



# HRA NEWSLETTER

## Highfield Residents' Association

Autumn 2017

### HRA COMMUNITY EVENTS

*Frank McKenna and Patrick Coulter write:*

**Since the last newsletter we've held two very successful street events, though under very different weather conditions!** On probably the hottest day in June we joined with All Saints' Church for a day of fun to celebrate our community and to raise funds for the Jo Cox Foundation. By contrast on probably the wettest evening in September we gathered under gazebos for our annual street meze and cinema evening. Despite the weather, the Highfield spirit prevailed and lots came to eat, drink and be fairly merry. We retreated later to the warmth of Church House where we finished off the drinks and enjoyed a movie. We also held a concert in June featuring a group of superb local musicians who provided a cracking evening of music and songs to raise funds for Asylum Welcome.

**The Autumn/Winter programme is set out below.** Let us know if you have any suggestions or would like to join us in planning and organising events.

### AUTUMN / WINTER PROGRAMME

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November (7.30pm) **The Character of Highfield** in Church House, New High Street – a presentation of the results of the recent assessment of the character of Highfield, carried out for the Neighbourhood Plan. This will be followed by a discussion in small groups on a street-by-street basis in which we'll draw on our local knowledge to provide a rich picture of Highfield.

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December (6pm) **Annual Street Carol Singing**, featuring a visit from Santa who will leave the reindeer feeding at Shotover and join us to sing around our streets for an hour followed by refreshments (indoors!).

Late January **Music Evening** in Church House – details later

Late February **Cinema Evening** in Church House – details later

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March **Annual Litter Pick** – details later

### COMMUNITY PROJECT FOR HIGHFIELD

**To compensate for the disruption caused by the construction of the energy pipeline, Vital Energi has donated £10,000 to be spent on community projects in Highfield and Sandfield Road.** The money is currently held in trust by Headington Action on behalf of the community. A proportion of the fund will be allocated to Sandfield Road on a pro rata basis to be agreed through discussion shortly. For Highfield options for projects include:

- measures to reduce traffic speeds on our streets including road humps, buildouts with planters, signage and the like
- improving the street scene at the Lime Walk/ All Saints' Road junction
- creating a community space in the area next to All Saints' Road where the telephone box used to stand
- planting more street trees.

We would welcome other suggestions at this stage so please forward ideas to HRA on [hreactee@gmail.com](mailto:hreactee@gmail.com) by 20<sup>th</sup> November. We'll then draw up a costed list of options to present to a residents' meeting from which we can decide those we should progress.

PC/FMcK

## Big Boxes on the hillside *Mike Ratcliffe writes:*

**One of our major concerns as a residents' association has been the number of major institutional sites that are being developed all around us.** Framing the view down our streets are the big boxes of university or hospital buildings. Each way you turn, there's another. This is a re-cap of where we've got to, and what's coming next.

**Oxford Brookes University:** it's redeveloped the old Clerici and Library buildings and built a new hall. This enables the move of the Business School from Wheatley. The next development will be on the Headington Hall site where the old Pergamon Press building will be replaced by a 'Cathedral of Making'.

**Warneford Hospital:** not immediately adjacent, but a new masterplan is being created for the site as the buildings are no longer fit for purpose. This will retain the original buildings but replace the later infill stuff. Notions about a heating plant would be contained on the site, rather than spread onto the meadow.

**Churchill Hospital:** a new masterplan is due soon. There has to be a balancing between the Churchill

and Littlemore sites which complicates what the trust may want to put on the site.

**Old Road Campus:** building continues – they've occupied the Big Data Institute, and the sculpture outside has won an award. The Amenities building is starting to dominate the end of Stapleton Road. Oxford University owns the Park Hospital site and its redevelopment will be very significant.

**Nuffield Orthopaedic Hospital:** there will be a new building for the Botnar Research Centre – linked to the existing one via a bridge across the internal road.

**John Radcliffe Hospital:** planning consent is being sought for a Neuroscience research building.

**Student Accommodation:** Frontier Estates has sold Beech House in Latimer Road to Unite, who is running it and Dorset House together. There is a sense that if Brookes gets permission for the Cowley Barracks site to house 800 students, then there will be no need for them to commission further purpose-built student accommodation. That won't stop speculators, but it may reduce their incentives.

