

Redland & Cotham Amenities Society



Annual Report
Open Gardens
Student Liaison
Planning, Parks
Trees



Number 204 - September 2024

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

As Autumn approaches, it is great to remind ourselves of the excellent Open Gardens event this summer. It was a delight to visit so many interesting gardens in the Redland East area. Thank you to the new Open Gardens team and congratulations on a successful debut! If anyone would like to join the team do get in touch; they would welcome an additional member.

This year the monthly Cotham Gardens workparties have continued to engage more people in keeping the park looking good. The social events have brought the wider community together and the new flower bed project has been welcomed by local residents and school families who enjoy the flowers and the insects that visit the bed.

Our whole area has been much 'greener' this year as the council has reduced the amount of herbicide use and the streets have a wide range of set-set wildflowers growing, not only in the parks, but also along the edges of the pavements and in the gutters. Is this something you welcome or concerns you? We have some concerns about the way that the paths in Cotham Gardens are being broken up by grass and weeds that have grown up where the tarmac is damaged which is increasing the damage and causing potholes in the paths.

Has anyone else been struck by the impact of the changeover to LED lighting in our streets? Looking up at the night skies in August, and spotting the 'shooting stars' from the Perseids, I was aware that the number of stars visible has increased significantly and I look forward to enjoying this as the evenings draw in. The change has meant a drop in lighting levels at ground level as well and there are areas where the streetlights are set wider apart making trip hazards and obstructions on pavements more difficult to see in the dark. Do report any problem areas and bins/ recycling boxes left on streets to the council if you have concerns about safety.

But all in all, this is a positive move and, not only saves the council money on running costs which can be put to better use elsewhere, but also helps the wildlife and plants which need the night-time to hunt and rest. A recent scientific study has shown that leaves on trees close to streetlights are tougher and less likely to have been eaten by insects than trees in darker areas; whether this is because of the toughness of the leaves making them less attractive to insects or reduced insect activity in street lit areas is not clear.

Slightly outside the RCAS area, there is another positive impact on our streets. The council has adopted a new policy for trade bin storage and has been rolling it out in the Old City and now on Gloucester Road. Businesses are no longer permitted to store trade bins on the pavements here, which has already reduced the pavement clutter and, with luck, will help to discourage fly-tipping here.

This change makes the Prom a much nicer place to enjoy the outdoor seating areas and removes obstructions to walking. I assume that this will continue to be rolled out in other retail areas across Bristol.

This year has seen major changes at the council and we have invited the councillors to come to our AGM in November and tell us a bit about the way decisions are being made following the end of the local mayoral role in Bristol, and how the new system is bedding in. Do put the date in your diary and come and join us at the Redland Club on November 6th. We look forward to seeing you there.

Alison Bromilow



MEMBERSHIP REPORT

A heartfelt thanks to our dedicated distributors who spent their summer delivering the May newsletter and collecting subscriptions. Their steadfast support, come rain or shine, is what makes it possible for you to receive this newsletter.

At present, our membership includes 568 households, which is slightly down from last year's total of around 584. We're keen to grow our membership to better reflect the diversity of our area, particularly by welcoming more families with young children or renters. If you think any of your neighbours might be interested in joining, please direct them to our website, or contact Kathryn (membership@rcas.org.uk) if you'd like to pass along an older newsletter.

Kathryn Armistead

The Redland High Rose in bloom



52nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The RCAS AGM will take place
on Wednesday 6th November 2024

at

The Redland Club Community Centre
Burlington Road
Bristol
BS6 6TN

Doors Open at 6.45pm

Meeting starts at 7pm

Light Refreshments provided

All members welcome.

There will be an important proposal to change the membership subscription of the society to zero that will be put to members at the meeting.

The local councillors will be attending to talk about changes to the procedures and processes at the Council.

