

Crossgate Community Partnership

Annual report 2024

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 Unite Students Rushford Court for hosting these meetings free of charge though to September, when the College of St Hild and St Bede moved in. Unite Students were fundraising for Children's Cancer North, and we agreed that a donation from us would contribute to the relationship between the local community and Unite Students so made a donation of £50.

We also have an email list where members can exchange views between meetings.

We have 157 local residents registered as members (exactly the same number as last year). Attendance ranged from 14 to 21. The median was 18, plus guests, and the average was 17.5.

The minutes of our meetings are on line, see <https://www.crossgate.durhamcity.org.uk/minutes/> and these record the details. Various themes have emerged and these are set out below.

Parish Council

There continues to be a good flow of information to and from the Parish Council. We are grateful to County and Parish Councillors for attending our meetings, sending in reports, and taking up issues raised with them. The Parish continues to fund additional Neighbourhood Wardens, and their monthly reports show how effective they are.

Community Emergency Plan

A working party of four has now produced a draft emergency plan for the broader Crossgate area. This sits within overarching Plans for the parish and the County.

Consultations

We have commented on the County Council Licensing Policy, the Public Spaces Protection Order, the renewal of the Regulation 7 order banning TO LET boards and the proposed changes to DCC Customer Access Points.

STACK

This entertainment venue obtained planning and licensing permissions in the first part of 2023. Last year's Annual Report noted that work had yet to start, and that remains the case despite the passage of a further year. The front of the premises, the former M&S store, had become something of an eyesore due to flyposting and graffiti. The owners have been prevailed upon to install large photographs of Durham.

Planning issues

The following planning applications which we commented on have been particularly notable;

DM/22/01606/FPA for a package of work to 50 The Avenue. We objected to the original proposal that the windows facing the street should be changed to uPVC, and were pleased when the proposal was amended to use sliding wooden sash windows, allowing the application to be approved.

DM/23/00241/FPA to convert 24 Nevilledale Terrace into two flats was refused by the Planning Committee in 2023, but approved on appeal.

DM/23/02236/FPA, to sub-divide 1 Beechcrest into three flats, was approved by the Planning Committee in July.

DM/24/00110/FPA , change of use of Crestholme, The Avenue from C3 dwelling to C4 HMO was refused after we pointed out that it was on a primary route from the PBSA at Duresme Court to the City centre.

Environmental improvements

A considerable number of planters have been sited around the area. This is a Parish Council initiative supported by our parish councillors. The community garden at the end of Lawson Terrace has been planted with saplings, again funded by the Parish Council.

Parking and street works

This is a recurring theme, with these general issues:

1. Shortage of parking spaces in some streets, notably Crossgate
2. Permits issued to houses built or converted after 2000.

These issues are being pursued mainly via the County Councillors.

In addition, a new virtual parking system is being introduced. It is not clear whether this was intended to replace the existing system or run alongside it, but after representations by ourselves and other residents' groups we have been assured that the existing system will continue, albeit without all-day scratch cards (instead 3x3-hour cards must be used). Actual implementation has been delayed by technical issues.

New Bus Station

We welcomed the opening of the new Bus Station on Sunday 8 January 2024, but this was premature. Although buses continued to serve the station, problems remained with access to the toilets and remedial building work has been required to the cladding. Consequently some access has been limited and the reinstatement of North Road is on hold.

Waste and recycling

This is an ongoing problem as each year's set of new student residents has to learn the rules afresh. The main issues are bagged recycling, which means it cannot be checked to see if it is appropriate, and side waste, which is allowed if the bin is full but only in clear plastic bags.

Unsafe trees adjacent to The Bowers

We have supported the residents of The Bowers whose concerns about unsafe trees in Flass Vale adjacent to their gardens were unfortunately proved to be well-founded when some of the said trees blew over into their gardens during storms. DCC tree officers, who were initially reluctant, were persuaded to approve necessary remedial work.

University

We continue to participate in the Durham University / Residents Forum (DURF) which meets senior University staff several times a year. The targeted leaflet *Living Out, in Durham* has once again been produced and we helped with its distribution. This explained to students, largely second years who have

moved from college accommodation to HMOs, what the arrangements are for things like rubbish and recycling, and also what the responsibilities and expectations are for livers-out.

Never-the-less rubbish and recycling issues continue. Large communal bins have been placed in student areas and these have on balance resulted in an improvement, though issues with the wrong contents being put in them remain, particularly at the start of the academic year. Implementation of the "Green Move Out" at the end of the academic year had been patchy as some student houses on the edge of the Viaduct area had been omitted, and again the scheme had started too late.

The College of St Hild and St Bede

In June Simon Forrest, Principal of Hild/Bede, and colleagues updated us on the progress and plans for their move into Rushford Court, where they will be for several years while their previous site is redeveloped. They are keen to build and maintain relationships with the local community and we are pleased that they will continue to allow us to meet on their premises, though teething problems have meant that this will not start until January 2025.

Conversion to a College has necessitated the construction of a JCR and this has progressed throughout the year, not without problems as mud washed from the site onto the adjacent road. Work was supposed to be completed by mid-December but it appears that it is running late. When completed the JCR will be licensed and in the interim a temporary licence was obtained for two marquees. We were fully consulted about this and raised no objection, and there were no issues arising. The licence has now expired but it seems unlikely that it will be renewed as in the winter months it is too cold to be a useful social space.

National Organisation of Residents' Associations

There have been administrative problems in receiving communications from NORA, but the organisation produced an excellent response to a Government consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This began:

The real tragedy of these proposals to up-date the NPPF is the apparent underlying assumption by politicians that planners build dwellings. It is understood their role is to facilitate development by granting planning consent that ensures it is built in the right place and fit for purpose. They have no power to enforce developers to build, only that by planning they do decide where they may and where they may not build.

The proposals to ease more planning consents only provides more choice of site, which allows developers to pick the easiest and cheapest sites. It does not oblige them to build.

We have renewed our membership for 2025, at a cost of £25.

In conclusion...

The January 2024 meeting elected five trustees to look after matters between monthly meetings. They were Roger Cornwell (chair), Ann Evans, Chris Hugill, Simon Priestley (Secretary) and Sarah Wilkinson (treasurer). Our thanks are once again 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 the past year. 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)

1 January 2025

Crossgate Community Partnership

Financial Statement: Year to 30 September 2024

	2023/24	2022/23
Income		
Total Income	£0.00	£0.00
Expenditure		
Subscriptions (NORA)	£25.00	£25.00
Donation (note 1)	£50.00	£0.00
Total Expenditure	£75.00	£25.00
Surplus/Deficit for Year	-£75.00	-£25.00
Balance Brought Forward	£514.10	£539.10
Balance Carried Forward	£439.10	£514.10
Represented By:		
Co-op Bank Account	£439.10	£514.10
Cash Balance	£0.00	£0.00
Debtors	£0.00	£0.00
Creditors	£0.00	£0.00
Total Assets	£489.10	£514.10

Note 1: £50 donation to a charitable appeal by Unite Students (see paragraph 2 in the Annual Report).