
WADRA

WADRA August 2021 Newsletter

Save the Date!

WADRA AGM 20 October 2021, 19:30-21:30

Currently the plan is to hold the AGM at the MPF Pavilion and will confirm this arrangement closer to the time. We will also make the meeting available via Zoom for those who cannot attend.

Hello Members,

We hope this Newsletter finds all our members safe and well and a warm welcome to all of our new members. The WADRA Committee have been very busy in Spring and Summer with a number of issues impacting residents.

In the past months we have been engaged in a wide range of activities, from monitoring the creation of the Deed of Dedication intended to protect Mapledurham Playing Fields from further development, working with RBC officers to re-open the Pavilion, providing kitchen equipment paid for out of WADRA funds raised, working with Festival Republic for salvaging and providing free tickets to participants, and liaising with CADRA and Matt Rodda on a possible initiative for banking facilities in Caversham. We also continue to monitor and address issues experienced by residents as a result of the Kier construction site on MPF, including the very unsafe A4074 crossing solutions. This newsletter provides some details on what the Committee, along with some members have been addressing over this time.

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Membership alignment and eMail issues

In the beginning of the year, The Committee endeavored to update the membership list and ensure that all those on that list are still valid members. We found that a number of people had moved or sadly are no longer with us. This is now completed and we will be planning a membership drive (we are stronger together) to encourage new and long-term residents to join WADRA. This will require a lot of walking as we will be delivering a note into every household in the WADRA area that is not currently a member. Many new residents, may not be aware of what WADRA does for the community or that it is required to join. If you know of any of your neighbors who are not members and would like to join, they can go to the

WADRA website at www.wadra.org.uk and under the About section, there is a link to join. **If you would like to help with delivery of the 'Why join WADRA' cards to households in our area, please contact us at info@wadra.org**

A Community Bank in Caversham

It is unfortunate that the Nationwide Building Society choose to close its doors in Caversham. Residents and Caversham Traders are now forced to travel into Reading to do their banking that they prefer not or cannot do online.

In late April, WADRA brought to the attention of CADRA, EGRA, Caversham Traders, and Matt Rodda an initiative called Community Access to Cash Pilots <https://communityaccesstocashpilots.org>. This is an independent initiative supported by the major banks, consumer groups, and groups representing small businesses. The scheme is currently supporting eight communities across the UK to trial and test scalable solutions to help keep cash services sustainable in smaller communities. The results of the pilot will be used to inform regulators and industry alike so that cash can remain a viable mode of payment for consumers across the UK, and small businesses are able to accept and bank cash.

WADRA requested assistance from Matt Rodda and recently spoke with him. Matt is very keen to support the community in re-establishing a banking facility in Caversham. He has already made inquiries via the relevant minister. WADRA will be working with Matt to better understand if there is a viable solution for Caversham. We look forward to working with Matt, CADRA and Caversham Traders in an effort to make life just that bit easier for all of our members and residents.

In order help with some of the leg and brain work, WADRA are seeking a member who has banking or financial expertise that would like to work on this issue as a representative of WADRA and be involved investigating options for a suitable banking initiative. **If you would be interested in working on this, please email the WADRA Committee info@wadra.org.uk**

Chazey Farm and the Tithe Barn

There has been no new information on activities or plans for the Tithe Barn at Chazey Court Farm or the development of a large nursing home on the site. If you are interested in this topic and would like to support WADRA by pursuing the relevant parties for more information, please email the Committee to discuss how you can get involved.

Chazey Wood and Absolute Airsoft

The WADRA Committee made some initial inquiries earlier in the year into the new Absolute Airsoft centre in Chazey Wood on the Mapledurham Estate, <https://www.absolute-airsoft.co.uk/reading>. The business is currently up and running and was based on the initial conditions of planning permission granted in the late 90's. The main issue that has arisen is the blocking off of public footpaths that have been used by local residents for up to five decades. There were a number of initial confrontations with men carrying 'guns' in Chazey Wood when members of the public continued to use the public footpaths.

