the WDC Local Plan accommodates overspill from Coventry, based on what we believe are hugely overestimated population predictions for the city. We remain convinced that there are ways open to challenge these and we are doing what we can in conjunction with other local groups, Parish Councils and other Residents Associations.

In the Westwood Business Park, a private accommodation block for 400 student flats has recently been completed at "The Oaks" and demolition work is in progress on an adjacent plot which will eventually house up to 700 more students.

Other developments within the Westwood Heath area such as that proposed to the west of Cromwell Lane are currently being reviewed, with little to report.

HS2

The enabling work on HS2 continues apace and continues to cause local issues with road closures and the use of the lower part of Westwood Heath Road for construction traffic. Following representations about the volume and speed of HGV traffic, the council deployed a camera to monitor HS2 traffic flows into Bockendon Lane, and HS2 have given briefings to their subcontractors to limit the speed of their vehicles in the Westwood Heath residential areas. Both seem to have had a positive impact but there are still occasional issues with HS2 heavy vehicles causing an issue.

If you experience problems, please use **Freephone 08081 434 434** or email HS2enquiries@hs2.org.uk and let a member of the RA know so we know and can follow up.

HS2 are working with the council to provide some additional planting of trees and WHRA are looking to see if community funding may be available for community activities from HS2.



Currently **we do not have any meetings scheduled** due to the ongoing situation, though we will widely publicise the news when we can arrange to meet again, via all the usual sources.

The general email for your questions or suggestions is: westwoodheathra@gmail.com

Westwood Heath History Group

The History Group has been active recently, despite the difficulties that we have all been experiencing. At the beginning of lockdown a wealth of photos taken in the larger Westwood Parish area in the mid-1960s were presented to us, and we have been tracking down the current buildings in an extended 'Then and Now' piece that is currently being put together. Regular updates have appeared on our website and on the WHRA Facebook page. These images have sparked a wider search of the area including newspaper articles and events mentioned in the original document.

Research into the self-build project to build houses in the Park Wood Lane/Dalmeny Road and Charter Avenue area has been very fruitful and will ultimately be another article for the website. The input from many local residents has been fascinating and the story is quite interesting. There are some remarkably interesting findings, which are being kept under wraps until the article is published – watch this space as they say!

History for the future was to the fore during the strictest parts of the lockdown, and we managed to record the events as they happened for the VE Day commemorations and for the Clap for the NHS and Carers activities. Some of the events are shown here.





During lockdown members of the community were making scrubs, wash bags and woolly caps for newborn babies for the NHS plus Louise Hughes has also been making masks and continues to do so. We've heard many cases of people helping each other by shopping, baking etc plus providing toiletries for the hospital assisted by a donation from Leofric Lions.

If you use Facebook, please check out our updates in the WHRA closed group. Here, we share historical findings most weeks – “Memory Mondays” - as well as other updates of interest to history lovers. This feature is proving popular and always generates discussion. We have covered Mary Dormer Harris local born historian, writer, social reformer, and suffragist; The Warwickshire Reformatory Institution for Girls and the Reverend John Octavius Coussmaker, Vicar of Westwood in the 1880s to name just a few.

If you would like to join us and undertake some research, you will be made most welcome. In time we hope to hold larger meetings but for now we are a small, informal group.

We are always keen to hear from anyone with a story to tell, or memories of life here in years gone by – or even if they are of relatively recent years, as the area has changed rapidly, and continues to do so. If you have any old photographs you would be willing to share, we would be delighted to hear from you. Also, if you have any questions about the history of Westwood Heath, or any comments or suggestions, please do get in touch.

Jill Kashi, Westwood Heath History Group. Email: westwoodheathhistory@gmail.com

University of Warwick

On 10 March – which now feels like a lifetime ago – we were supposed to be introducing you to Parvez, our Director of Transport and Future Mobility, at a WHRA meeting. Of course, that meeting was cancelled due to Covid-19, so you didn't get to hear about some of the exciting projects he is working on. (We shall ask him for some details, so you don't miss out entirely.)

It has been a busy five months for the University since that cancelled meeting in March.

Thousands of our students have completed their courses with online assessment and have now graduated *in absentia*. This means they are officially University of Warwick graduates – and have the certificate to prove it as they begin their careers – but they were unable to attend the usual celebrations. We are looking to reschedule them when it is safe to do so.

And there will be a lot to celebrate when we can come together, as our students and staff stepped up to support the regional response to the pandemic. To mention just a few examples: our Medical School students volunteered to join the NHS teams in local hospitals, our engineers designed and produced 3D printed PPE face shields, and we worked with our

partners to ensure people in Coventry and Warwickshire could access food in these extraordinary circumstances.

The coming academic year will look quite different as we offer our students a blend of face-to-face and online learning. The campus will also look different. We have signage up to remind everyone about the need to social distance, and there will be fewer people around as staff work from home where possible and some classes are taught online.

As many of you do already, you are welcome to continue walking across the campus for exercise or when walking the dog, but please do respect the social distancing guidance. Whilst you're there, the NAIC café has reopened on reduced hours and the Sports and Wellness Hub has reopened, so feel free to visit those.

Stay in touch and let us know if you would like more information on anything University.

Jo Handford and Ben Hayday.

Email: community@warwick.ac.uk

Membership

There is a membership fee of £5 per household per year, in order to cover administration costs such as printing and website fees. However, if you do not feel that you want to join, you would still be very welcome at any of the WHRA meetings to listen to the discussions but will not be eligible to vote.

As with many organisations, WHRA has decided that the current members will have their memberships extended due to the pandemic restrictions, and the new subscriptions will not be due until December 2020.

We currently have 97 households who registered during the last year, and memberships will soon be due for the coming year. Payment is available by various means, please see the website for details.



Streetwatch

Streetwatch is a local initiative backed by the police, for residents to walk the streets in a suitably highly visible way, to advertise the fact that we are keeping an eye out for dubious behaviour. It has also become a particularly useful way of getting to know neighbours and local residents in a friendly environment, not to mention the health benefits of a good walk! Several pets have also been located so it is certainly not all business.

Anyone can join, with a minimum of police-led training, and there is a minimal commitment of walks per month at a time to suit yourself.

If you are interested in being part of this initiative, Louise would love to hear from you via: streetwatch@westwoodheath.org.uk

Westwood Heath Residents Association Website Address:

<https://www.westwoodheath.org.uk>