



**A Voice for Our Community**

**March 2021**

Welcome to the latest Newsletter from Westwood Heath Residents Association (WHRA).

### **AGM**

The WHRA AGM was held (by Zoom) on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 7.30pm. Elections for committee members were held and we welcome Linda Weyman as our new secretary. We thank Sheila Millar for her help in setting up the Residents Association from scratch, and for her support in the role of secretary until this year. She will carry on in a support role on the committee for the time being. Sheila was presented with a bouquet of flowers as a gesture of gratitude from the team.

### **Planning**

Of the proposed local developments, the 240 houses at Cromwell Lane have just gone through planning permission for (minor) “Reserved Matters” changes, and a similar process is expected soon for the initial tranche of 129 houses of the 425 proposed for land to the South of Westwood Heath Road. If the plan changes are approved, we can expect construction to start in the third quarter of 2021.

### **Link Road**

The consultation process for the proposed A46 “Strategic” Link Road closed in February and we expect to hear some feedback in May after the local elections purdah period closes. WHRA submitted a detailed and robust response to the proposals, along with many other residents and Residents Groups. The scheme would see another swathe of Green Belt land removed, potentially see a rise in traffic volumes of around 65% or more on Westwood Heath Road, cause congestion at local junctions and potentially commit upwards of £70m to be spent on a road which has a dubious business case post-Covid-19. The scheme has a tentative date for completion of 2028 if it goes ahead.

See <https://www.westwoodheath.org.uk/a46-link-road> for more detail.

### **Stadium**

We were delighted to see that the Sky Blues have negotiated a return to the Ricoh Arena. Although the Coventry City FC announcement allows a break clause after seven years to move to the proposed new stadium on land adjacent to Warwick University, we remain hopeful that the club will remain at the Ricoh now and the stadium plan will fizzle out.

### **Population projections**

The Coventry Local Plan, on which housing needs are based, relies on data on population numbers from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). There has been a campaign to validate these numbers as the ONS Coventry population numbers appear to over-estimate the Coventry population by a substantial amount, and as a result housing needs have also been exaggerated – resulting in huge developments on the fringes of Coventry including locally.

Late last year, the statistics regulator began an investigation into the accuracy and use of the population numbers, particularly in University towns/cities like Coventry. This has gathered detailed evidence and is expected to yield an interim report around the end of April 2021.

This report could have great significance for the granting of future developments, including a reserved area for 700 houses towards the lower end of Westwood Heath Road. We believe that the review, together with further factual data gathered by the census, will result in a decreased need for new-build housing in the area.

### **Off-road biking noise nuisance**

In recent weeks there has been a significant increase in off-road biking in the area of the newly-planted wood between Ten Shilling Wood and Park Wood. In addition, significant damage has been done to the ground and many of the tree saplings uprooted. The police are aware of the problem and have intervened, but it would help step-up the response if we all report the nuisance as it is happening – please use 101, the Chat facility on the police website, or email [westwood@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk](mailto:westwood@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk)

### **Litter**

With increased pedestrian traffic over Lockdown, we have noticed a big increase in the amount of litter being left around the area. As restrictions permit, we plan to organise local litter picks to support “Keep Britain Tidy”, in particular the Spring Clean initiative. If you are interested in joining in, please see our Facebook or email [secretary@westwoodheath.org.uk](mailto:secretary@westwoodheath.org.uk)



### **Speeding on Westwood Heath Road**

There has been a noticeable general increase in traffic speeds on Westwood Heath Road, with some vehicles exceeding the speed limit by large margins. There are over sixty driveways, ten side roads and ten commercial/community premises over a short distance along the road, bus stops on either side (some without pavement), creating a high risk of an accident and the faster the speeds, the greater the risk of a fatal result.

In liaison with the police, community speed checks will be recommended once restrictions allow, and the police will conduct these without prior notice.

## **Membership**



Membership of the Residents Association is at rock bottom prices - only £5 per household per year, this covers administration costs such as printing, website fees, meeting rooms including Zoom and other associated costs of the Residents Association.

We currently have 8% of the households in the area registered this year, and just over 500 people signed up to our Facebook page. The Committee members are doing their best to represent the views of the community and we really need a few more subscriptions and suggestions. Just a few clicks away ..... and you too could add your voice and of course your funds!

Payment is available by various means, see <https://www.westwoodheath.org.uk/members> for details.

## **Online Presentations**

As the current Covid restrictions look set to continue for some time, the Committee has been looking at ways of keeping the community updated with developments in the local area and are actively organising internet presentations from some of the key stakeholders which should give residents the opportunity of asking questions directly. These will be advertised on the WHRA Facebook page as and when they are arranged.

## **Westwood Heath History Group**

Westwood Heath History Group has continued its activities and we are all enjoying our research into the area. One of the highlights of the lockdown months has been the discovery of a local history project undertaken in the 1960s, focussing on Westwood Heath and associated ancient hamlets. This is a wonderful resource, containing old photos, maps and information about local people and the development of the area. The project has been transcribed – a true labour of love – and will be made available to read on the website in due course.

