

Street Parties

On Saturday the 14th of September 2019 **Vernon Avenue** hosted its very own Street Party Celebration! With previous street parties being documented in 1977 and 1981, the event was eagerly anticipated! Residents young and old were treated to a gloriously sunny day, a tasty BBQ spread by our very own resident grill chefs and a range of entertainment & activities all day! So many residents took the opportunity to mingle and get to know each other. The event was a huge success and residents are already looking forward to the next one! A special note of thanks to the local businesses who generously donated to the event:

Universal Flooring, Cakeology, Kitchen Renovations, Phillipa's Kitchen. Thank you to ALL Vernon Avenue residents for accommodating the event, road closure and parking restrictions on the day and to our street rep and organising committee without which the event would not have happened. **Louise Cabecas**



Bronson Road held a Car Free Day Event on Sunday 22 September: Thank you to everybody who joined to make the Car Free Day a success. Despite the weather starting out rather wet, it managed to clear up and allow people to join in the celebrations. The children played lots of activities like bubble-blowing, hopscotch, skateboarding and even a bouncy castle appeared which had to be the highlight. The event was enjoyed by all the children and adults too. **Suzanne Barnes**

Street parties are a great way of having a good time and getting to know our neighbours. It is really fun closing the road and taking it over to relax together and children can play safely. And you get to say hello to that person down the street you see regularly but haven't quite got round to it! Often we plan these days on Big Public occasions such as a Royal Wedding. Friday 8 May 2020 is going to be a celebration for 75 years since VE Day (Victory in Europe) (The Bank Holiday is being moved from the previous Monday). Might this be the day for your street to put on a party? It is not as difficult to organise as you think. We discovered very quickly that lots of people want to assist in setting up and running the event so the burden is always shared. If you are interested in setting up a party, speak to your road rep. There is always help from roads who have put on a party.



The ARA needs a new Chair!

Residents Associations are funny things. What are they about? As stated on the middle page, we were set up with the specific intention of protecting our homes from conversion to flats. (There was a secondary aim at that time to develop the land between Sydney and Dupont roads into a community garden – but we failed on that one!) So our major objective is to look out for planning applications, which could negatively affect our properties. We are also involved in facilitating neighbourliness in our streets, which is why we focus on having a rep for each street. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will see more of the sorts of things we do e.g. street parties, tree planting, campaigning for better street cleaning.

We work closely with our three ward councillors who are always there to support us and help obtain answers from the Council when we need them. We are members of the Raynes Park Association and as such work with them for the improvement of the whole Raynes Park area.

To be really effective, residents associations have to make sure they truly represent the whole community. The danger is that they can find themselves being run by 'older' residents (like me!) who have perhaps more time for such matters. In the ARA we pride ourselves on having a good cross-section of committee members including some with young families.

I was involved in setting up the ARA 30 years ago and have been Chair at various points in its life. I am looking for someone to succeed me. Are you looking to do some valuable voluntary work and do you think that perhaps this is something for you? You will have a great team working with you. I promise my full support. If you are interested, please contact me so that we can talk more. It is a very worthwhile task!

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New pedestrian/ cycle route from Raynes Park to New Malden

Have you yet been along this new route, which was opened this summer? It makes for a great stroll or cycle ride. The access to the route is via Taunton Avenue at the back end of Waitrose. And if you don't want to walk back, you can always take the train!



Date for your diaries

Friday 6 December 2019 from 3.30pm to 5.30pm: Raynes Park Christmas Festival. This annual event is always a great success and includes choirs from local schools and adult groups. Father Christmas will be there too! This year the Festival will be held around the station entrance.



@apostlesra



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ARA Committee Members

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Apostles Residents' Association Newsletter November 2019



Summertime at the Skew Arch!



For those of you new to The Apostles – welcome!

Major alert in the Apostles – Planning application to convert our homes into two small flats

The Apostles Residents Association was set up some 30 years ago with its main purpose to protect our lovely family dwellings from being converted into two small flats. At that time a few conversions were undertaken. It was (and may still be) a developers' paradise. Let's say that our properties are worth £700k. A developer purchases one, then converts it into 2 flats and sells them for £500k each – a nice profit! As more and more houses are converted, our streets change completely in character. And, more importantly, these family homes are lost forever. In Merton there is a lack of family houses, defined as having 3 or more bedrooms.

Please bear with me as some of the detail is a bit complicated – such is planning law! But this is important for all of us, so please stay with it!

Over the years the ARA has campaigned successfully to make sure the Council's planning policy gave us protection. The wording of the Council's Core Planning Strategy includes the presumption to refuse planning permission to convert a 'family' house into flats. We were given to understand this would protect our homes from such conversions.

We were therefore surprised that an application for planning permission to convert 36 Aston Road into two flats has been made. On behalf of the ARA we opposed the application and quoted the relevant paragraph of the Council's Core Strategy. We assumed we would hear no more. However, we were totally shocked to discover the Council's planning officer recommended acceptance of the application. She argued that, as the property was currently 2 bedrooms, it did not fall within the meaning of the Core Strategy because it was deemed too small to be a 'family' house. So, the argument is that because it wasn't a 'family house' in size, no loss of family houses would occur.