ANNUAL PLANNING REPORT

Loss of front gardens to off-street parking bays continues to be a large part of the planning application cases in our area. It is unsurprising that this is further exacerbated by the failure of the council and government to address the issue of creating a network of publicly available charging points which drivers of electric cars can access close to their houses. We are fortunate that the loss of front gardens has been identified as a threat to the character of our area and an Article 4 direction (which removes permitted development rights) has been adopted. This means that any householder has to make a planning application for this development, which in other areas is 'permitted development' provided that the area of hardstanding is of water permeable material.

RCAS has objected to any application which entails the loss of front gardens and boundary walls and hedges. It was encouraging to read the judgement of the inspector of an application which went to appeal which dismissed the proposal and stated that similar developments showed the adverse impact of loss of front gardens and boundaries and were therefore not a precedent which could be relied upon.

He also gave weight to the argument that there would be loss of publicly available on-street parking despite this not being a planning consideration. We understand that the council parking services department are charging against the cost of loss of on-street parking in residents parking scheme areas. Any changes to the current parking layout which requires a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) has to be applied for by the BCC highways dept and obviously is costly in terms of officer time in drawing up revised plans etc which also have to go for public consultation. The costs are therefore significant.

The loss of permeable planting areas which help with slowing the flow of surface water flooding into the combined sewers is also an issue which unfortunately is not given weight under the current planning system. Even permeable paving cannot soak up the torrential rain that we are now experiencing, especially when it is laid on a slope towards the road. The London Climate Resilience Review commissioned by the mayor Sadiq Khan has emphasised the problem of increasing areas of hard surfacing and the impact on flooding in urban areas and he has suggested that charges should be made on householders to reflect this impact. We wait and see whether that is acted on in London!

Bristol continues to tackle the issue of poor-quality rental properties in the city and has brought in a new licensing system for rental properties across the whole of Bristol. In our area, we have been used to the inclusion of 'small HMOs' (3 -5 people from 2 or more households living together in a single residential unit with shared facilities) in the planning and licensing system, but the expansion of the University and the impact of the Bristol planning policy to restrict the number of HMO properties by defining a maximum level of 10% of the residential population, based on the harmful impact of overconcentration, has slowed the conversion of family houses to HMOs. We have even seen some units being converted back to family houses.

The enforcement project to deal with the cases where retrospective applications for planning permission for small HMOs has been closed and enforcement of this and other planning issues has been less of a priority than the programme to deal with the backlog of planning cases generally. This is now going well and the planning department are hopeful that Bristol will be removed from special measures later this year as planning applications are now largely being assigned and considered within the nationally designated time frame.

Unfortunately, there are a number of outstanding cases from the year which remain to be determined and many residents are still waiting for decisions on their applications.

There continue to be applications to create small residential units in back gardens. One aspect of these developments that particularly concerns us is the very small size of the home and the lack of outdoor space for the future occupants. We support the construction of new houses in the area but feel that they need to have a good standard of living which includes views out, good light levels and some amenity space (for instance to dry clothes, store waste bins or to sit outside).

There is much concern nationally that the pressure to build more houses is allowing a very large number of poor quality small residential units to be provided which will become the slums of the future. This is of particular concern when office blocks are converted to residential units under permitted development rights, which is happening in the centre of Bristol rather than locally; in this case, national space standard are waived.

There have been few planning applications over the summer other than works to trees in our area.

Planning Application update.

24/02736/P Land At Home Gardens Redland Hill Bristol BS6 6UR; Application for outline planning permission with some matters reserved - Redevelopment of the site comprising demolition of existing buildings and the erection of two new buildings to provide up to 60 residential units (Class C3) and up to 209 sq.m. (GIA) of flexible office space (Class E) to Whiteladies Road ground floor frontage, and associated works (Access, Scale and Layout to be determined now with Appearance and Landscaping reserved for future consideration).

The previous application for this site was refused by Bristol LPA and at appeal on the grounds of adverse impact on the adjacent properties at 7 and 9 St Vincents Hill. The revised design has moved the building further from these properties and reduced the height closest to them, and increased the green buffer. RCAS will be assessing the new application.

24/02382/F Garden Flat 52 Hampton Park Bristol BS6 6LJ: Relocate shed, replace with 1-1/2 storey garage with studio accommodation above.

