



Please let us have your views

Those of you who came to the AGM will know that WDPS has some exciting opportunities to contribute to the Wheathampstead Village Plan, which has now been adopted by the Parish Council.

As part of this contribution we need to know our members' views on three important issues.

The first concerns the proposed Information Board to be sited in the centre of the village. We are working with the Parish Council and Wheathampstead for Enterprising Business (WEB) to decide what should be shown on the board. Please let us know which information about the history and heritage of the village you think should be included. This is particularly important as the board may form part of a proposed heritage trail around Wheathampstead.

The second is about the number of redundant signs. Many of the respondents to the Village Plan questionnaire felt that these made a major contribution to a "cluttered" feel to the village.

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You can view the **Village Plan** on-line at

www.wheathampstead.net

Click on the Parish Council link

WDPS CONTRIBUTES TO VILLAGE PLAN

The **Wheathampstead Village Plan**, launched at this year's Annual Parish Meeting, represents the work that has been done by the Parish Council and others to identify and respond to the concerns that residents have, including what residents would like to be preserved and what they would like to see improved.

WDPS has made significant contribution to the Plan in the areas of environment and planning. This is only the beginning, however. The Plan contains numerous action points, and WDPS will be responsible for taking a number of these forward and making sure they are implemented.

The articles on letting us have your views and on signage give details of some of these. In addition, we shall be:

- monitoring the results of the NATS consultation exercise and respond appropriately (see page 3);
- organising another day event to tidy the river near the Mill Bridge, removing litter and where possible pruning the vegetation;
- investigating ways in which the river could be better utilised and accessed, so that it becomes a greater asset to Wheathampstead.



See you on Village Day

We hope to see you at our stand on Wheathampstead Village Day. It's a great opportunity to come and discuss any concerns you have about the village and the surrounding area, and to see what we have been working on during the past year.

As usual be raffling hampers containing produce that, as far as possible, has been produced locally. All donations will be very welcome—please contact Richard Brett on 01582 833789..



Please let us have your views *cont'd*

Please tell us about any signs which no longer (if they ever did!) serve a useful purpose. It would also help us to know about any signs which are badly positioned. Are they too prominent or not prominent enough?

Lastly we welcome your views about those buildings which need improvements to their upkeep or their general appearance. This includes all buildings, whether inside the Conservation Area or not.

This is an important chance for members to have a say on issues which really matter to WDPS, and it is a chance that we must not waste.

Please let us have your views on any (or preferably all three) of them.

Email sue.johnston@which.net OR write to Sue Johnston, 9 Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead AL4 8AN

Signs of Wheathampstead

You may recall previous articles in the Newsletter about signage and the important effect it has on the character of our village.

It was very clear from the Village Plan survey which the Parish Council undertook last year that many residents share our views about appropriate signage in the village, and we were pleased when the Parish Council invited WDPS to take the lead in devising the action plans that relate to signage in the Village Plan.

We have identified four priorities:

- A directional sign (finger post) in the village centre pointing the way to important features such as the Riverside Walk;
- Attractive signs at the main entrance points to the village. Two of these have already been commissioned by the parish Council. Five more signs are needed to replace the existing tired, characterless signs.

The good news is that Wheathampstead Parish Council in conjunction with Wheathampstead for Enterprising Business (WEB) have been successful in helping secure funding for these signs from grants for improving 'street scenes' in villages.

- An information sign in the centre of the village that will illustrate important features of Wheathampstead. If funding is available, this idea will be extended to create a Heritage Trail around the village – to highlight the many special features that exist locally and help us to treasure and preserve them.
- Guidance on the kind of signs that should grace our village. We are investigating the guidance that currently exists on signage – and especially advertising signs – in our village and will be creating or updating a design statement for signs that will apply to the conservation area. We feel sure this will help ensure that the look and feel of the village is preserved and that we do not suffer from gaudy or inappropriately large signs in the middle of the village,

In the longer term, we shall also be investigating the possibility of persuading public bodies to change their signs if necessary so that they conform with the design statement for signs, and establishing whether there is a demand for street name signs that better reflect the character of the village.

This is an exciting time for Wheathampstead and we are working hard to help make sure the village has signage that is appropriate to the character of the village. If you have views or comments on what you would like to see included in the plans, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact Sue Johnston (contact details on the left).

NATS plans still up in the air

A year ago, National Air Traffic Services (NATS)'s proposals to introduce new air traffic routes over South East England were the subject of a public consultation exercise.



The proposals included changes to the flight routes for aircraft leaving Luton Airport in an easterly direction. Those heading for destinations to the south west turn sharply right shortly after take-off and fly to the north of Wheathampstead. Under NATS' proposals, these flights would turn less sharply and pass over south east Wheathampstead and Nomansland Common.

