

CHURCHGATE AREA ASSOCIATION

The Association caters for the interests of all residents, businesses and property owners, not only in Churchgate Street, but also within the entire medieval grid

Chairman's Report

The Annual General Meeting will be held on 23 October 2026 at the Unitarian Meeting House at 19.00 to which all residents and businesses are welcome

A Year of Listening, Learning and Finding Our Feet

Taking over as Chair after Vivien's ten years in the role has certainly been a baptism of fire, as well as a joy and delight! I had some very big shoes to fill, and stepping into the role has been a steep learning curve, particularly when it comes to navigating the different responsibilities of our three councils – Town, District and County – and finding the right people to speak to about the issues that matter to our residents. I am learning all the time, and I am grateful for all the help and guidance I have received along the way.

One of the first things we did was to ask members to complete a survey so that we could better understand your concerns and where you felt the CAA should focus its efforts. The main issues raised were:

- Parking
- Condition of pavements
- Traffic
- Planning
- Weeds
- Litter
- Crime
- Licensing

We also asked for your views on the two main strands of the CAA's work:

1. Building community spirit

This includes welcoming new residents, organising social events and keeping everyone informed through our newsletter. Over 60% of respondents felt that we should continue with these activities as we do now. I was pleased to see that bringing people together and helping to maintain a sense of community remains important to our members.

2. Representing residents and engaging with the authorities

Consulting with the relevant authorities on local issues and raising concerns on behalf of residents and supporting members when problems arise.

We aim to ensure that decisions affecting the Grid are consistent with the requirements and legislation that protect our historic town and its conservation status. More than 75% of respondents agreed that this should be the CAA's core focus, giving us a clear steer on where you would particularly like us to concentrate our efforts.

As a committee, our aim is to represent the collective views of our members across the Grid and to help make where we live an even better place. This includes working to improve safety and quality of life by raising concerns about speeding, potholes, pavements, antisocial behaviour and vandalism, as well as looking at ways to improve the appearance of our streets, including keeping street furniture such as bollards, lampposts and bins clean and well maintained.

With close to 400 members across an area of approximately 650 households and businesses, we have an important role to play in making sure residents' voices are heard. As a residents' association representing a historic conservation area, we see ourselves as guardians of this beautiful medieval Grid.

This is particularly important as we look ahead to the **Greene King redevelopments**, which have the potential to shape our area for many years to come. We want to build positive, constructive and proactive relationships with our councils and other authorities, working together to protect and preserve the character of our historic town for future generations.

The more members we represent, the stronger our collective voice will be, giving us greater weight when engaging with Greene King and the authorities on decisions that will shape the future of the Grid. If you know a neighbour or local business that is not yet a member, please do encourage them to join us.

Many members contact us by email or telephone for advice or help with an issue, and we do our best to point them in the right direction and work towards a resolution. We cannot promise to resolve every problem, but we can make sure concerns are raised and followed up wherever possible.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to our **local councillors** for their support and willingness to help. Martin Robinson, who was our councillor before the May 2026 by-election; and Cllr's Julia Wakelam (WSC), together with Dylan Roques (WSC and SCC), have given their time and assistance to matters affecting our community, and we are very grateful for this.

I am equally grateful to Jodie Budd at the **Town Council**, Town Warden Bradley Bedford-Smith and Civic Administrator Beverley Kipling, who have all been so helpful and proactive in responding to our queries and helping us follow up residents' concerns. Their willingness to engage and assist is very much appreciated.

I would also like to thank our **Community Police Officer**, Timothy Bond, who has always responded promptly to our enquiries and done his best to support us whenever needed. Having people who are approachable, responsive and willing to work with us makes a real difference, and I am delighted to acknowledge their contribution to our community.

Keeping members informed is equally important. Through direct email updates and our printed newsletters, we aim to share news, explain what is happening locally and let you know when issues are being pursued on your behalf.

Above all, this first year has reinforced for me the value of having a collective voice. By listening to members, working together and maintaining constructive relationships with our councils and local police, we have a much better chance of making a difference to the place we are all fortunate to call home.

Below is a brief summary of our main activities over the past year:

Communication

Alongside our printed newsletter, we continue to keep in touch with members by email, sharing local news, important updates and information that we hope you will find useful. Keeping in touch helps us feel connected as a community and ensures that everyone has the opportunity to stay informed about what is happening in the Grid and the work we are doing on your behalf. We really value being able to communicate with you, so please do let us know if your email address changes to ensure you continue to receive our updates. And if there is something you think would be helpful for us to share with members, we would love to hear from you.

Greene King Subcommittee

We have established a dedicated subcommittee to focus on the Greene King redevelopment proposals and to develop direct lines of communication with Greene King and the relevant councils. Given the potential impact of these developments on the Grid, we want to ensure that our members' views and local knowledge are shared and taken into account as plans progress.

