



## Wandering for Wheathampstead

WDPS is this Christmas launching a fun trail through the centre of Wheathampstead that will keep the whole family entertained.

The route can be easily followed. A range of fascinating questions introduce you to a mixture of points on the Heritage Trail, some of the businesses and other organisations that thrive in the village and other interesting features that you might not otherwise notice.

7 Which bird shares a name with a lady who has a bench in memory to her at the church?  
Name a part of the church.

9 What do the NRFA (now called Fields in Trust), the plastics industry and Wheathampstead Parish Council have in common?

10 Tents of birds can be seen from the Hall - which one is an anagram of I AM PEG?

11 If you arrived at Wheathampstead Community Library at 8.15 on a Saturday morning, how long would you have to wait before it opened?

12 How many dogs are on the sign opposite the garden?

A parallel series of questions has been designed for children. It follows the same route and can be done at the same time.

*Wandering for Wheathampstead* would be a great way to spend some

time over the Christmas and New Year period, but it can be followed whenever you like. And from time to time we shall refresh the questions and the route so you can follow it anew.

### Prize Draw

Copies of the *Wandering for Wheathampstead* directions and question sheet cost £8. The proceeds will go to the Chapel Gym project. To get your copy, just visit [www.wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk](http://www.wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk) and follow the instructions. You can then follow the route, fill in the question sheet and send it back to us. (Details of where to send it are on the question sheet).

When we have received 12 correct entries, we shall hold a prize draw, and we shall do so again after each batch of 12 correct entries. One of the 12 people will then win vouchers to the tune of £20 to spend at local businesses.

## "We're talking garbage!"

Well litter to be precise! Nobody likes it, so why do so many people do it?



A growing band of litter picking enthusiasts are devoted to reversing the trend in Wheathampstead. We're calling them the Wheathampstead Wombles. You may have spotted them in their "Don't Mess with Wheathampstead" hi-viz vests, you might have joined one of our coordinated litter pick events or maybe you're following our Facebook Page of the same name. Even better would be if you noticed that the village is looking cleaner than before.

### Why is now the right time to tackle litter?

Coronavirus has made litter worse.

With all the PPE being used nowadays, a lot of it ends up in the gutter.

Sadly, people are no longer just discarding takeaway packaging on our road verges, they are also dropping facemasks, disposable gloves, wet wipes and tissues.

"People are using my street like a rubbish dump...Litteralley"



For as long as anyone can remember there have been people who, whenever they saw litter in the street (a crisp packet, say, or a sweetie wrapper) they would pick it up without thinking and pop it in a nearby bin. But they're not doing this now due to the fear surrounding Coronavirus.

So, it's a double whammy of more litter coupled with less ad-hoc litter picking.

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**Isn't it the Council's job?**

Yes and no.

**Yes**, because there are contracts in place for litter picking at Parish and District Council. A local contractor undertakes litter picking and bin emptying on land owned/managed by the Parish Council and a different contractor (a national company) undertakes litter picking and bin emptying around the areas managed by the District Council, such as the High St.

**No**, because neither Parish nor District Council are responsible for litter picking on any of the footpaths around the parish, so it is up to volunteers to help Keep Wheathampstead Wonderful.

**You started off talking garbage but now you really are talking crap!?!**

When you go walking in the country you have probably seen deposits like these:



But which of those two deposits offends you the most (please assume that in both cases they are at the side of a country footpath where you are unlikely to step on it and is far away from where children could be playing)?

Dog poo is a natural product and will decompose within 7 days but the plastic bags (even the biodegradable ones) take at least 10 years and in some cases can take up to **500 years!**

So, if you're in the countryside and if you're not going to take your dog poo home with you then please don't wrap it up in a bag and tie it in a bow. Just kick it to the side and let nature do what nature is good at. 😊

**Will we ever get rid of all the ancient historic Litter?**



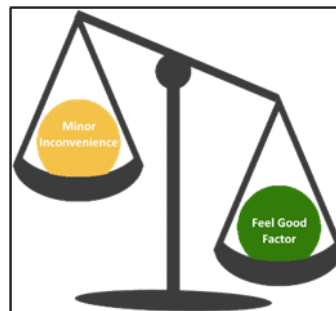
We know that a lot of litter has been lying there for many years, maybe decades. One of our volunteers recently got overly excited to find a vintage ring pull (like the one in the photograph).