WADRA's concern is with the use of high-powered Airsoft rifles that could potentially travel out of the site boundary and cause injury. They have provided assurance that the power of the rifles used on site are well within their boundary, but upon speaking with users of the site, who brought their own weapons, this was found not to be true according to our witness. The site, according to the planning permission, is 70 acres. On their website they advertise that the site is 150 acres. It is likely that the site will significantly

increase in size, and along with that increase noise and traffic. It was also found that the last occupier of the site constructed a number of structures. For which there was no planning permission. Today there are numerous structures on the site and it appears as if they are building additional ones. We believe that there is no planning permission for any additional structures on site.

The site also produces a significant amount of noise when running and homes within 1.5k distance are able to hear the noise of weapons firing, unfortunately throughout the weekend. The Committee was unable to pursue these issues to their full extent, but there were a number of local residents who were interested in ensuring that the footpaths that have been open to the public across Chazey Wood remain available. **If you are interested in being involved in the efforts to maintain the public footpaths in this area and in general planning enforcement for the site, please email WADRA and we will connect you to others who are working on this issue.**

Mapledurham Playing Fields and Pavilion

MPF Deed of Dedication

When the land at MPF was leased to the EFSA for The Heights School, RBC and the MPF Trustee Sub-Committee were committed to entering into a Deed of Dedication designed to protect the MPF Trust from further development. After almost two years, the community is still awaiting a final Deed of Dedication for the Mapledurham Playing Fields. The Deed document is currently in draft form (see link below) and has been produced by RBC's legal representatives.

The Draft Deed of Dedication can be found here <https://wadra.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/DRAFT-MPF-deed-of-dedication.pdf>

The intended purpose of the Deed is to protect MPF from any further development or restriction of land from beneficiaries. After WADRA's careful consideration of the draft document, it remains unclear how this document would serve the intended purpose. WADRA wrote to Chris Brooks, Corporate Legal Advisor at RBC, to ask a number of questions concerning the ability of the terms in this document to protect MPF from further development or access restrictions to any of the remaining green space. The reply received was not reassuring.

As a result of great doubt on the ability of the draft Deed to delivery on its intended purpose, WADRA sought expert legal advice. WADRA were advised that the document was indeed not fit for purpose. Our legal adviser replied that the beneficiaries should be very concerned with the current document as it will not protect the playing fields to any great degree. As a result of this, WADRA has instructed our legal advisor to provide a draft version of a deed of dedication that is fit for purpose, i.e., to keep the remaining portion of the Mapledurham Playing Fields free from development or restricted beneficiary access. This new version of the Deed of Dedication will be available the first week in September. Currently some at RBC are resisting the considering of a new version.

As you may be aware, people's past behaviour is a reliable indication of how they will act in the future and therefore there are concerns for the future of the Mapledurham Playing Fields Trust.

We will continue to push RBC and the Trustees to accept a Deed of Dedication that is fit for purpose. Letters to support the creation and signing of a relevant Deed that will protect the remaining green space at MPF should be addressed to; Isobel Ballsdon Isobel.Ballsdon@reading.gov.uk, Chris Brooks Chris.Brooks@reading.gov.uk, Deborah Edwards deborah.edwards@reading.gov.uk, Matt Rodda mattroddampcasework@parliament.uk, Angela Lewis, Fields in Trust angela.lewis@fieldsintrust.org and WADRA info@wadra.org. A letter can include your concern for the robustness of the Deed of Dedication

and requesting that the final version have more protection against development or the ability for a single group to commandeer land.

You can read the email exchange between WADRA and Chris Brooks, RBC here: [XXX](#) Below are the questions that the Committee have put to Chris Brooks on 17 May 2021, Chris Brooks answers in italics.

Pavilion Refurbishment

The bulk of the refurbishment of the Pavilion is completed. It has been transformed into the lovely space we (WADRA and the User Community) always knew it could be. There is still some work to be done around the Pavilion, mostly landscaping and fitting out the kitchen, but RBC are hoping to open it up very soon (as always COVID depending). Unfortunately, due to a last-minute revision in the plans for the Pavilion, there is very little on-site storage for frequent users. The landscaping work is to be completed by Kier as they have used the land around the Pavilion for storage. All landscaping work must be completed before the school can open as per the conditions of the School's planning application.

