



## Green Fingers?

Following the success of our community projects to enhance the High Street, we are now considering a new idea to establish a community market garden. This would give everyone the opportunity to develop a communal vegetable plot.



Would you be interested in getting involved in this initiative? If this sounds like the idea for you, please get in touch. You can contact any of the members of the committee, or e-mail the Membership Secretary: [lindahalford@mail.com](mailto:lindahalford@mail.com) to express your interest. Also, the AGM on 21<sup>st</sup> February would be another chance to talk about ways forward.

Fresh vegetables, making new friends and keeping fit: this could be just for you! We look forward to hearing from you.

## Annual General Meeting:

8 pm Friday,  
21st February 2014

Memorial Hall, Marford Road,  
Wheathampstead  
All are welcome.

Our guest speaker will be  
**David Kenny**

Heritage at Risk Projects Officer  
**English Heritage**, talking about

- Devil's Dyke
- the risks that it faces and
- why it is on the Heritage at Risk Register

## WDPS Priorities for 2014

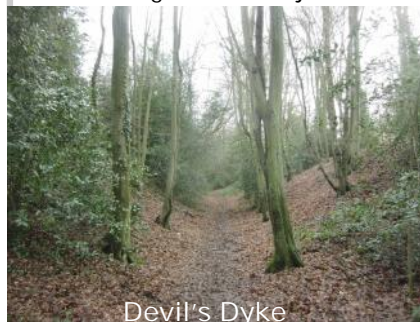
**WDPS is considering its priorities for 2014** and would like your help.

We have achieved a lot in recent years. As well as regularly investing considerable time and skill in reviewing and responding to local planning applications, we have for example launched the Diamond Jubilee Garden and reintroduced the red telephone box. It seems appropriate to take stock and see what our priorities should be now.

The Committee have drawn up a short list of activities that we believe would bring value to Wheathampstead and would reflect WDPS's aims of protecting what is best about the village. We would therefore welcome any views members may have on our priorities.

### Proposed Priorities:

- Devil's Dyke and the English Heritage Risk Register
- Community Market Garden
- Heritage Centre
- A-boards
- Triangle of land at junction of Bury Green and Rectory Gardens



Devil's Dyke



Bury Green Triangle

As always members and friends are very welcome to take part. Projects such as these are very rewarding but they take time to plan and carry out and a lot of effort to get them off the ground. We also need people to cover the range of skills that are needed. So if you're interested, please get in touch.

## WDPS Awards 2014

**The 2014 AGM** takes place on Friday, 21 February. We plan to hold a WDPS Awards ceremony to recognise the work that an individual or a team has done to contribute towards conserving what is best about the village and making sure that new projects are sympathetic to what already exists.

We are seeking nominations. If you know of anyone or any group who has made a notable contribution during the past year, please let us have your nominations by Friday, 14 February. You can either telephone Sue Johnston, WDPS Secretary, on 01582 833679. or email : [info@wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk](mailto:info@wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk)

## Plaque recognises sponsors and helpers

**If you've used the red telephone box** in the High Street recently, or even just glanced in, you may have noticed a new plaque. We have installed it to recognise the contributions that so many people made to replacing the grey phone box with its brash advertisements that previously occupied the site.

## WDPS Committee has vacancies

**Do you want to help preserve** all that is beautiful and unique in Wheathampstead? Could you be part of our vibrant, fun and active Committee?

Wheathampstead and District Preservation Society has many exciting plans for the future and we need more enthusiastic volunteers to help us achieve our goals. Following our recent successes, including the red telephone box, the Diamond Jubilee Garden and the community noticeboard, we are preparing to take on some new challenges for 2014 and we need your help!

Our Committee meet monthly for a sociable gathering at one of the Committee member's houses and we all play a part in moving projects forward. Tasks could be anything from planting daffodil bulbs, clearing the river, maintaining the Diamond Jubilee Garden, taking a survey of local traffic, cleaning road signs, fundraising, reviewing local planning applications and objecting to any we believe would be harmful to the village, writing articles for our magazine, staffing our stall at Village Day..... the list is endless and the tasks are very varied!! We have lots of fun and gain a great sense of achievement when we complete a worthwhile project.

So if you have a little spare time, a lot of enthusiasm and are willing to roll your sleeves up and get involved... join our Committee!!!

Contact our Chair, Julie Bell, for an informal chat about what's involved. Her email address is [julie.bell@can-do.co.uk](mailto:julie.bell@can-do.co.uk)

## Finding the best site for new school

**Herts County Council (HCC)** is, as you will no doubt be aware, is proposing a new secondary school in the Harpenden Secondary Planning Area (which includes Wheathampstead), and that in the autumn they identified their preferred site at the junction of Lower Luton Road and Common Lane on the Wheathampstead side of Batford.



The site at Lower Luton Road and Common Lane in Batford

A local action group immediately formed, called 'Right School, Right Place' ([www.rightschoolrightplace.co.uk](http://www.rightschoolrightplace.co.uk)). In October WDPS contacted those members for whom we have email addresses requesting views on the preferred site. We only received replies from members that live in the immediate vicinity of the site. In December HCC held a small number of public exhibitions at which they outlined their position and invited comments, and the outcome of this process is still awaited.

There are some very serious drawbacks to the Lower Luton Road site. It stands in the Metropolitan Green Belt. Building here would reduce the already narrow rural gap between Batford and Wheathampstead and increase the danger that, at some stage, the remaining land between the two villages will be built on and the two communities will blend into one. The Lower Luton Road is already clogged with traffic (as noted in many previous newsletters), and the situation would further deteriorate if a school serving some 1,600 pupils were built along it.

