

YELLOW LINES ON ELM TREE AVENUE

Many thanks to those who let us know your views on this following the article in Focus 201. Your views were exactly 50:50 on whether to go ahead with the lines where people park to take and collect children from Whitehouse School or not.

Suzanne and Julia organised a meeting with the local police; council officers and the school to look at that and some other safety issues, taking all views expressed by residents into account. After a lot of discussion, and listening to all present, the Councillors felt that, on balance, putting down the lines would not make the whole situation of school parking any safer, and could cause other problems. They are asking the Officers Traffic Group not to proceed.

Many motorists think that they cannot enter the hatched area, surrounded by a broken white line, on Elm Tree Avenue. The Highway Code says "if the area is bordered by a broken white line cars can enter it if it is necessary and you can see that it is safe to do so."

What will happen is :

- The School will step up its action in working with parents about parking where it is safe and legal to do so.
- The school travel plan will be updated and worked on by all that can help with it, and ways be looked at to encourage the use of parking at Elm Tree Shops and Sainsbury's.
- Council officers will look into getting white lines across the pedestrian crossing points to make sure that they are always kept clear for people walking across the road at that point.
- Council Officers and police will work on other ways of reducing the speed of traffic on Elm Tree Avenue.

We do appreciate that this decision will not please everybody, but can assure everyone that views were listened to and all will continue to work for the safest ways forward possible.



ALFORD LANE PATH

Julia met with members of Friends of Whitehouse School who have agreed to help try to get funding to improve this path. They insisted that there be consultation of people living nearby and this is being done by officers of the council. We'll keep you updated with progress.



Julia on the path

LOW FLOOR BUSES

There have been complaints from some people, especially pensioners, that not all buses are pulling up to the raised kerb, making it difficult and even painful to get on or off the bus. Suzanne raised this issue at the bus users forum in Stockton and whilst Stagecoach said they would remind drivers, it is important that they know which drivers are causing the problem, and when and where it happened. Each bus ticket identifies precisely which vehicle you used, so do keep the ticket when there has been a problem.

Suzanne did ask for the bus companies to provide a Freepost address to do this, but they have not done so.

You can send any tickets from problem buses to your Councillors via the Liberal Democrat Freepost address, and we will forward them for you.

Suzanne has already reported a 58 bus for not pulling up anywhere near a kerb in the High Street, and Stagecoach did check this out on the CCTV and take up the issue with the driver. Hopefully all drivers in need of reminders will know what they need to do soon!



Bishopsgarth Cottages

A recent council Planning Committee discussed Bishopsgarth Cottages which has not been built in accordance with the approved plans. Julia spoke at the Committee and their decision was that the building must be reduced in size to that previously approved. The applicant can appeal against the decision and so we will wait and see what happens.

6TH FORM COLLEGE PLANNING APPLICATION

After all the hard work by everyone to meet deadlines for getting planning approval for the new Sixth Form College to secure funding we are shocked at what has happened. The sheer incompetence of the Learning and Skills Council has caused at the very best delay, and at the worst a stop to this new college being built.

Liberal Democrats will do our best to give every support we can to the College in getting the building back on track for students of the future.

Fuel Poverty Eradication Bill

We were both very disappointed that David Heath, Lib Dem MP's recent Private Members Bill was defeated as there were not enough MP's present to vote on the day. The Fuel Poverty Eradication Bill would have reinstated the duty to end fuel poverty, which a recent High Court judgment overturned. Without this Bill, the Government will probably jump at the chance to abandon their various fuel poverty policies. In their recent progress report, they themselves admitted that they were not going to hit their fuel poverty targets – **and they have been repeatedly censured by their own Fuel Poverty Advisory Group for their failure to take sufficient action.**

A recent survey by Help the Aged revealed that 4.5 million pensioners planned to live in one room this winter because they can't afford to pay their fuel bills.

The Bill needed 100 members to vote in favour. Only 91 attended on the day. Neither of Stockton's two Labour MP's attended. The debate will resume on 12th June so please lobby your MP to attend and vote in favour on the day.



Mortgage Rescue

There are new measures available to help people facing the awful prospect of losing their homes through mortgage difficulties. As always, do seek advice as soon as you start to experience difficulties. Contact Citizen's Advice Bureau at Bath Lane, Stockton any weekday morning between 9.30 and 12.30 or ring on 607445/633877 or ring the councils' Housing Options Team on 528389.

Why we say NO to the BNP

The BNP offer no solutions for local people. The BNP are an extremist organisation who would be very bad news for everyone in the region. A vote for the BNP is a vote for fewer jobs, increased tensions and falling house prices. All these things have been experienced in areas that have elected BNP councillors.

BIDDICK CLOSE / BISHOPTON ROAD WEST

Following concerns from a resident about cars using this cut through, children being able to run out onto this very busy road, and vehicles driving onto the footpath of Bishopton Road West to turn into Castle Close, Julia and Suzanne are looking into the possibility of a barrier here. It will have to be paid for out of the Small Environmental Improvement Budget. So costs will have to be looked at when all the schemes for this year are known.



Guarantees a better deal for Third World Producers

FAIR TRADE WINE TASTING

Following the very successful event last year, there is a second chance to come along and try out Fairtrade wines at The Arc on **Thursday 11th June**. Entry by ticket only – contact Suzanne or Julia for more details

FRIENDS OF NEWHAM GRANGE PARK

The AGM of this group will be held on Tuesday 26th of May in St John's Church, Durham Road, Stockton, at 7.00 p.m. If you want to find out more about future plans, what is happening in the Park, or want to become more involved, please do come along to the meeting.

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT ACTION - ALL YEAR, EVERY YEAR !