Following a public meeting in the Memorial Hall organised by WDPS and District Councillor Judy Shardlow, we submitted objections to the proposed changes, calling

for Luton easterly departures to the south west to be allowed to follow a much wider, dispersed route over Wheathampstead, so that aircraft noise would be spread over a wider area, rather than being concentrated over a narrow path. We also suggested that departures from Luton could reach higher altitudes more quickly, with obvious benefits for those living under the flight paths, if the Bovingdon 'hold' for aircraft queuing to land at Heathrow were to be moved a few miles to the west. This would also enable long-haul northbound departures from Heathrow, which currently pass over south west Hertfordshire, to track further west at higher altitudes.

NATS had so many objections to their proposals - about 15,000 from representative bodies, environmental groups and individuals all over the South East - that they have announced that revised proposals are being considered for some of the routes and holding areas. These revised plans will be issued for public consultation some time after July this year. We do not know at this stage whether any of the revisions will affect Wheathampstead.

As soon as NATS' further changes are published, we will be examining them critically to see whether there are any advantages or disadvantages for Wheathampstead. No doubt the revised proposals will be reported in the national and local Press.

The story of Riverbank Stables

The owner of Riverbank Stables in Lower Luton Road, Mr Bob Smith, who claims to be a Romany gypsy, has appealed against St Albans District Council's refusal of his planning application last year to change the use of the land to a residential gypsy site comprising one mobile home, a touring caravan and an ancillary building.

Mr Smith and his family have been living on the site without planning permission since the end of 2004. When the Council eventually took enforcement action to get him off the site, he appealed to the Secretary of State. The Enforcement Notice appeal was refused in late 2007, but the time for compliance with the Notice was extended to July 2008. When that period expired, the Council again moved towards enforcement action, but Mr Smith pre-empted this by submitting application 5/2008/2510 which is now the subject of this appeal.

We submitted objections to the application on grounds that the site is in the Green Belt and Government policy is to regard

gypsy and traveller sites as inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The East of England Regional Assembly is currently deciding how many gypsy and traveller pitches each local authority should provide in their area, but when consultants identified potential sites in south west Hertfordshire, the Riverbank Stables site was not among them. Our submission can be viewed on our website www.wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk or a copy is available on request to Rick Sanderson (01582 832449).

The Council refused the application on Green Belt policy grounds. Mr Smith's grounds of appeal do not, in our view, present any new evidence to justify overturning that decision. The appeal will be heard by an Inspector at a hearing to be arranged.

It is obvious that Mr Smith is 'playing the system'. Under the Planning legislation, the Council cannot pursue enforcement action while there is an outstanding application or appeal. In theory, Mr Smith could go on submitting applications and appeals against refusal or enforcement notices for an indefinite period. That is the way that successive governments have set up the planning system.

Walks around Wheathampstead

Some of you will remember the very successful guided walks around the village arranged for WDPS members last summer. As everybody enjoyed them so much we are contacting the St Albans Museum Service to arrange some more walks this year.

We are trying to organise some repeats of last year's walks for those who missed them, and for those who would like to go again – there was a lot of interesting information to absorb at one go! We would also like to arrange some walks which go a little further afield and cover new places – Devil's Dyke for instance.

We will let you know as soon as dates and routes have been finalised but places on the walks are filled quickly, so watch this space!



Left:
Devil's Dyke

The year of the snowdrop

Since the beginning of the millennium WDPS have been planting daffodils at various locations around the village, and for the first time this year we planted snowdrops.



In March a group of volunteers planted over 1,000 snowdrops on the bank at the top end of Station Road. Hopefully, these will give us an early bloom next year and for many years to come.

Woodland Trust speak at the AGM

Our thanks go to Alistair Crosby, Senior Woodland Officer at Woodland Trust, who was our guest speaker at this year's AGM on 27 February. He spoke about the development and management of Heartwood Forest, and he and Louise Neicho, Woodland Officer, then answered various questions from the audience about Woodland Trust's plans for the new forest..

After drinks and nibbles, WDPS chairman Rick Sanderson outlined the campaigns and issues that we have been engaged in during the past year, and questions were invited from a lively audience.

The new WDPS Committee . . . as from February 27th

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Chairman</i> | Rick Sanderson | 01582 832449 |
| <i>Vice Chairman</i> | Nigel Oxley | 01582 832900 |
| <i>Treasurer</i> | David Watson | 01582 833888 |
| <i>Secretary</i> | Sue Johnston | 01582 833679 |
| <i>Membership Secretary</i> | Madeleine Salter | 01582 831658 |
| <i>Minutes Secretary</i> | Vivienne Kendall | 01582 629930 |
| <i>Newsletter Editors</i> | Richard Brett and Julie Bell | 01582 833789 |
| <i>Committee Members</i> | John Wackett | 01582 834224 |
| | Sonja Fillingham | 01582 831899 |