I would like to thank our CAA members who are giving their time to this subcommittee: **Colin Pedrick, Simon Baker, David Miles and Paget Fulcher**. Their help and commitment are much appreciated.

We have been awaiting a draft masterplan, which we had hoped to see earlier this year. In the meantime, the CAA has continued to keep in touch with other interested parties and gather information to help inform our response to the next round of consultations. Our aim is to engage constructively with Greene King and the councils, and to help ensure that the historic character and interests of our community are reflected in the plans.

Have your say – please complete our Greene King survey

If you haven't yet completed our Greene King survey, please take a few minutes to share your views. This is an important opportunity to tell us what matters most to you about the proposed developments and what you would like the CAA to focus on when responding to the plans.

[Complete the Greene King survey here](#)

The more members who take part, the better we can represent the views of our community and ensure they are heard as the proposals develop. Thank you to everyone who has already taken the time to respond.

Licensing

Although there has been relatively little licensing activity this year, it remains an important part of the CAA's work. We reviewed the licence application for a new family restaurant at the top of Guildhall Street and have supported members who have raised concerns about noise and antisocial behaviour associated with two existing establishments. We want residents to feel that their concerns are heard and that they can turn to the CAA for support when issues arise in their neighbourhood.

Membership

We are pleased to report that our membership has remained steady, and we will be keeping the annual subscription at £5. We hope to reach out to newly arrived residents over the coming weeks to explain the benefits of joining the CAA. The greater our membership, the greater our influence with the various authorities, which will become increasingly important as the Greene King developments progress.

Newsletter

Our newsletter is an important way of sharing news, stories and happenings from across the Grid. We would love to hear from members who have an interesting story to tell, a local memory to share, or simply something they think others might enjoy reading.

You don't need to be a seasoned writer – contributions from all members are very welcome.

If you have an idea for an article, a photograph, a fond memory of the Grid or a local topic you think would interest others, please get in touch with me or send your contribution by email to newslettercaabse@gmail.com

We would be delighted to hear from you and help bring your ideas to life in future editions.

Parking

Parking Zone D

The main traffic and parking-related event in the last year has been the long-awaited provision of the promised additional parking spaces. The marking out of the bays and provision of the accompanying signs seemed to take an eternity, but now the full scheme is operational, and the general view is that although far from ideal, the parking situation has improved. There are some matters relating to the expansion that are still to be resolved, and these will be addressed over the following months.

Parking Zone F

We are also working with the councils to look at the anomalies of some odd parking bays in Honey Hill and near the Magistrates' Court.

Residents' Parking Hours

The operational hours for residents' parking bays have finally been extended to 08:00–20:00, although not all resident bay street parking signs have been amended. We are following this up with both the Town Council and Highways.

Pavements

The condition of some of the pavements across the Grid remains a real concern, with uneven and damaged surfaces presenting a risk to pedestrians. Sadly, we have had reports of residents tripping and suffering quite serious injuries, highlighting the importance of getting these defects addressed.

I recently carried out a walkabout with Dylan Roques from Suffolk County Council (SCC) to look at pavement conditions, and I will be undertaking a similar walkabout with the Town Council Warden in the coming month. It is frustrating that pavements fall under the responsibility of SCC Highways, which does not have a local team routinely inspecting pavements in our area. This makes it all the more important that we report defects whenever we come across them. The more reports SCC receives, the greater the chance of defects being assessed and repaired.

If a pavement defect is considered dangerous and poses an immediate risk to the public, please call 0345 606 6171. Other defects can be reported through the [Suffolk Highways pavement defect reporting tool](#).

Once a defect is reported, SCC Highways has 30 days to assess it and carry out an initial repair to make the area safe. These initial repairs are contracted out and frequently involve tarmac. SCC then has up to six months to replace the temporary repair with the appropriate stone paving, in keeping with the historic character of our conservation area.

The CAA will continue to raise concerns about the condition of our pavements and press for repairs that are both timely and sympathetic to the historic character of the Grid. In the meantime, please do report any defects you come across – your reports really do matter.

Planning

We continue to engage with the Town Council and West Suffolk Council's Planning team on the importance of retaining existing off-street parking when commercial properties are converted to residential use. For example, where properties such as the Constitutional Club have existing parking facilities, we would like to see these retained wherever possible as part of any redevelopment. Losing these spaces can place further pressure on an already stretched parking situation in the Grid.

As part of our ongoing work, we review planning applications within the Grid each month and share our observations and concerns with the relevant authorities where appropriate. We aim to ensure that the impact on local residents, parking provision and the historic character of our conservation area are taken into consideration. Parking remains a particular concern, with Zone D oversubscribed by a ratio of 2.3 vehicles for every available space. We will continue to engage constructively with the councils on these issues and look for opportunities to support solutions that benefit our community.

