



# HRA NEWSLETTER

## Highfield Residents' Association

Spring 2016

### HRA COMMUNITY EVENTS

In the past six months we've held three very successful events – a pub games evening in November, Street Carol Singing in December and our annual Spring Litterpick. Thanks to everyone who helped produce these events and who came along to support on the day. We're planning a celebration for the Queen's Birthday in June and our annual Street Cinema evening in September – details below. If you have suggestions for events we'd be delighted to hear from you.

*Frank McKenna and Patrick Coulter*

### SUMMER PROGRAMME

22<sup>nd</sup> April (Friday): **AGM** 7.30pm All Saints' Church House followed by:  
**Medical Research in Headington** – a presentation on the future research programme by a representative from the Oxford University NHS Trust.

June 12<sup>th</sup> (Sunday): **Queen's Birthday Celebration**. We are combining with All Saints' Church and New Headington Residents' Association to provide a day of celebration including a community lunch (on the street), street party games, open gardens, afternoon teas in the Church gardens, music by the Oxford Fiddle Group, a special evensong service in the Church and an evening social/BBQ in the Butchers Arms. All Saints' Road will be closed for the day. Further details shortly.

Late September: **Street Meze and Cinema** on All Saints' Road – details later

**HRA AGM on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> April** (7.30pm) in All Saints' Church House (New High St)

HRA belongs to you so come along to the AGM and:

- hear what we've done in the past year
- discuss plans for the coming year
- raise local issues
- hear how we've spent your subscriptions
- elect officers and committee for 2016 (we are seeking new committee members)

Around 8.15 pm: **Medical Research in Headington**  
A representative from the Oxford University NHS Trust will outline the future of medical research in Headington. Then we'll have questions and discussion followed by refreshments at 9pm.

### INCIDENT BOOK

**Thanks to all who have notified HRA of issues or incidents having a negative impact on our community.** What you report to us gets logged in the 'Incident Book' and enables us to get an overview of problems in Highfield and to approach the relevant authorities. Whether you have reported issues to the appropriate authority or not, please also keep us informed.

Anything from failed traffic lights, dog fouling, problems with wheelie bins, sightings of rats, smashed mirrors on parked cars, speeding, blocked gullies and kerb-side drains, to break-ins and anti-social behaviour, please let us know via [hracttee@gmail.com](mailto:hracttee@gmail.com), and if you have contacted the police, please let us have the Crime Reference Number.

*Hilary Rollin*

**PIPELINE NEWS:** The Oxford University Hospitals Trust (OUH) wants to connect the new boiler at the JR to the Churchill Hospital. It came up with this plan in 2013, and its contractors have been actively planning it since. There have been some misadventures, and, as I write, things remain uncertain.

**This is not [just] a pipe:** there are six things to be laid in the trenches; two hot water pipes and four ducts (two for data and two for power). It is 1.4km between the two plant rooms, and the route runs through four residential streets and crosses both the London and Old roads. In general terms the scheme involves digging a trench in stretches of 120m and laying the pipes and ducts and requires the whole carriageway to be closed for four weeks.

The OUH website provides details of the project: <http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/about/developments/energy/>

**This is not going well so far:** you'll have seen that OUH organised a press-launch on 30 November 2015 to tell the media about the plans. They had refused to tell other people about the plans, or to even book public meetings until they had this launch. Of course it was possible to guess what they had in mind – you could visit the trench being dug at the JR and see the markings on our streets. A public meeting was organised for 9 December, and the Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders were published that same day. These TTROs were supposed to be the only notice of the works, and provided no formal opportunity for consultation. The TTROs came into force on 4 January 2016. **The public meeting was feisty. Why had the promoters of a project at least two years in the making chosen to give a month's notice of their plans, and why, even then, were they unable to explain basic details?** After the meeting a liaison group was formed to consider the detailed issues that were thrown up. The pipeline works started (with road closure signs that confused almost everyone) and then stopped.

**A key problem had occurred; although the plant room changes have planning permission, the pipeline does not.** The City Council thinks it should, and it is the planning authority. The County Council apparently did not think it should, but it is the traffic authority. The County had decided that the work could be done through these TTROs, and that issuing them for individual 100m sections meant they didn't need to consult or take a 'key' decision in public. **The City's decision means that a public consultation was started about the pipeline, but even that was stopped**

**again when a legal problem required a solution.** Space precludes the detail of this – but it's to do with the way that the County only own the road, not the land under it, and their assumption to give the pipeline permission may not be legal.

**Waiting:** We have had apologies from OUH and from Oxfordshire County Council. Meetings to sort out the legal aspects and the necessary traffic management continue; and will be needed before the City can even consider planning permission. With hindsight, if open consultation had happened in 2014 or the first 11 months of 2015 then we could have had this sorted. We could have debated the merits of the scheme, the legal issues, and the best way to manage the project. It could have been genuinely collaborative. Now the scheme will run into any Access to Headington works.

**It does raise an issue for HRA though: when things happen quickly email is really the best way for us to communicate – in both directions.** Committee members suddenly got called to represent residents. We chose to focus on how to mitigate the impact, but knew that other residents were raising fundamental questions about the legality of the scheme. Do contact us on [hreactee@gmail.com](mailto:hreactee@gmail.com) and let us have an email address if possible.

