

Crossgate Community Partnership

Annual report 2016

Crossgate Community Partnership (CCP) is a charity whose objects are:

- to promote the conservation and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Crossgate and the surrounding area in Durham City
- to promote the establishment, continuation, and improvement of local amenities
- to build and maintain a strong, safe, healthy, and balanced community by encouraging the residents of Crossgate and neighbouring areas to participate in community activities.

The principal way we do this is to hold monthly residents meetings to identify current issues and address them. We are grateful to the North Road Methodist Church for hosting these meetings for a modest charge. We also have an email list where members can exchange views between meetings.

We have 140 local residents registered as members (a slight increase from 136 last year). Attendance at our meetings ranged from 9 to 29. The median was 15, plus guests, and the average was 16.

We have a half-hour PACT¹ session at the start of each meeting, which sets priorities that we would like to see addressed by the police. Our main police contacts are PCSOs Steven Bell and Rebecca Carey, and at least one of them has attended eight of our meetings. They submitted a written report for the other four. Two further meetings saw a presence from other officers. Our thanks to all of these officers. The two main priorities have been disturbance from late-night student revellers and dangerous cycling. In the first part of the year we supported police efforts to combat burglary by encouraging better security. Our concerns about drivers using mobile phones on the move were initially seen by the police as something they could not prioritise, but this changed following Government plans to double the penalties, and a fatal accident that received wide publicity.

We have now seen a complete academic year when Community Protection Notices have been used to deal with anti-social behaviour such as loud parties continuing after 11pm. The first stage is to issue CPN warnings advising that if the problem continues a CPN will be issued. 58 of the 83 warnings issued were in the Crossgate area. This was largely effective in curbing the late night disturbances but it was necessary to issue a follow-up CPN in 5 cases, 4 of which were in our area. No CPNs were issued after November 2015 in that academic year, which is a sign of the success of the scheme. It was not been necessary to move to the next stage, a fixed penalty or a court appearance.

However, with the new academic year a fresh batch of students take up residence, and problems start again. Up to the end of November 2016 41 warning notices had been issued in our area (and 12 elsewhere in the City). Three Community Protection Notices have been issued, all in the Viaduct area.

We considered a proposal to licence the basement of 29 Neville Street. The March meeting was attended by the proprietor and his licensing representative, and Martin Haigh from the police licensing unit. They described a proposal for a bar with food. However when the licence application was published the food element was missing. CCP decided to oppose the licence and were represented at the hearing on 21 June by Liz Brown, Ann Evans and Brendan McKeon. The Licence was granted, with conditions that were not made public. However, the premises have not yet opened.

Unfortunately the developers of the County Hospital won their appeal to build a PBSA and construction has now started. Elsewhere the Berendsen Laundry has been demolished, but construction has paused while talks take place with Durham University. Demolition of The Gates is proceeding, and the new development

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will include a large PBSA. These three sites promise almost 900 places. On the positive site, a proposal to redevelop Fram Well House as student residences has now been refused, as has a proposal for student flats in Holly Street, where it was successfully argued that this site should be for family homes.

We monitored proposals to convert the Companions Club on Ainsley Street into flats, and a number of individual members objected or made other comments. Permission was given but for a C3 (family homes) use, and a condition refusing C4 (HMO) use. Development has yet to start, and we understand the site has been sold.

During the year the Council adopted an Interim Student Accommodation Policy. This has two parts. The first deals with the conversion of family homes into houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) which in Durham will be for students. In much of our area this now requires planning permission as the permitted development right has been removed as the result of an Article 4 Direction. This is now feeding through into decisions, though an early example was to refuse an application from the only permanent resident of Waddington Street. The second part was to set criteria for new PBSAs.

The Council consulted on the *Issues and Options* for its "amended and refreshed" County Durham Plan. We are grateful to Simon Priestley for drawing up our response. This emphasised the need for the Plan specifically to have as an objective the creation of sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. We also supported the inclusion of the Interim Student Accommodation Policy in the Plan, while saying that we might propose changes in the light of its operation.

We have also continued to urge the Council to introduce an Article 7 direction to control the display of "To let" boards on student properties. Unfortunately changes made this year had the presumably unintended consequence that the voluntary code of practice is being ignored by even more local estate agents. The Council tells us that they are monitoring the situation to provide evidence for the Article 7 direction.

The Durham University – Residents Forum (DURF) was established in October 2014 and is now up and running on a regular basis. Roger Cornwell attends on behalf of the CCP, Liz Brown also goes as a representative of the Nevilles Cross residents, and Mike Costello continues as its secretary. Over the summer Durham hosted a national conference of Universities, Councils and residents' associations which proved a useful opportunity to learn from each other. Recent meetings have had presentations on the University's masterplan.

The recycling and rubbish collection remain an uphill struggle. The large number of students cause problems through a mixture of being unaware of what the system is, ignoring it, and depositing large volumes of rubbish at the end of term. Their landlords also dispose of rubbish inappropriately.

We have been pleased with the help that our local Councillors, Grenville Holland, Nigel Martin and Richard Ormerod have been able to offer both at and outside our meetings, and in particular in speaking at planning committee meetings. David Freeman focusses on Elvet Residents. We are also grateful for the help that Roberta Blackman-Woods MP has given at key moments.

The January meeting elected five trustees to look after matters between monthly meetings. They were Liz Brown, Roger Cornwell (chair), Mike Costello, Alan Doig, Ann Evans and Simon Squires (treasurer). The Forum remains without a secretary, and secretarial tasks were shared around. Our thanks are due to Jean Rogers who has taken minutes of our meetings throughout the year, and published them on the CCP website.

This annual report is necessarily a summary of our activities during 2016. A fuller account of the work of CCP is on our website at crossgate.durhamcity.org.uk which includes the minutes of our monthly meetings (see crossgate.durhamcity.org.uk/minutes) and how to apply to us for small grants to enhance the area.

Roger Cornwell (Chair)

7 January 2017