WADRA and others have been very busy getting a working kitchen up and running. WADRA would like to thank Shaun Tanner, Michael Foldvari, Trish Goble, Caversham Trents, The Bartlett's, and Luke Lloyd, who have contributed to the fitting out and sourcing equipment for the kitchen and its design.

Pavilion Kitchen

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The Heights Primary School

The is scheduled to open on 6 September 2021

Working with The Heights

WADRA would like to see the integration of the school community into our area be a positive experience for all involved. There are concerns that the school will have a negative impact, in particular on the surrounding residents, based on the experience of residents living close to The Heights temporary site. Despite previous requests having been refused, WADRA has again requested that school meet with MPF user representatives and residents to see how we can ensure that their integration into the area is smooth and positive for all.

Despite all but one previous request being refused for a meeting between the school and WADRA, a virtual meeting did take place on 10th March 2021. Martin Brommell represented WADRA and the Heights had several school representatives led by Esmé Tiplady and Karen Edwards the headmistress. This meeting was specifically to review the school's proposed Travel Plan. It included an overview of the proposed action plan, school travel data, some of the actions the Heights have been working on to facilitate smooth drop off and pick up, plans with regards to the day to day site management, and an opportunity for WADRA and others to put questions to the school. The Heights stated that they are not in a position of being able to submit their Travel Plan until they occupy the new MPF site which meant that unfortunately they cannot share the document yet. They were able to discuss the intended strategies and intent. Much of their plan is predicated on the temporary site and bears little relevance to the challenges faced by visitors to the school once it relocates to Mapledurham Playing Field.

An example of this was the Heights response as to why the School Streets Scheme had been deemed unsuitable for the new site. The Heights reiterated that the transport team and Transport Development Control Manager advised that the Heights cannot submit their travel plan until after they occupy the site.

A review of those plans will not take place until 3 months after they have been operational at the new location.

Key points from the meeting included:

- Data may change when 50 new Reception children join the school in September'21. Information cannot be gathered from them because they haven't yet been offered places.
- Year 6 pupils, the largest out of catchment, will finish this July thus a perceived reduction in car travel
- The school stated that they "actively discouraged" car use but Karen Edwards explained they have no enforcement powers and can only act via communications with offenders.
- The school's plan ties in with the LCWIP (local walking & infrastructure plan) where they can influence cycle and pedestrian routes
- The Heights proposed holding an open evening for residents after the school opens, now thought to be early September 2021.
- Cllr Ballsdon responded to a question calling for a 20mph scheme on the A4074 by advising that it cannot be considered because it is a main highway and national policy prevents this.

WADRA continues to press for school representatives to meet with MPF user representatives and residents to see how we can ensure that their integration into the area is smooth and positive one for all concerned. Disappointedly, our most recent letter to Nick Walden, Chair of Governors has gone unanswered, as have the majority of correspondence to the school. Regardless of how hard we try to communicate with the school in good faith, and multiple suggestions for doing what is best for everyone, The School's leaders have not engaged. A copy of our most recent correspondence can be found here: 22 July [Letter to Nick Walden](#).

Planning conditions - Building beyond the school boundaries

In June it became apparent that the school was building outside its red-line boundary. Specifically, the stairs leading from the multi-use games area (MUGA) have been constructed on MPF land not included in the school lease. On 2 July, after a meeting with RBC to highlight the building outside planning conditions, WADRA wrote to RBC with a plan/drawing of how this issue could be easily rectified without building outside the school boundaries. To date RBC have not replied and the stairs remain.

Subsidence

Many of you may have heard or noticed that the land to the front of the school (north side) had shown signs of subsidence early in the summer when some of the welfare buildings had been moved. WADRA have asked numerous times to an array of different organisations, e.g., Kier, RBC, EFSA, Isobel Ballsdon, for a copy of a subsidence report commissioned for this area of the school grounds. WADRA's concern is that the subsidence was close to residents' home and there was no information made available to residents to assure them that there is no structural impact on their homes. With no responses received, we have again requested that Kier provide a copy of the subsidence report for the school car park.

Working with Kier

Since lockdown began, WADRA has been inundated with calls and emails from residents complaining about the noise, vibration, and light pollution, dangerous and inconsiderate parking, and behaviour of Kier staff, the construction company working on Mapledurham Playing Fields. The WADRA Committee has been working with residents, RBC, and Kier to try to alleviate residents' increasing distress.

