



FeCRA Chair's Report - AGM 2019

SLIDE 1 – FECRA BANNER & INFO

Cambridge's acute housing problems and lack of affordable housing together with the unabated growth agendas pursued by government, big business, the universities, colleges and property developers working together pose challenges to the quality of life of not just of present residents and those who will come to live here but of the next generation. Before the last general election among the issues residents asked us to put to the MP candidates was the need to properly assess the *cumulative impacts* of developments before any decisions are made and to bring the councils, universities and colleges together with residents in decision making.

SLIDE 2 CITY CENTRE – UNIVERSITY OWNERSHIP

FeCRA was glad to have the chance to comment on the recent application for Cambridge High Street funding. The proposals generated a huge city-wide response - residents felt the application was premature without an effective historic environment strategy, an assessment of city centre capacity and a conservation area management plan for the historic centre but they were pleased to be involved and they made a lot of constructive suggestions. We hope the dialogue will continue and that it will also involve the colleges who own most of the city centre, who should be working together to bring about a desired range of users.

SLIDE 3 MILTON ROAD LANDSCAPING PLAN

Residents associations and community groups on all sides of the city have continued to be pro active about getting in early so as to have a say and shape what is happening to their neighbourhoods. Madingley Road RA and the Madingley Focus Group are working on a safe cycling and walking project with officers for their conservation area. Milton Road Residents Association and Hurst Park Avenue RA's have worked closely with officers on design ideas for the streetscape and landscaping of the GCP's Milton Road Project. Following their efforts, the GCP Board approved a set of plans that North Cambridge residents describe as being much more in keeping with a street built for people rather than a corridor built for buses – the original plan. Construction is now scheduled to commence in April 2020 with completion at the end of 2021.

Histon Road Road Area residents have also actively engaged with plans for the Histon Road scheme, which is expected to commence in the autumn of this year. Histon Road Area RA has also secured funding to work an exciting oral history project of their area.

Environmental issues have once again been a key issue for RAs across the city

The decision to fence off ancient Ditton Meadows from the Chisholm Trail cycle way was handled via planning conditions and secret landowner agreements, with no public scrutiny and raised a lot of concerns about the lack of consultation and transparency.

SLIDE 4 ARBURY HEDGE-MAKING A STAND

The same concerns were raised In Arbury when an ancient city boundary hedge bordering the Arbury Play Park, a Protected Open Space owned by the City Council, was removed too make way for a cycle path despite a brave sit-down protest of one local resident. Hurst Park Avenue Residents have launched a formal complaint about the process of consultation.

SLIDE 5 HOOPER STREET CHESTNUT TREES SAVED

North Cambridge Residents were not able to save the Arbury hedge, but following an SOS from Mill Road Community groups that their much loved Hooper Street horse-chestnut trees were at risk, FeCRA alerted residents across the city who moved swiftly to object to an application to fell and prune the trees, a green lung in a heavily built up area of the city. The trees were saved.

In Newnham there was an outcry from residents when the County Council ripped out bushes, saplings and a mature ash tree on the footpath by Grantchester Meadows. They informed the City Council tree officer who issued a notice requiring replacement planting.

SLIDE 6 GRANTCHESTER MEADOWS REPLACEMENT REPLANTING

Montreal Square RA have campaigned against the Cambridge Housing Society's plans to demolish their homes and community and the protected green space and thirty trees of the square. The campaign to raise the profile of their gem of a community and its square, an attractive green space in Romsey a ward with very little green open space has garnered city wide and cross-party support.

A new Cambridge City Council team has been established to help improve the city's streets, parks and open spaces by forging closer links with local residents and community groups and ensure that they play an active role in caring for their local environment. West Cambridge Residents, including members of Newnham Croft RA and South Newnham Neighbourhood Forum, working closely with the City Council's Biodiversity Officer, have set up the Friends of Paradise Nature Reserve.

SLIDE 7 BIODIVERSITY - PARADISE NATURE RESERVE

The hedgehog talk they organised reflects national concern about falling numbers of hedgehogs and the decimation of UK wildlife. At the inaugural meeting of another Friends Group, the Friends of Queens Green the City Council's Biodiversity officer spoke about the ways to enhance the biodiversity of Queen's Green.

Biodiversity and climate change is something about which many young people are very concerned. This year has seen Cambridge school children taking the lead in striking for climate change and setting up an EcoSchools council. On the south side of the city the Hills Road Tree planting scheme organised by the Hills Road Area RA with the City Council's tree officers was spearheaded with the help of thirteen year old Josephine from the RA who illustrated the leaflets designed children's activities, baked cakes and wrote speeches.

SLIDE 8 CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL CHILDREN ARE TAKING THE LEAD

Design, good place-making and genuine civic engagement are at the heart of what makes for an inclusive city and good neighbourhoods. Cambridge needs a historic environment strategy, one that addresses climate change and biodiversity. People are looking to politicians and to planners to raise the bar and give them a voice.

SLIDE 9 - FECRA BANNER – JOIN UP

Wendy Blythe

Chair, FeCRA 5.4.20