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## Updated Website and Blog - [www.highfieldresidents.weebly.com](http://www.highfieldresidents.weebly.com)

*Mo Chandler writes:*

**We're excited to announce the launch of our new and improved website,** which has been designed to help us connect with our members via posts, messages, surveys and more. It will also provide online resources, up-to-date news/events and

other information about the local area. The site is designed to help and encourage you to get involved in the community through more interactive content. It is work in progress so we'd encourage you to go take a look to see what you think - and return to check for updates on a regular basis. Please do send us feedback and suggestions for any new content you'd like to see via our website:

**[www.highfieldresidents.weebly.com](http://www.highfieldresidents.weebly.com)**



## Environment

Hilary Rollin writes:

**Lovers of trees and open spaces take heart! HRA Committee has entrusted a small group to look into options for replacing some of the damaged and missing trees in Highfield.** Contrary to the Oxford Times (Sep 28, p.2), we shall not lose the **Warneford Meadow**, a Town Green, to the building of a power plant for district heating. In fact, it is the remaining area of playing field that might house the power plant. The meadow, meanwhile, is being mown regularly, with the opening up of various paths making walking easier; moreover, the mowing has extended closer to the lower end of the meadow, and closer to the access from Roosevelt Drive. Extensive pruning in the orchard, clearing of the undergrowth, and provision of benches has raised the orchard's profile.

**Among the aims of HRA in fostering the community spirit in Highfield is trying to keep our 'patch' as pleasant as we can.** Some of the issues that impact negatively on us require police involvement, others can best be resolved by our knowledgeable and hard-working councillors (see list on p.4), while others depend on US taking remedial action or reporting issues. Many such problems relate to pavements; the **annual OxClean litterpick** is no longer enough to keep our streets clear of litter and miscellaneous debris, but several people carry out unofficial litterpicks, and one public-spirited person can be seen unblocking drains in the gutters. When it comes to **fly-tipping**, increasingly common, and likely to become more so with the new scale of charges at the tip, we need to call in the Council. Other issues recently reported to councillors have been **overhanging vegetation**, particularly vexing when branches get bowed down by the rain. Used syringes, dog fouling and bins left on the pavement have also caused problems.

**For decades we have been told that we are never more than x feet/metres from a rat**, and the recent increase in rat sightings is often blamed on Thames Water's policy of no longer baiting the sewers. Be that as it may, the fact remains that hen food, and scraps and seeds put out for the birds (who, most of the year, are better nourished if left to fend for themselves) can attract rats. One Highfield resident, reports being astonished to see a kestrel swoop down on her garden, and fly off bearing a large rat.

**We may well lament the deteriorating air quality, but do we need to further jeopardise it by driving everywhere as we did in less enlightened times?**

Those who would like to enjoy the occasional use of a car, but not the regular outlay on servicing, insurance, MOT, road tax, to say nothing of the unscheduled expense of costly repairs and the hassle of finding a parking space, might **consider joining Co-wheels**. This is pay-as-you-go Social Enterprise car club, working to develop and improve access to more sustainable car use. It can also enable households currently running two cars to cut down to one, plus Co-wheels membership. Cars are located



in All Saints' Rd (above), Perrin St, Sandfield Rd (also a charger), Kennet Rd, with the latest addition, unknown to many as yet, being the Coach House car park on Quarry Rd (our thanks to Headington Action for contributing to the cost of lining and signing of the parking bay). What's more, members can book cars online or over the phone in many other locations across the UK:

### **Co-wheels, UK's leading pay-as-you-go car club:**

One-off joining fee £25. Second member of household £15. Minimum duration of hire 1 hour.

For further details and scale of charges:

0191 375 1050

[info@co-wheels.org.uk](mailto:info@co-wheels.org.uk)

Finally, for a fascinating free half-day out, visit the **Energy Recovery Facility at Ardley**. If the idea appeals, contact me on [hracttee@gmail.com](mailto:hracttee@gmail.com) and I will send you details when the date of the next tour is made known.

### **Incident Book:**

Please keep us informed ([hracttee@gmail.com](mailto:hracttee@gmail.com)) of any issues or incidents that have a negative impact on our community (speeding cars, potholes, break-ins, stolen bikes, dog-fouling etc). Whether you have referred the matter to the relevant authority or to our councillors, please keep us informed and we will enter it in the Incident book. If you have informed police, please include the Crime Reference number. *HR*