Since the work commenced on the construction of the Heights School, WADRA has been working consistently with local residents to ensure that their issues, concerns, and damage to their homes are addressed by RBC, Kier and the DoE. We met with the new site manager, Robert Walsh (Robert.Walsh@kier.co.uk) and Narelle Wakeman (Narelle.Wakeman@kier.co.uk) the third Community Liaison to be assigned to the Heights. In an effort to have Kier recognise the impact of their actions (or lack of), WADRA agreed to a meeting to discuss how Kier can engage with the community and fix some of the problems that they have created. WADRA requested comments from residents and users that they wanted us to address with Kier. This is a 20-page document, delivered to Kier and Considerate Constructors Scheme and is available on the WADRA website [xxxxxx](#). Unfortunately, Robert Walsh was not interested in meeting with WADRA, nor addressing any of the issues experienced as a direct result of Kier's working practices.

Throughout the school development, we have kept the administration of the Considerate Constructors Scheme informed of Kier's inability to be a considerate constructor. Unfortunately, The Considerate Constructors Scheme has not been of any value during this difficult time for residents.

Community Use Agreement (The Heights School)

A Community Use Agreement (CUA) with The Heights School has been agreed with RBC. This is not an agreement between the Trust or the Mapledurham Management committee, but is part of the planning process. This is the same approach that has been taken with other schools and entered into to ensure that the school will open up its facilities to the community.

There are some concerns by residents that live closest to the school site, as it is currently proposed to allow the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at the back of the school to remain in use until 10pm during the week and the car park until 11pm. As both of these areas back on to residents' homes, noise, inconsiderate and dangerous parking as well as light pollution is a concern. We have been told by an RBC Officer that he is sure the school would be happy, to reduce access times if it is a problem.

If there is objection from residents now or in the future, on the impact of using the MUGA until 10pm during the week, please contact the WADRA Committee and we will put forward a formal request to have the MUGA hours use reduced in the evening.

The final Community Use Agreement for The Heights can be found here <https://wadra.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/190411-The-Heights-Community-Use-Agreement-April-2>

Traffic, Safety, and Pollution

WADRA have raised a number of serious concerns regarding health and safety issues with RBC and the Heights. These issues mainly relate to traffic, parking, safety, noise and pollution. An example is the new island in the middle of the A4074, which encourages parents and children to use this as a crossing point, but at the risk of being caught in a very narrow corridor whilst large vehicles, such as articulated lorries and buses, pass closely by.

The access road leading to the MPF car park appears to be too narrow for two large cars to safely pass each other during the school's "kiss-n-drop" periods. This situation is made more dangerous by blind corners in the car park and the possibility of vehicles having to queue back onto the A4074 to access or exit this short road. The MPF car park faces further closures for lorry grade block paving to be laid between 5th -25th July which will affect visitors travelling to MPF by car.

There will also be disruption whilst a Pedestrian Refuge Island, Zebra Crossing and school markings are painted on the A4074. Another concern is that the school car park only has 20 car parking spaces for some 80 teaching staff, of which two spaces are reserved for disabled users. To avoid street parking, Karen Edwards advised that some teaching staff have made arrangements to use nearby neighbours driveways during the school day. 45-50 pupils will be dropped off early and collected later than normal school hours due to attending breakfast & after school clubs, which may alleviate some parking issues. Car parking spaces in front of the MPF pavilion appear to have reduced to around 50 with some further spaces reserved for tennis club players by the courts. The car park definitely appears to be smaller in capacity than it used to be and this is impacted by the one-way system to accommodate kiss and drop. It is feared that such limited car park spaces will force many visitors to park in roads surrounding MPF.

One of the biggest concerns is the lack of parking controls in streets surrounding MPF. Poor parking is already being experienced daily as Kier workers park dangerously in Woodcote Way and Knowle Close. Residents in roads such as Hewett Avenue and Chazey Road have seen a massive increase in verge parking by football and tennis players, dog walkers and casual visitors to MPF. Unless RBC Highways act to invoke parking restrictions in these roads at peak times, both during the week and during match days at weekends, the safety of children, parents and other MPF users will be put at risk. Several local roads are narrow with blind spots and especially Hewett Avenue where people exiting the playing field run the risk of walking into the path of oncoming vehicles as they blindly exit MPF via the Breedon pathway exits if vehicles are parked along the verges.