RCAS has objected to the new proposal on the grounds of design and poor-quality accommodation for future residents.

23/03947/H | Loft conversion with rear flat roof dormer and front pitched roof dormer, rear extension and new driveway. | 121 Cranbrook Road Bristol BS6 7DE.

Retrospective application to dig out the front garden to create off street parking has been refused on safety grounds and on the detrimental and harmful visual impact of removing the stone wall.

The proposed dormer has been refused on grounds of impact on the visual amenity and character of the area. No other dormer windows have been created in this terrace so it would be out of character and appear incongruous.

24/02681/F 125 Redland Road Bristol BS6 6XX The replacement of two front dormer windows on the second floor. RCAS objected to the design of the dormer windows. The design has been revised and RCAS has withdrawn its objection.

24/01117/H 52 Clarendon Road Redland Bristol BS6 7ET Demolition of part front boundary wall and excavation of garden to form off-street parking space with charging point for electric vehicle and reconfigured steps and relocated refuse/recycling store. Refused.

23/01285/F | Renovation of 2 existing garages to front of site; demolition of 6 existing garages and construction of a two-storey residential dwelling to rear of site. | 38 Chandos Road Bristol BS6 6PF Revised plans were submitted in March 2024 and have been approved.

Existing planning applications: not decided/ updates

23/01007/F | Application for retention of use from residential (Use Class C3) to small House in Multiple Occupation (Use Class C4). | 25 Brighton Road Bristol BS6 6NU still awaiting decision

23/02830/LA | Demolition of potting sheds, outbuildings and garaging, and altered access off Hartfield Avenue. Change of use of Muller House from a large HMO into 6no. Use Class C3 dwellings and construction of 5no. dwellings (Use Class C3) with associated car parking. Alterations to listed building and curtilage listed buildings. Works to trees and re-landscaping. Major | Muller House & The Lodge 7 Cotham Park Bristol BS6 6DA, awaiting decision

Alison Bromilow and Simon Birch

There are photos of many of the gardens that were shown in Open Gardens this year throughout the newsletter

ANNUAL TREE REPORT

RCAS monitors all applications made to Bristol City council for work on trees in our area. The following summarises some examples over the last year.

- Two applications for removal of 3 trees (a copper Beech, a Holm Oak and a Cherry) in significant street locations were objected to by RCAS, and suggestions were made for alternative management methods that achieved the required goals. These applications for felling were subsequently withdrawn.
- One comment was made by RCAS in support of proposed pollarding work on a copper beech tree. Management work to maintain trees in proportion to their surroundings is often needed in urban situations.
- An objection was made on an application to fell a number of trees, as annotations on the plan submitted contained significant errors such that permission to fell a large Yew and a copper Beech could have been allowed. Revised plans with correct annotation were submitted and the valuable trees are secured.
- A member got in contact with RCAS because of concern over an application to fell a tree that made a very significant contribution to the street scene in their area. After a little investigation it was possible to identify that the application for felling was actually for a different and much less significant tree in the same garden. It's quite OK to raise any concerns over applications for tree work for further investigation by RCAS so please do contact us with any concerns.
- One member was concerned about the felling of a 'healthy' Cypress tree in a neighbouring rear garden. The tree provided privacy and shade and of course an amount of biodiversity value to the area. However the rules the tree officer can apply require there to be significant amenity value ie the landscape benefit that can be seen from a location with public access. Permission to fell the tree was given by the tree officer.

- One tree in a significantly prominent location has had limbs removed and the top of the tree removed, in a very crude manner. It is very unlikely that any appropriately trained arboricultural surgeon would ever do work like that. The remaining tree is now visually in a very poor state and the tree health badly affected. No planning permission was requested for this work and Bristol City Council are following up the planning breach.

Dave Jones



PARKS REPORT

Redland Green

Once again, we are in the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness of autumn and thankfully the sun shone for one of the year's fun-filled community activities - apple pressing.