This year, the CAA submitted objections to two planning applications within the Grid, and we are pleased that both were refused by West Suffolk Council. These cases highlight the importance of keeping an eye on planning applications and helping to protect the historic character of our Grid. We will continue to review applications and raise concerns where we feel the heritage of our area may be affected.

Potholes

It is encouraging to see signs that Suffolk County Council (SCC) Highways is making progress with pothole repairs in recent months, and we hope this continues.

As with pavement defects, SCC Highways does not have the resources to routinely monitor every road, so reports from residents are essential in helping to identify problems and get them addressed.

Please help by reporting any potholes you spot in the Grid. It only takes a few minutes, and the more defects that are reported, the better the chance of them being assessed and repaired. You can report a pothole directly using the [Suffolk Highways pothole reporting tool](#). Thank you for helping us keep our streets safer for everyone.

Speedwatch and Speed Indicator Sign

Speeding remains an ongoing concern for residents, and the CAA has been working for at least ten years to introduce Community Speedwatch in the Grid.

Unfortunately, this requires a group of local volunteers to run the scheme, and so far we have not had enough volunteers come forward to get it off the ground. If you would be interested in helping, we would love to hear from you.

Alongside this, installing a mobile flashing Speed Indicator Sign on Westgate Street has been on the Committee's to-do list for some time. We owe a particular thank you to one very determined Westgate Street resident who has tirelessly pursued the matter with Suffolk County Council Highways.

The Town Council has now stepped in and is progressing the installation. Although the equipment is ready, a change of circumstances has meant that an alternative location needs to be identified. Following the introduction of traffic-calming measures and the new parking bays outside the originally proposed location, the Town Council is working to find a suitable alternative position on Westgate Street. The Town Council has confirmed that the sign remains high on its priority list, and we hope to see progress soon. We are grateful to everyone who has continued to push for action on this important safety issue.

Vandalism

A couple of our members have reported vandalism to their flowerpot displays, which is particularly upsetting given the care and pride so many residents take in their street frontages. The beautiful flowerpots, window boxes and hanging baskets we see throughout the Grid add colour and charm to our streets and contribute so much to the character of our historic town. The incidents were reported to the police, but unfortunately, without CCTV or other supporting evidence, it has proved difficult to identify those responsible.

If you experience vandalism, please report it to the police and, if you have a Ring doorbell or other security camera, preserve any relevant video footage rather than allowing it to be automatically deleted. This evidence could prove valuable in helping the police investigate and identify those responsible. It is a great shame when the efforts residents make to keep our streets looking beautiful are treated in this way. These displays are something we can all enjoy, and I hope we can continue to take pride in the attractive and welcoming environment that makes our medieval Grid such a special place to live.

Looking Ahead - Community Working Day

Looking ahead to the coming year, we hope to bring residents together for a community working day in the spring, supported by locality grant funding from the Town Council. It will be a chance to make a few small but worthwhile improvements around the Grid, with activities such as litter picking, giving some bollards and lampposts a fresh coat of paint, cleaning street signs and doing a little work to make the BT phone kiosk on Churchgate Street more welcoming.

The idea is simply to bring neighbours together; share a few hours of our time and take pride in the place we call home. We'll make it a sociable occasion too, with coffee, tea and cake and plenty of opportunity to chat along the way. If you'd like to join in, even for a short while, please do let me know. We'll share a date and more details in the new year. It would be lovely to have residents involved and make it an enjoyable community effort.

Your Committee

I feel very fortunate to be working alongside such a lovely and committed group of people, all of whom give their time and energy so generously to the Churchgate Area Association.

There is a surprising amount of work that goes on behind the scenes, from planning, licensing, pavements and parking to membership, the newsletter and our finances. Each person brings their own knowledge, skills and perspective, and together we work to make sure the concerns of our residents are heard and that we do what we can to protect and improve the place we are so fortunate to call home.

As Chair, I am particularly grateful for the support and encouragement I have received from **Cathy Friel, Sue Worsfold, Paget Fulcher and David Flowerday** during my first year in the role. Thank you all for being so willing to help, share ideas and get involved. It makes such a difference knowing we can rely on one another, and I have really appreciated the spirit of teamwork and the good humour we bring to our work together.

I would also like to give a special thank you to **Brian Jones, Nick Law and Geoffrey House**, who between them have contributed 30 years of service to the CAA Committee. Brian has given 12 years of his time, Nick 10 years and Geoffrey eight years. Their dedication, knowledge and commitment to our community have been greatly valued, and I am sure members will join me in thanking them for all they have done for the CAA.

I am also delighted to welcome two new members to our Committee, **Julie Bell and Dean Sykes**. It is wonderful to have new people willing to give their time, bring fresh ideas and help us continue our work on behalf of the community.

A heartfelt thank you to each and every one of you for your time, dedication and friendship. I really do appreciate all that you do, and none of what we achieve for our community would be possible without you.

Jennifer Baker
October 2026