

Chichester District Council

Full Council

31 January 2023

Public Questions and Answers Sheet

Question from Penny Tomlinson:

I have lived in Westgate in the Conservation area for the past eight years. During that period the traffic has become increasingly oppressive both in volume and speed. The 20mph speed limit is widely ignored and the 7.5 tonne weight limit is also abused. A few years ago a neighbour tried to get a Speed Indicator Device installed but the Highways Department of the WSCC refused permission. At that time a Freedom of Information request revealed that the Police had not enforced the speed limit for the last five years. This situation is intolerable and the pollution levels are among the highest in Europe, at almost three times the WHO safe level.

The Chichester District Council in July 2019 declared a “Climate Emergency” in the District and committed to reducing CO² levels across the City by 10% per year until 2025. Westgate is a very polluted area and this affects the health of its residents, the many children and other pedestrians who pass through daily as well as cyclists who use the two National Cycle Routes of which Westgate is a key part.

A recent survey revealed that as much as 73% of the traffic using Westgate at peak times is actually ‘through traffic’ going to and from the A27. This traffic should be using Via Ravenna, built as the A259 Westgate Relief road, but prefers the shortcut down Westgate, an unclassified residential road. Something needs to change. The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham recently introduced a scheme to prevent the use of residential streets by traffic avoiding arterial roads. This has not only improved traffic flow on all roads but has also reduced CO² pollution in this area of the borough by more than a tonne per day! These facts are verified by the borough data. The scheme relies on ANPR and local residents being permitted to pass freely through their neighbourhood while alien traffic is not. The attached Flyer, which had been provided by way of an up-date for local residents, provides an excellent overview of what could be achieved in Chichester, with minimal delay and at virtually no cost.

Given that the development of 1,600 new homes to the West of Westgate will inevitably exacerbate our traffic volumes, urgent action now needs to be taken to prevent through traffic using Westgate as a short-cut – especially when a more suitable alternative exists in Via Ravenna.

Hopefully you have all had the opportunity to consider the BACKGROUND provided prior to this meeting and therefore:

My question is:

Will the District Council please support the installation of an ANPR system to reduce traffic on Westgate so that this could be installed without delay following an application to the Secretary of State,

And,

Will the council ensure that this system is approved for installation before planning consent is given for further housebuilding at Minerva Heights (Whitehouse Farm).

Answer from Cllr Penny Plant:

Thank you for your question. As you rightly point out, the District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and subsequently published a detailed action plan containing targets and a wide-ranging series of actions to reduce carbon emissions both within the Council's own estate and the wider district. Whilst I note your concerns regarding the volume of traffic using Westgate as an alternative to Via Ravenna, matters concerning traffic routing and traffic management within the city are a matter for West Sussex County Council as the local highway authority and so you should approach them with your request. Should the County Council formally consult the District Council on the matter outlined in your question then this Council will carefully consider its response through our normal governance process.

With regard to air quality on Westgate; the Council adopted the Chichester City Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which includes Route B for Westgate. That route is a high priority for bringing forward and is intended to reduce air pollution by pushing alternative modes (cycling, walking and other non-car modes) on that route in due course. It is through encouraging switching to these alternative modes that traffic management measures on Westgate can contribute a modest but helpful amount to the district-wide carbon target. Again, as a Highway matter this is for WSCC to implement.

In respect of your reference to the planning application at Whitehouse Farm, I would add that the merits of those planning proposals, which include the impact of additional traffic on roads in the area, are presently under consideration by the Council in its role as the local planning authority. You may therefore wish to submit representations to the application outlining your concerns and also raise them with WSCC which is a statutory consultee to the application. A decision on the application will be made in due course by the Council's planning committee which you can attend and register to speak at should you wish to.