Nature's annual cycle of life in this pleasant land of ours is so well mirrored in the life of the apple tree. Beautiful blossom in the spring which once pollinated yields small fruits which swell and grow on the branches of the trees until the end of summer when the apples can be picked. Depending on the variety and the keep-ability they can either be stored or used to make preserves, squeezed to release delicious juice which can be either drunk immediately, frozen, pasteurised or processed to make cider or cider vinegar.

All in all, one of our very useful trees. As you can see from the included photographs even the smallest trees start producing fruit early in their life cycle. The tree in the photo is one of the ones planted in the Green in the area behind the St Oswalds Road houses. Huge thanks to the council for mowing round the fruit trees thus preventing the brambles taking over the area again and the local residents for weeding, placing supports and cages round the tree and watering them in hot weather. The other two photographs are of the apple pressing (producing over 250 litres of juice!!!) which was done this weekend at Redland Green Farm and is an activity enjoyed by all ages!

Unfortunately, there are some downsides to the whole process!! The wind, rain, weather, squirrels, birds and bugs cause many apples to fall early. These windfall apples can be used by cutting out the bad bits and eating or cooking what is left or they can be left to rot as compost for the tree.

This year two of the apple trees near and in the play area were stripped of their fruit by young children well before the apples were ripe and had reached their full size. Please parents and carers don't encourage your children to pick the apples too early or climb into the trees which damages them but explain to your children that you have to wait for fruit to ripen and it takes months in the case of the apples! Also picking them and throwing them at other children, people or windows is also not acceptable.

Good news for Redland Green is the application to build 6 houses on the site of the garages on Cossins Road was dismissed at Appeal by the Planning

Inspector. He made some excellent points about the proposed development and the likely impact on Redland Green. If anyone wants a copy of his report I am very happy to forward it on if you email me direct at loisgoddard@mac.com

A few dates for your diary:-

Sunday 20th October 2024 Litter picking and bulb planting 11.00am to 12.30pm Meet at Redland Green Farm

Friday 13th December 2024 Christmas Sing Along in the Green 6.00pm (by the play area with hot chocolate and mince pies)

We hope you have all had a good summer either here or wherever. Hopefully we have some more sunny days to come before we settle into the winter months.

Lois Goddard



Cotham Gardens

The last few months have seen a regular if occasionally small turnout by volunteers to keep Cotham Gardens clean and tidy.

The playground is swept, and sandpit raked, leaves and branches cleared from paths and rain channels. A hardcore group managed to lift the drains and clear them so the area at the bottom of the hill behind Bannatynes no longer floods!

The flower bed opposite Cotham Gardens Primary School was a challenge to get right as the self-seeded borage from last year created a forest of borage which crowded out the smaller more delicate plants. We will try to thin it better and earlier next year accordingly.

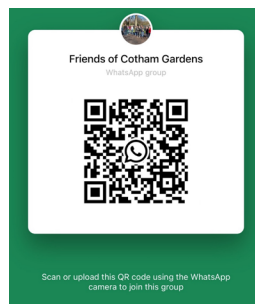
We held our first FoCG summer social park event a week before the end of summer term in July to thank volunteers and bring neighbours together. It was well attended and universally enjoyed. Lucy of Roam Wild Coffee ran a licensed bar as well as excellent finger food. The general feedback is that we should aim to do more of these possibly every 4 months or so.

We will be holding our second Carols in Gardens event in December...keep an eye out for further information on this.

Finally, we are very glad and thankful to have a very active and committed group of regular volunteers which number nearly 60 in total. 20 x 45 mins is a lot of tasks done!!

If you want to stay in touch with FoCG Events and / or join the workgroup sessions, please use the QR code below to join our WhatsApp group or email chris@csa-i.com.

Chris Shelley
Coordinator Friends of Cotham Gardens





OPEN GARDENS

The wet spring made it a real challenge for people to prepare their gardens in time for June 23rd, so huge thanks to the individuals, Redland Court, and Kersteman Road Allotments for braving it out and sticking with their commitment.

The day itself was warm and dry but not too hot for our members to get around the 16 Open Gardens of Redland East, which is a surprisingly hilly area.