One question which remains unanswered concerns car parking capacity once the school and pavilion open, with both being in use at the same time as MLTC, CTFC and the MUGA are all in use. It was acknowledged by the headmistress, Karen Edwards, that problems could arise and these will need to be reviewed and addressed as they occur. There is no appetite by RBC or the school's traffic advisers to take any action until the school becomes operational. WADRA have pointed out on numerous occasions that there is clearly insufficient parking in the combined school and MPF car parks to facilitate such congested usage but this warning has fallen on deaf ears.

Anyone experiencing poor parking should, in the first instance, contact RBC at:

[https://self.reading.gov.uk/service/Report an illegally parked vehicle](https://self.reading.gov.uk/service/Report%20an%20illegally%20parked%20vehicle)

For dangerous parking issues, please use the following contact points:

MapledurhamandThamesNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police or

PeppardandCavershamNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police

Events and Initiatives

WADRA Community Hub at Mapledurham Pavilion

WADRA will be organizing a Thursday afternoon Community Hub session at the Pavilion. From 12:30-4:30pm the Pavilion will be open and serving hot and cold drinks, cakes, and snacks. We are organizing with The Ways and Means Trust to supply the cakes each week to help them fundraise.

We will be organizing speakers, activities, or groups to come in and talk to residents about what they offer. Informal groups or just individuals will be very welcome to participate or just have a quiet coffee.

If you would like to volunteer to work serving drinks etc. for one afternoon a month, please contact WADRA at info@wadra.org. Alternatively, if you have a special interest, e.g., gardening or have an informal group, e.g., book swap club, please contact WADRA if you would like to be part of one or more Thursday afternoons.

Reading Festival

Reading Festival is on again this year and they are expecting 105 thousand attendees. You should have received a flyer from Reading Festival through your door. Due to Covid, not everyone may have received a flyer. Some details are below that may be useful.

A hotline number 0208 396 7621 has been set up for local residents to offer comments or raise queries during the event. The phone will be answered between 9am and 5pm on Wednesday, 25 August and then 24 hours from 9:00 Thursday 26th August until 15:00 Monday 30 August. There is also an email address that you can send information to licensing@reading.gov.uk.

- The campsite will open on 25 August, Wednesday at 18:00
- The campsite opens to all 26 August at 08:00
- Festival Show days Friday 27 to Sunday 29 August
- Monday 30 August waste clearance starts
- Friday 17 September the site is clear

Entertainment Schedule:

	Recorded Music	Live Music	Live Music (Festival Republic/Pit/Lock Up)	Cabaret & Comedy	Cinema
Thursday 26	15:00-03:00				00:00—1:00
Friday 27	10:00-03:00	12:00-00:00	11:00- 00:00	12:00-03:00	00:00-04:00
Saturday 28	10:00-03:00	11:00-00:00	11:00- 00:00	11:00-03:00	00:00-04:00
Sunday 29	10:00-03:00	11:30-00:00	11:00- 00:00	11:30-03:00	00:00-04:00

WADRA will be doing salvaging on Monday afternoon and all day on Tuesday after the Festival. Some items will be given directly to local charities. We plan to have a camping gear sale within a month.

Safer neighborhoods (Martin)

The North Reading Safer Neighborhood Forum (NRSNF) is a voluntary group consisting of residents, resident associations, Neighborhood Watch teams, RBC and Thames Valley Police representatives who meet approximately every 6 weeks to help resolve community safety and crime related issues within an identified area.

Current topics have included thefts of bikes from sheds and garages. Thefts of motor vehicles or contents from vehicles. Fly tipping, speeding, recent stabbings, begging, rough sleepers, drug abuse, motorised scooters and anti-social behavior. Advice from these forums includes personal security especially in the warm weather, when doors and windows are left open. Suggestions for all residents is the use of CCTV or RING cameras, gravel drives, robust locks, Farady pouches for keyless cars and security best practices.