These style of ring pulls were replaced by the stay-on tab from 1975 onwards meaning this piece of litter had been on Pipers Lane for several decades! If you have ever watched the BBC series, The Detectorists, you'll understand why we got so excited by this find.

As time goes on and with more people volunteering to litter pick, WDPS think that we are on the verge of a breakthrough in Wheathampstead's Litter. The day when we can say there is no historic or vintage litter anywhere in the parish!?!

Imagine the effects of having no old litter 😊

- ⇒ Firstly, we know that "litter breeds litter" so an absence of litter can have the opposite effect and will actually deter some people from dropping litter in the first place 🙅
- ⇒ Secondly, the council contractors should find less to litter pick and this will be balanced by fuller litter bins (bins may need to be emptied more frequently because after all, where's all that litter going?) 🗑️
- ⇒ Thirdly, it will be easier for our volunteers to find and remove new litter (no more digging deep into the undergrowth) 😊
- ⇒ And finally, if everyone in Wheathampstead agrees that we're going to stare at the person standing nearest to a piece of fresh litter, they're probably going to want to pick it up 🙋



**Why should I volunteer?**

Lots of people are getting on board and joining a growing team of volunteers picking up litter across the area.

Litter picking is fun and rewarding when you weigh up the feel good benefits against the minor inconvenience it causes. Bothering to carry a bag and a litter picker (or pair of gloves) when you go out walking is more than made up for by the sense of pride and public spiritedness.

**What's all the fuss about the Litterati App?**

Many of our volunteers have become addicted to using a smart phone App called Litterati. Developed in California, it is a worldwide App to capture an image of

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every piece of litter which then gets automatically geotagged and categorized to provide a statistical analysis of litter collected and trends.

Our top two Litterati contributors (other volunteers might be picking more litter but as there's no data then we don't know 🤔) are Jan Knights and Iain Begg. Both are retired and are keen walkers so they have decided to turn every walk into a Litter pick and they've got quite competitive about their relative position in our Wheathampstead challenges and also their world rankings 🏆

*"I want to be a rubbish collector...I hear the industry is picking up!"*

**Okay...I'm convinced...how can I get involved?**

If you use Facebook, then join our "Don't Mess with Wheathampstead" Facebook Page.

If you notice litter around your own neighbourhood and would like to help to keep it clear of litter then you could join our growing band of Wheathampstead Wombles. WDPS will lend you a litter picker making it a COVID-safe activity. Here's a picture of Orinoco outside the Chemist on the High Street when he came to visit Wheathampstead recently...

If you are a dog walker and you would be happy to carry a litter picker and a carrier bag on your dog walk, then again drop an email to:



[info@wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk](mailto:info@wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk)

and WDPS will lend you a litter picker.

We would be extremely grateful if you would pick up any dog poo bags that you see along the way.

**Luton Airport consultations**

If you haven't got enough to engage your mind at this moment in time and you really want a real brain teaser then fathom this one out. Luton Airport has been weeping that it will take till 2024/5 or beyond to recover the passenger numbers and revenue resulting from the dramatic effects of Covid-19. So why are they at this time having a pre-consultation to increase their capacity by 1million passengers a year?

You will recall that they had till 2025 to reach 18M but managed to do it within 5 years (2019) by offering discounts to airlines. According to published information they are offering further discounts as part of the operators deal with Luton Borough Council (the owners) to increase numbers.

**Lack of evidence**

The expansion does not set out any evidence of need as it would be hard to find this during this current period of low demand. Over the last 7 years they pushed up numbers by 40%, added larger, noisier aircraft and in so doing broke their noise footprint conditions in 2017, 2018 and 2019 several times over. They incentivised companies such as WIZZ Air (2019) to fly into Luton to maintain the cheap holiday trade whilst the BA operation was left stranded on closed runways at Heathrow (April 2020).

The consultation may seem a 'small' increase in numbers but could be a precursor to yearly increases within the giant stride to reach 35 million passengers as Luton Airport and Luton Borough Council set out in their strategic plans last year. It looks like only Covid could halt Luton Airport's plans which would inevitably result in an increase in noise and pollution over Hertfordshire.

**Arrival Flight Paths north of Luton**

Another important consultation relates to arrivals flight paths into Luton Airport. These are to the north of the airport and do not directly affect the Wheathampstead area but the main issue is again whether flights should be concentrated into narrow tracks (Luton Airport's preferred solution, meaning that those affected suffer much more noise and pollution) or whether they should be more randomly dispersed. The airspace consultation closes 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021.