The matter went before the Planning Committee on 17 October 2019. We made our submission. We pointed out to them that 36 Aston Road was built (as were all the Apostle houses) as a 3-bedroom family home. Most people then converted the small bedroom into a bathroom so they became 2 bedrooms. We said to the committee that if they permitted this application, it would in effect allow any developer to purchase a 3-bedroom house, convert it to 2 bedrooms, and then apply to turn it into 2 flats! We also said to them that granting the application would be to ignore what actually happens in the Apostles i.e. young people purchase a 2-bedroom house with a view to extending it when they need to. And finally we told them that by granting the application they would totally undermine their stated intention to preserve family housing.

I am pleased to say the committee listened to the points we made and have deferred the application. This is not, however, necessarily good news. They want to consider the legality of the Council's Core Strategy. But they also want to check out the point we made about our houses starting as 3 bedrooms.

So watch this space. Meanwhile, if you hear of any such planning application, please let us know immediately. Do you want to receive updates on this and other local issues? If so, are you on our mailing list? If not, simply send me an email and I will add your name. Please also let me know your address, as sometimes we send out information relevant to an individual street.

When this matter returns to the Planning Committee, we will be encouraging everyone to send in their comments, and perhaps turn up en masse at the meeting.

Our survey

You may recall that we undertook a survey of Apostle residents earlier this year. These are the main conclusions (*with ARA comments in italics*):

Residents believe the ARA is beneficial to the local community and appreciate the work it does. *That is good news!*

There is an opportunity to increase contact with residents, as it would be appreciated by a great many people. *We continually look for more ways to do this.*

We need to increase engagement via social and digital channels – e.g. drive more people to the website for information (we should also use Survey Monkey as a tool to maintain contact and gain opinions). *One respondent kindly offered their services to assist us. However, we didn't take contact details so could not respond. We would love to hear from you and would very much appreciate your help and advice!*

The cleanliness of the streets is a key issue for the majority of people – a street clean-up would be well supported! *We discussed this at our recent meeting and will be planning something for the spring – so watch this space!*

People are keen to show their support / get involved in ad-hoc events – *we need to find ways to channel their energy and enthusiasm.*

Consider Neighbourhood Watch as an additional opportunity. *This is an interesting suggestion. However, we act as a kind of 'neighbourhood watch' already. We immediately alert residents of any criminal activity via our MailChimp database – let us know if you want to be signed up for these alerts and other local news. We also have a rep on the local Dundonald Police Safer Neighbourhood Team with whom we liaise regularly.*

Street cleaning

We continue to monitor the rubbish collection and street cleaning in our roads. Please let your road rep know of any problems you encounter and, of course, inform the Council. The general message is that the household rubbish collections are going well, but that there remains a problem for the collection of rubbish from those living above the shops on Kingston Road. This causes problems at the ends of our streets. This has been particularly bad in Vernon Avenue and Gore Road. Edward Clark, our Vernon Avenue rep, has been negotiating with Merton Council insisting on improvements. Cllr Anthony Fairclough has assisted us greatly too.

Damage to cars from delivery vans

We were concerned to learn that quite a number of residents have had damage done to their cars from delivery vans, especially supermarket deliveries. A resident of Sydney Road informed us that a driver attempted to turn in the middle of the road rather than going to the end. This resulted in £3k damage to his car, which he is having difficulty claiming. Many of our roads are fortunate enough to have turning areas at the end of our roads. It therefore makes sense to inform delivery drivers of this fact. Some roads do not have good turning areas and where we can we are trying to address this with the Council.

St Saviour's Church WW1 war memorial restoration

You may recall that last November St Saviour's Church in Grand Drive held an exhibition to mark 100 years since the WW1 Armistice. They also planned to repair the war memorial in the church grounds, and they asked for donations for this purpose. We have just heard from Peter Hutton, the project co-ordinator, that the good news is that they have received £20k of the £23k needed. However, thanks to the usual bureaucracy of seeking permissions the project has not yet been completed. They are quietly confident it will take place in the coming year.

Farmers markets

The Raynes Park Association (RPA) has been working with Simon Greig, who runs the successful market in Wimbledon Village on Sundays. He hopes to open a market in Raynes Park on Saturdays. His aim is to position the market at the station entrance with stalls either side of the archway. However, space is limited and Merton Council has concerns. The RPA is working with the Council and with Simon to see if there is a way forward. Meanwhile a market has now opened on Sundays at Wimbledon Chase School.

Trees

You may recall that in our last newsletter we were in negotiation with Merton Council to receive some money from us for some tree planting in our streets. We have now succeeded in coming up with an agreement with them. At our recent meeting we decided to increase our donation from £2k to £3k. (This cash has built up over years from the surplus from our annual subs collections.) Jane Plant, our tree advisor, is in negotiation with them to get the best deal for our money! By the way, if you have ideas for other ways to spend small amounts of money on something local, let us know.

Parking charges

The cost for our annual CPZ permit will rise by 100% next year from £65 to £110. We campaigned vigorously against what we see as a totally unfair tax as it is not levied on people with their own driveway or who live in a non-parking controlled area. The Council claimed they were doing it to protect the environment and discourage us from using a car. Whilst many of us accept we have to live more sustainably, the additional charge is unlikely to deter anyone from running a car.

Apostles' mother and baby group

Are you currently on maternity leave, shortly expecting a baby or have little ones at home? Rebecca from Carlton Park Avenue has set up an Apostles parent/carer and baby group. Please text her on 07861 684341 if you would like to be involved.

Don't leave food around

We understand that in Chestnut Road a resident has been leaving food out for the foxes. This is NOT a good idea as it leads to the foxes making a great mess and adding to it by what they leave behind!