*Mike Ratcliffe*



All over by Christmas?

**THANKS TO OUR COUNCILLORS:** We would like to record our thanks to our local councillors who have worked tirelessly on our behalf during the year, particularly on the Latimer Rd student accommodation planning application, the pipeline project and also for providing additional bollards at the junction of All Saints' Rd and Lime Walk: vehicles are travelling more slowly over the crossing now that they can no longer charge or squeeze by each other. This tweaking of the junction has been successful and long overdue. *FMCK/PC/et al*

**ACCESS TO HEADINGTON:** The County Council has put forward revised proposals for the management of road traffic in Headington. **Deadline for comments: 23 March.**

See: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/accessheadington](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/accessheadington). Major changes affecting roads in the Highfield area are:

**Removal of the grass verge** along Old Rd (south side) from the junction with the Slade to Churchill Drive for a cycle & pedestrian path to be installed.

**Separation of cyclists and pedestrians** by pavement marking from Old Rd/Windmill Lane junction to Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre (Old Rd entrance).

**Traffic lights to control** the exit/entrance to Churchill Drive from Old Rd, with only buses exiting Churchill Drive into Old Rd at peak times. Traffic exiting Churchill Hospital site at peak times will use the Gipsy Lane/Old Rd junction.

**Removal of the zebra crossing** at the Stapleton/Old Road corner and its replacement by a toucan crossing at the Old Rd/ Bickerton Rd corner to service an entrance into the Old Rd Campus. (NB this entrance is part of an ORC planning application to the City Council, not yet submitted.)

**Removal of the on-street cycle lane** (north side) from Gipsy Lane/Old Rd junction to Valentia Rd. Off-road cycle & pedestrian track (north side) to be installed from Gipsy Lane/Old Rd junction to Valentia Rd, using existing pavement.

**Creation of off-road cycle & pedestrian track** from Churchill Drive to Gipsy Lane/Old Rd junction (south side). This will entail clearing encroaching vegetation from footpath and replanting the hedge. Double kerb to be eliminated by regrading Old Rd from Stapleton Rd to Valentia Rd (approx).

*Nicholas Rollin*

**ENVIRONMENT: Oxclean 2016: Despite an inauspicious start to the day, the snow and sleet quickly cleared and a band of litter pickers set off to clear litter from Highfield.** This year no hidden treasure was reported, but views were exchanged about the quantity of builders' unwanted remnants (copper piping, plastic piping, electrical cable). Some roads were said to bear evidence of individuals' preferred make of beer, and no prizes for anyone finding the omnipresent cigarette butts, discarded tissues and relics of fast-food containers, plus a rug found in the vegetation, for which the Council is making a special journey.

**Date for the Diary:** Eco Festival: *What we are doing and what more can we do?* With talks, stalls and activities. Sunday 22 May, Holy Trinity Church and Coach House, Quarry Rd. 2.30-5.00, in conjunction with All Saints' Church and Corpus Christi Church. All Welcome.

*HR*

**LATIMER RD STUDENT ACCOMMODATION:**

Many residents will have attended the East Area Planning Committee of 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015, and/or the Planning Review Committee of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016. The application to demolish the family houses 36, 38 and 40 London Rd and 2 Latimer Rd and replace them with a 167-room student accommodation block plus 2 x 2-bed and 2 x 3-bed maisonettes was recommended by planning officers for acceptance, but was refused 6-3 by the East Area Committee, on two main grounds:

(1) *"That the height, mass and bulk of the main building is overbearing and does not form an appropriate relationship to the street. The design does not appropriately relate to the context of its surroundings and does not show the high standard required for a building of this size on this prominent key location. The height and design has a significant adverse impact on the privacy, outlook and amenity of neighbouring buildings."*

(2) *"The development has an unacceptable adverse impact on community safety by reason of overlooking of the adjacent school playground and because of traffic movements and which seriously reduces the safety of pedestrians and cyclists."*

To judge from the many letters of objection to the proposals, this was very much in line with the assessments by local residents.

**The Planning Review Committee took a different view. A motion to confirm refusal for reason (1) was defeated after hardly any discussion of the impact and design of the buildings.** Officers advised that pedestrian and cyclist safety was not a valid reason for refusal. (!!) The majority of the discussion centred on the overlooking of form rooms and changing rooms of Headington Preparatory School and the safeguarding implications of this. If the overlooking student rooms were screened to have no view, would living conditions in them be acceptable, and what would then be the appearance of the west-facing elevation of the proposed building?

**Eventually the application was granted conditional approval, with a pre-commencement condition** *"to prevent overlooking of the Headington School grounds and buildings by obscured glazing or screening the western elevation of the development. Such a scheme to be developed in consultation with the applicant, Headington School and the County and City Council safeguarding officers; to consider the inclusion of obscured glazing on the Headington School buildings; to protect the amenity needs of the student residents; and to be approved by Oxford City Council."*

**Technically, the City Council website records the status of the application as "Awaiting Decision".**

*Tony Joyce*