Our regular Memory Monday Facebook posts continue to be a particularly good way of engaging with residents. These can be found in the private Residents Association Facebook group. If you are on Facebook, please join us. Otherwise, the posts are all uploaded on to the RA website for you to read at leisure: <https://www.westwoodheath.org.uk/history-of-westwood-heath>

We are currently transcribing the decennial censuses and some electoral registers, to be available in a searchable database in due course; both are excellent resources for family, local and house historians.

In May, we plan to hold a History Group meeting, via Zoom. This will be an informal “get-together”, with a short introduction to the history of the area, followed by a presentation on current research and plenty of opportunity for questions and chat. Everyone will be warmly welcomed to this, our very first history community meeting.

If you would like to get involved in the History Group, or wish to share information with us, we will be delighted to hear from you. Please email: - [westwoodheathhistory@gmail.com](mailto:westwoodheathhistory@gmail.com)



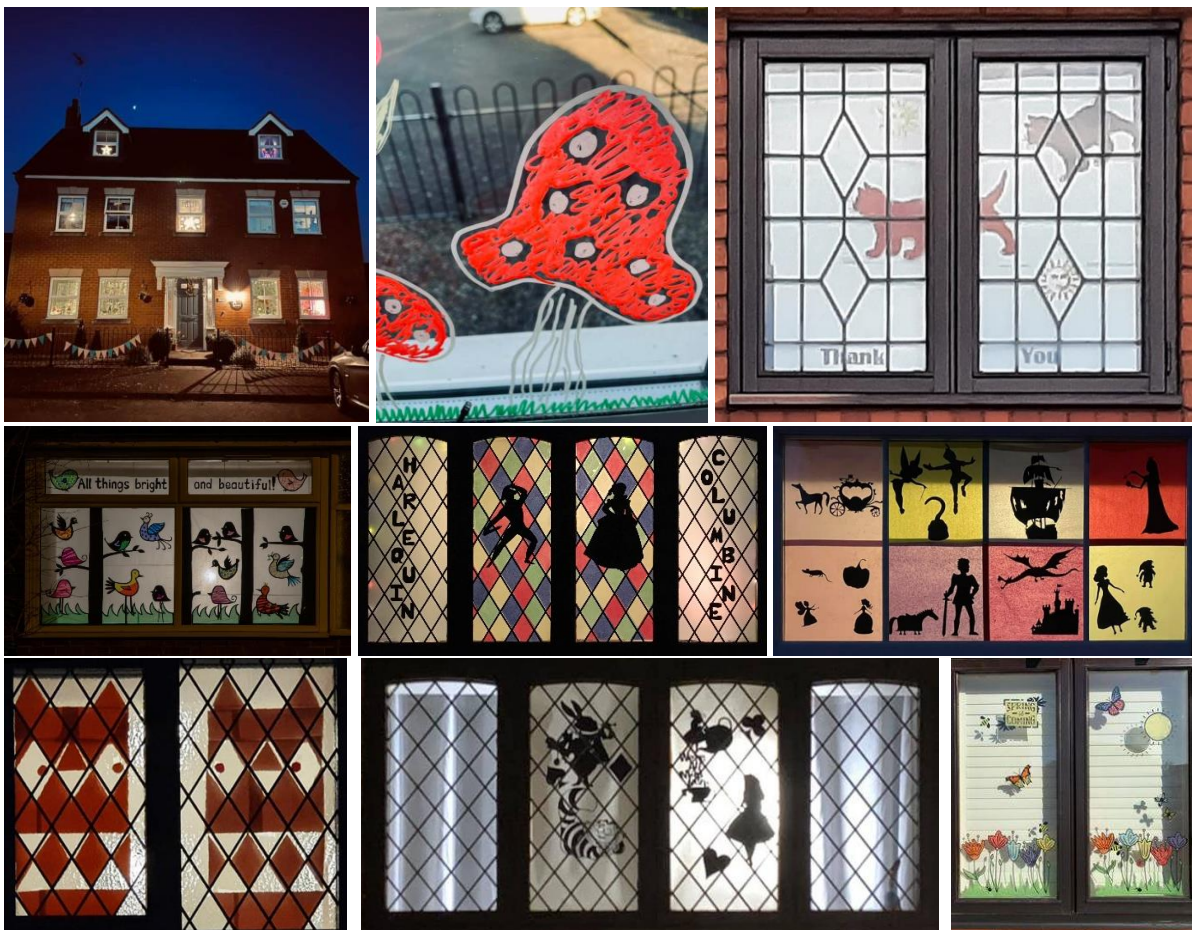
## Streetwatch

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 on the community. Since the lockdown restrictions back in March 2020 it has not been possible to carry out the normal Streetwatch walks, but these will be reintroduced as soon as normality returns.

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, please contact us via: [streetwatch@westwoodheath.org.uk](mailto:streetwatch@westwoodheath.org.uk)

## Window Wanderland

Many of you took part in the Window Wanderland event held as part of the Coventry City of Culture year. Here are some of the pictures taken by the residents, more can be found on Facebook.



**\*\*\* Next Residents Meeting April 27<sup>th</sup> via Zoom \*\*\***