All the other sites that HCC deemed worthy of serious consideration are unfortunately also in the Green Belt, and HCC point to problems with each of them. There would be strong local objections to all of them.

WDPS recognises the importance of providing enough secondary school places within a reasonable travelling distance, and on the basis of the evidence that HCC have published it would appear that the only viable option is to create a new school. It is therefore a question of selecting the site that has the fewest disadvantages.

WDPS is sure that Wheathampstead Parish Council, CPRE and local groups such as 'Right School, Right Place' are doing all that can be done to persuade HCC to ensure that the most appropriate site is selected.

## Plans for St Helen's Church extension are rejected

**St Helen's Church's application** to build a new church centre has been rejected by St Albans District Council. The proposal was for a two-storey building, erected on part of the churchyard and linked to the existing church.

WDPS had a number of concerns about the plans, which we expressed to the District Council. At the same time we recognised that the church has a pressing need for the additional facilities that a new building would provide, and we recognised too that those facilities would be an asset not just to the church but to the wider community. These are the main points that we made to the Council.

### Size

Although the intention is that any new building should be subservient to the existing church, the proposed new structure would have been nearly as tall, and it would have transformed the views of the church from the north and west. When other church centres in the vicinity have built adjoin church centres, most have single-storey or have had a limited first floor within the roof space. We suggested that with, for example, a more flexible use of partitions, the needs of St Helen's could be accommodated in a similar way.

### Position

The proposed position of the new building was very close to the northern perimeter wall of the churchyard, a wall which is in fact Grade II listed. This would have had two significant consequences.

First, the gap between the building and the wall would have been very narrow, limiting views across the north of the churchyard and creating an alley in which some people might feel unsafe.

Second, because the ground floor of the new building would have been at the same level as the floor of the church, and because the emergency exit of the new building would be on the north side, and because also the gap between the building and the wall would have been too narrow for a ramp leading up to the emergency exit, the ground between the new building and the wall would have needed to be raised. The new level of the ground would have been about half of the height of the wall. This would have meant that the wall – a Grade II listed structure – would become load-bearing although it had never been designed to be load-bearing.

### External design of new building

Most new church centres and similar buildings make

some reference in their external design to the exterior of the church itself, such as in the shape of the windows or the predominant material used in the walls.

We are disappointed that the proposed design did not reflect any of the main design features of St Helen's Church.

One of the most successful modern church centres in the district is that at St Stephen's Church, St Albans.



St Stephen's Church and church centre

The main material (flint) used in the external walls of the St Stephen's church centre is the same material as in the church itself, and great care was taken to make sure that the windows in the new building reflect (though are not exactly the same as) the design of the church windows.

In the past this same approach was adopted in



Windows at St Helen's Church and Old School House

Wheathampstead. The Old Church School, built in the 1860s and now Grade II listed, reflects (though does not exactly copy) some of the design features of St Helen's Church.

**St Helen’s Church extension rejected**

*(Cont’d from p.3)*

**Foundation of the new building**

We believe the new building should be supported on piles sunk between the graves, thus minimising any disturbance to the graves themselves.

**Link between the church and new building**

The proposed design for the link would have produced a very obtrusive structure, limiting views across the churchyard and detracting attention away from the church itself. We recommended a lighter, structure that would be less noticeable, such as a covered walkway without sides, or a structure in which glazing extended down to ground level.

**Lighting**

While recognising the need for external lighting, we suggested that it must be not only effective but also as unobtrusive as possible.

From our discussions with St Helen’s, we feel that they are probably in agreement with a number of these points, and are, for example, open to suggestions about the external design of the new building or its foundations, even if this was not reflected in the plans submitted to the District Council.

St Helen’s Church issued a press notice following St Albans’ District Council’s rejection of their plans. They express their disappointment but were pleased that many local people recognised the need for additional facilities at the Church and vowed to find an acceptable solution.

**Time to renew**

**January 2014 means** it is time to renew your WDPS membership. At present the subscription is still £5 per household.

Something you may not know is that when the society was founded in the early 1990s the subs were set at £5. This has never changed. Despite advice from some of our members to raise the amount, we have decided to keep it the same. This is because we do not want to discourage anyone from joining this growing society. At present we have nearly 360 members: approximately a 15% of the households in Wheathampstead. Clearly this means that WDPS is able to have a significant voice when speaking on village matters.

Over the past year WDPS has delivered a number of projects. The Diamond Jubilee Garden, the community notice board and the traditional red telephone box have clearly transformed our High Street. WDPS will continue to enhance our beautiful village through their involvement in innovative projects, often working side by side with the Parish Council.

Of course these projects require finances, so although we have decided not to raise our basic subscription, we are going to offer our members the opportunity to add a donation to their £5. We enclose a form for this purpose.

If you intend to come to the AGM on 21<sup>st</sup> February that would be a good chance to pay. However, if that is not possible please send your subscription to:

The Membership Secretary,  
35, Marshalls Way,  
Wheathampstead,  
Herts.

**An enthusiastic group of WDPS volunteers**

spent a recently Sunday morning planting more bulbs at the top of The Hill.

The new bulbs are on the north corner of the junction of The Hill and Hillydyke Road. They will complement the bulbs we planted a few years ago on the other side of The Hill so that in Spring there should be a fantastic display on both sides of the road.

More bulbs for the top of The Hill



WDPS Website