The Redland East gardeners put themselves out to show us colour, foliage, landscaping and innovation. There were great discussions on plant management, pest and disease control and how well plants grow in Redland soil. Open Gardens is a good way to be inspired on the potential for your own garden and learn from the experience of others. It's a great way of connecting people and a number of long lapsed relationships were rekindled this year.

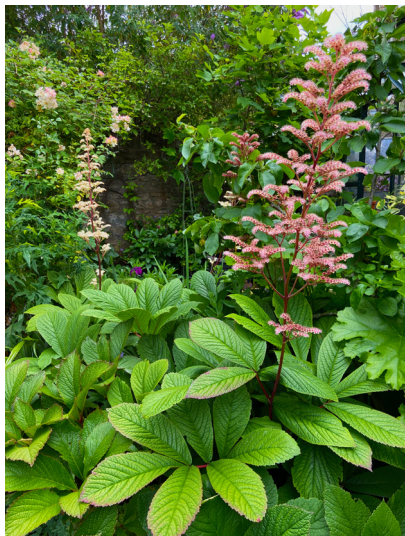
This year there were three gardens where refreshments were being served to revive garden walkers and raise funds for charity. One garden alone had contributions of over £160, so a winning arrangement all round.

Next year the area for Open Gardens will be Redland North, last visited in 2021. Many changes will have occurred in that time and we hope to see many new gardens as well our regulars. If you are in Redland North, the Open Gardens team will be in touch in March to sign people up.

Dave Jones









STUDENT LIAISON REPORT

In September the academic year starts and Bristol's population suddenly rises by over 40,000. Bristol has always been a popular choice for students and in the next few years the numbers of students are projected to increase further. This gives Bristol a vibrancy and diversity. Sadly there can be a downside as a small number of students are not as community minded as might be wished. Experience has led many residents who have students living next door or nearby that a friendly welcome visit to your new neighbours (maybe bearing a small welcome gift!) can reap rewards.

Cotham does have a very high student population. The Chandos Road area, for instance, is a very densely populated area of Bristol, due mainly to the large number of HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupation) which are let to students. Concentrating such large numbers of students in a relatively small area can cause significant problems for other residents, and many RCAS members will be familiar with late-night street noise, house parties, poor management of waste etc. Recent changes to the licensing of HMOs in Bristol means that now the overall number of HMOs in any area can be controlled so that there is a balance between HMOs, Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), and other properties.

An HMO is defined as a property where 3 or more persons who are not related occupy the accommodation and share certain facilities such as the kitchen and bathroom. Properties where there are 5 or more people sharing the accommodation will continue to be licensed using the existing mandatory HMO licensing scheme. In Bristol, as of August 2024 there is an additional HMO licensing scheme operating citywide and in certain wards including Cotham a new selective licensing scheme covering most other types of privately rented accommodation. These new schemes aim to limit the number of HMOs in any area and improve the quality of housing stock. We hope that these changes to HMO licensing will bring positive results.

The Bristol Student Community Partnership (BSCP) was created a few years ago as a forum where the University of Bristol (UoB), University of the West of England (UWE), resident associations, Bristol City Council, local councillors, Bristol Waste and landlord's representatives could all meet to try and resolve issues caused by student anti-social behaviour.

For the last 12 months or so this partnership has become strained, primarily because it was discovered the UoB had made changes to their student

disciplinary procedures without communicating the fact to the local residents' groups. As almost all students in the area attend UoB, it's essential for residents to understand how complaints are dealt with, and it's taken much questioning for the UoB to explain what changes have been made.

As we head to the new academic year the situation is still in flux and the effects are not fully understood. As explained by the UoB, the changes made now provide a legal underpinning to their disciplinary procedures, and this was necessary because students were beginning to successfully challenge existing attempts at disciplinary action.

For some years the UoB has had a Community Liaison Officer (CLO) who deals with complaints from residents about student behaviour. This position provided residents with a single point of contact with UoB and the CLO could resolve issues by personally disciplining the students involved.