## Safe Cycling in Wheathampstead

by Richard Hollingham

If you've ever tried cycling from the village to St Albans, Harpenden, Welwyn Garden City or Hatfield, you will quickly discover that Wheathampstead has a problem. Every direct route involves a steep climb and busy, dangerous 60mph B-roads.

Leisure cyclists are well served by a fantastic network of lanes and bridleways but when it comes to reaching our nearest towns for work, education or shopping, for most people cycling is not an option. As someone who (in normal times) regularly commutes to Welwyn Garden City, the options are to arrive plastered in mud from the Ayot Greenway, traumatised from attempting, to cycle the B653 or to take the car and drive.

As more of us are encouraged to get on our bikes to benefit our health and



the environment (not to mention our wallets), we have set up the **Wheathampstead Safe Cycling Group** to try to address these issues.

A sub-committee within the Wheathampstead Community Group, we are a group of local people working to improve cycling routes in and around Wheathampstead. We are not cycling nerds (only rarely appearing in lycra) but see this as a real opportunity to change our village – and our lifestyles – for the better.

Our efforts are supported by the Parish Council, our county councillor Annie Brewster and our MP, Bim Afolami. We also have the backing of local primary and secondary schools.

We are particularly focused on cycling for commuting to work and schools, where we see the greatest opportunity for improvement and – vitally – the most chance of winning government funding. Our aim is for well-surfaced and lit paths separate from traffic – suitable all year in all weathers for most bikes including hybrid, electric and commuter. We believe this would benefit both drivers and cyclists. Most of us are both.

Our initial focus is on the routes we believe are the most achievable: Wheathampstead to St Albans and Welwyn Garden City/Hatfield. We have already had success with efforts to complete the cycle path across Nomansland Common, which is funded and in the planning stage.

We are also investigating the missing link in the cycle path between the village and Harpenden. Separately, we are supporting efforts for secure cycle storage at local train stations.

Our campaign is only beginning but we are optimistic that, in the aftermath of the pandemic, this is the perfect opportunity to make our village an even better place to live...and, occasionally, leave.

## CCG plaque unveiled



Sue Walford has unveiled the plaque to Derek Hills in the Crinkle-crankle garden. The plaque reads:

*To remember Derek Hills whose generous legacy funded this garden, created for and by the people of Wheathampstead.*

## WDPS AGM

Please make a note in your diary... Our 2021 AGM will be at 7.30 pm on **Friday, 26 February**, when the speaker will be Martin Maylin from Hornbeam Wood Hedgehog Sanctuary.

This may have to be an online event. Further news will follow in the New Year.

## WDPS Subscriptions due

Traditionally WDPS subscriptions are due on 1 January, so it would be lovely if you could make your payment (£5 per household) either via the website (see address below), which also has details for electronic banking. If you prefer to drop us a cheque, please post it to our treasurer, Diane Black, at 5 Dale Ave, Wheathampstead, AL4 8LR.

We realise many people have set up recurring payment which become payable throughout the year, There is no need to change those.

If you pay by electronic banking, please make sure you include your name in the reference.

## Light at the end of the tunnel for Symondshyde?

by *Rick Sanderson* Planning Adviser to Save Symondshyde

**More than four years** after the first public consultation on the Welwyn Hatfield Draft Local Plan, and more than three years after the public examination of the Plan by a Planning Inspector began, the final version of the Plan and whether it should include the proposed allocation of the Green Belt site at Symondshyde Farm for development as a 'garden village' has still not been resolved.

The Save Symondshyde campaign group has participated at each stage of public consultation and in several of the Examination hearings that have been held – most recently, in the site-specific hearing on the Symondshyde proposal, held in March 2020.

### The contentious housing target

The submitted Draft Plan set a housing target of 12,000 new dwellings for the 20 year period of the Plan, of which about half would be in existing urban areas and the remainder in the Green Belt. The proposal for around 1,100 dwellings at Symondshyde represents about 9% of the total allocation. The 12,000 target was based on sub-national household formation projections produced in 2014, in accordance with central government guidance. The Inspector subsequently indicated, on the basis of revised evidence, that the 'Objectively Assessed Need' (OAN) for housing should be increased to 16,000 for the Plan period.

At a hearing session on Housing Need in December 2019, Save Symondshyde argued strongly that the OAN should be reduced significantly to reflect the reduction in the 2016-based household projections for Welwyn Hatfield, but the Inspector decided that the OAN of 16,000 dwellings should be adhered to.