The Police continue to urge us to report incidences. While it may be helpful to alert others via social media, the police do need information direct. Plans are in hand for Community Speedwatch to be relaunched and we will report back when the scheme is ready to invite volunteers.

Reporting

- Reporting Nuisance - <https://www.reading.gov.uk/environment/nuisance/report-nuisance/>
- Non-emergency crime reporting – www.thamesvalley.police.uk or via 101
- Anonymous Crimestoppers – 0800 555111
- In an emergency - 999

Our Environment

Plant a Tree for the Jubilee

In an effort to keep the WADRA area green and replace trees that have been lost due to development, we thought members would be interested in **The Queen's Green Canopy** initiative. The scheme is available to individuals and organisations. More information and a link to the website are below.

The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) is a unique tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 which invites people from across the United Kingdom to "**Plant a Tree for the Jubilee.**" Everyone from individuals to Scout and Girlguiding groups, villages, cities, counties, schools and corporates will be encouraged to play their part to enhance our environment by planting trees from October, when the tree planting season begins, through to the end of the Jubilee year in 2022.

With a focus on planting sustainably, the QGC will encourage planting of trees to create a legacy in honour of The Queen's leadership of the Nation, which will benefit future generations. As well as inviting the planting of new trees, *The Queen's Green Canopy* will dedicate a network of 70 Ancient Woodlands across the United Kingdom and identify 70 Ancient Trees to celebrate Her Majesty's 70 years of service. For more information go to the website at <https://queensgreencanopy.org>

Philip Darlow Obituary

Many of our members will have had the pleasure to meet Phil Darlow, one of WADRA's long-standing Committee members. Phil moved to Kidmore Road as a child in 1945 when his father was appointed Town Clerk of Reading. Living in Reading, the river and boats became a large part of his life. Subsequently the family moved to The Warren, where their boats were at the bottom of their garden. After completing his training at Warsash Maritime Academy Phil started his career as a merchant naval officer, mainly on ships trading and carrying passengers between Britain the Far East. Upon marrying Gill in 1962, Phil left the merchant navy and began work at The Baltic Exchange in the City of London, buying and selling cargo space. He then set up with a colleague, Mike Magnus, Magdar Shipbrokers in 1976. Phil and Gill had four children, Dough, Nigel, Jen and Pete who grew up in the house on The Warren, where he lived until his death in April. Gill passed away in 2007 after a long illness and Phil subsequently found happiness and companionship with Mutzuko. They enjoyed many happy years together.

Phil was dedicated to his family and also had a hugely successful career, becoming one of the leading and most respected Shipbrokers in London, but Phil will be remembered by the community as the unassuming, non-pretentious, laidback and quietly knowledgeable (about just about everything!) person who volunteered a huge amount of time to the community via WADRA. We aren't quite sure how long Phil served on WADRA, but we do know that his position on the committee was preceded his mother's, who was one of the founding members back in 1963. Most recently he was keeping an eye on what has been happening at Chazey Farm and the development of a nursing home. This development has been going on for at least three decades and Phil knew every detail. His historic knowledge of the area and WADRA was invaluable and was a significant contribution to the development of a Constitution that is in keeping with the aims and purpose of WADRA from its inception.

Phil will be greatly missed by all of us on the WADRA Committee and those that have worked with him in the community. It was a great privilege to have worked with him.

we have made a £100 donation to Sue Ryder Foundation as per Phil's wishes. Phil's daughter, Jenny, has some recordings of Phil talking about the history of the area as well as the tea set that was commissioned for the Queen Mother's visit. The committee voted to put the recording/transcripts on the website along with pictures of the china.

Action: Elisa to arrange recording/transcript to go on website



Contact Us

Questions or Concerns: If you have any questions for WADRA or any concerns about issues in the community, please contact the Committee at info@wadra.org.uk

Volunteering to support WADRA: If you have some ideas for community events, fundraising events, a community initiative, would like to become more involved with WADRA or the running of an event, please contact the WADRA Committee at info@wadra.org.uk.

Elisa Miles, Chair
Martin Brommell, Secretary
Hayley Brommell, Treasurer

Robert O'Neill
Pam Reynolds
John Heaps (co-opted)

Alistair McLean
Sally Hart (co-opted)
Michael Howes (co-opted)