Steve Smith became CLO 3 years ago. His approach was more dynamic, and his 'kitchen chats' with students at HMOs usually resulted in a marked improvement in behaviour. He was also instrumental in improving relations with resident groups, and proactive in developing the usefulness of the BSCP. Most significantly, he proactively used what disciplinary procedures were available to him when dealing with the most disruptive students. Sadly, Steve Smith will be leaving his post as CLO.

It's not yet clear how these changes will affect residents who want to make a complaint. The UoB has acknowledged that personally identifying information may need to be disclosed during the process. This may have a dampening effect on the willingness to complain, leaving problems to fester because they are unreported?

These issues are what resident groups are trying to resolve with the UoB. One avenue is the establishment of Working Parties under the auspices of the Vice Chancellor. There are presently two, each with a Facilitator:

'Disciplinary Process' - intended to be a single meeting which will concentrate on clarifying the position with relation to sanctions, evidence required and revealing personal information. The aim is for UoB to answer questions raised by resident groups.

'Education and Communication with Students' - this will be more long term with topics covering what is wanted from a community, how to educate students for life in the community, and what method works best in the modern media environment.

For now, it's important to say that the UoB have assured BSCP that complaints of anti-social behaviour can still be made in the usual way - by email to community-living@bristol.ac.uk .

Anti-social behaviour is only seen in a minority of students and the vast majority of residents living next to or near student properties have happy relations with their new neighbours.

Derrick Collier

BALANCING ACTS

Bristol City Council has announced that it is owed more than £229m in unpaid debt. Although some of this debt is not due until next year there remains a budget shortfall of £22m this year which the council leader Tony Dyer has warned could mean the organisation is declared bankrupt if savings cannot be found.

Bristol City Council is struggling to provide vital children's services and adult care services so we may find that we residents are going to need to be more involved in doing some of the tasks that previously the council performed. Litter picking, street weed clearance, graffiti removal and parks maintenance and cleaning are all tasks that spring to mind. Some groups are already set up to do these tasks so please do get in touch if you can help in any way.

We hope that improvements in the Recycling collection services continue after a prolonged period of chaos. Changes in the weather patterns with more frequent high winds don't help with the scattering of recyclable plastics, cardboard, and containers over the streets. If you can weight your boxes or use the elastic string tops to keep the contents in your green box please do!

Electric Vehicle Charging. The council is considering an application for 4 EV charging points and associated infrastructure at the Redland Filling Station on Hampton Road that it originally refused planning permission for last year as the site is in a conservation area and the council considered that the additional plant equipment required would be detrimental to the existing street scene. This illustrates the balancing act between preserving the look of an area and the need for improved infrastructure to enable the move from more polluting cars to electric cars.

The council does have a plan to install 150 on-street EV charging points in residential roads without driveways, car parks, and lamp posts as part of a larger plan to install more than 300 EV charging points across the West of England area. We do not have many EV charging points in our area and there will be increasing pressure for householders to be able to install EV charging points in their front gardens. This inevitably leads to a change in the street scene in conservation areas and a decrease in the soak away provided by green gardens. We need to keep as many street trees and front gardens as they are. Changing rain patterns are increasing the amount of rain we see in short periods. The drains often cannot cope with this increased rain and flooding will be an increased risk.

Street trees can also be problematic. Whilst we know that street trees and beneficial both for biodiversity, and psychologically and environmentally, residents can find the size, placing and choice of street trees annoying. Aphids that feed on lime trees exude a sticky honeydew that lands on cars, Gingko trees produce fruits that smell very unpleasant when crushed on pavements. Leaf fall in autumn can be dangerous for pedestrians particularly when wet. Bristol City Council in its One City Plan aims to increase the tree canopy from 12% in 2018 to 25% in 2035 and double it by 2046. This will require planting 17 million saplings and 110,000 specimen trees whilst also felling dead trees and those deemed dangerous for other reasons. There is also an increasing pressure from householders to remove or reduce garden trees. The council wishes to improve the environment and air quality but finances are reduced for tree maintenance and street cleaning.

Balancing community wishes, environmental issues and budget requirements is an ongoing and very difficult issue. There are no easy answers.