At the site-specific hearing on Symondshyde, Save Symondshyde demonstrated that the proposed development of a stand-alone new settlement - separated from the nearest urban development by at least a kilometre, and three to four kilometres from the town centres and transport hubs at Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City - would be unsustainable in terms of the local services/facilities it could support and sustainable modes of transportation. As a result, the Inspector asked the Council to provide more evidence on how it could be made more sustainable. In response, the site landowner and promoter of the Symondshyde proposal, Gascoyne Cecil Estates, proposed that the development should be increased to 1,500 dwellings and expanded to within around 700 metres of the outer edge of Hatfield, claiming that this would create the necessary 'critical mass' to make it sustainable.



In summer 2020, the 2018-based household projections produced by the Office for National Statistics showed another huge reduction in the number of new households likely to form in Welwyn Hatfield by the end of the Plan period in 2036. In a written response to the public consultation on this, Save Symondshyde's planning consultant demonstrated that the OAN should be no more than around 10,500. This would have the effect of saving a number of sites in the Green Belt, not just Symondshyde.

### The Inspector's interim conclusions

The Inspector's reaction to this is awaited, but we cannot be optimistic of the outcome, because he seems to be wedded to the Government's policy of building as many houses as possible in the mistaken belief that affordability will improve. The Inspector issued his Interim Report, giving his provisional conclusions on the Examination (document EX212 on the website [www.welhat.gov.uk/localplanexamination](http://www.welhat.gov.uk/localplanexamination)) in October. In it, he set the Council a deadline of the end of December to confirm how it wishes to proceed with the Local Plan and what additional sites it proposes to allocate to meet the full OAN (whatever that might be).

### A possible change of course

This brought matters to a head. At a full Council meeting on 23 November, following continued lobbying of councillors by Save Symondshyde and other parties opposed to unjustified development in the Green Belt, a 'political' decision was taken to recommend a new OAN of 13,800 dwellings for the Plan period, **including the removal of the Symondshyde allocation from the Plan.**

The ball is now in the Inspector's court. He could accept the Council's new proposals, in which case he would invite the Council to submit them formally as what is *Cont'd on p.6*



## Work continues at the United Church

The work in Wheathampstead United Church continues apace, still with the aim of opening *The Chapel Gym* in 2021. The project team reports that lots of milestones have already been passed, including – with enormous help from Jarvis Homes – the reinstatement of the electricity.

It just happens that Neil Mathieson, Electrical Contracts Manager at Jarvis, was born in Wheathampstead and his mother had spent her whole life in the village until she died in December 2019. So Neil has been very keen to help the project and has achieved miracles with rewiring the church at no cost, as well as saving the team thousands by digging the trench so that UKPN could reconnect the power.



Other work on the building is progressing. You may have noticed the restoration of the front door, lovingly completed by Maria Azcona, and Richard Brett has been restoring the decoration on the Victorian brickwork.

Jobs for the New Year include the installation of a toilet (with thanks to Nonpareil for all their help) and work on the flooring, ceiling and insulation. The team are also excited to think it may be possible to create an additional stained-glass window (funded separately), as well as repair and protect the beautiful windows that already exist.

All this requires a lot of funding, and the project team are thrilled with the support that the village has offered during two crowdfunding campaigns. These create opportunities to reach out for match-funding from national organisations, thus multiplying the donations.

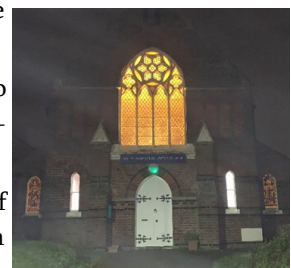
The project team would also like to thank everyone who came to the Christmas Market in early December in the church car park. Both WDPS and The Chapel Gym really appreciated your generosity – both sold out of stock!

The Swan are now making a donation to the gym for each pizza they sell. They gave a donation for November even before the team knew they were doing it! What a great village this is!

The large stained-glass window at the front of the church can now be illuminated in memory of a loved one. If you would like to take up this offer, please email [contact@chapelgym.co.uk](mailto:contact@chapelgym.co.uk) to make arrangements.

Wheathampstead United Church is now investigating whether it may be possible to bring the church hall back into use. Neil Mathieson is working with the team to reinstate electricity in the building. Watch this space!

The contest to choose a name for the new gym was won by Joe Duddy, who thought of the winning name *The Chapel Gym*. WDPS awarded him a £25 voucher to be spent in a local business of his choice (Elephant & Castle).



### Light at the end of the tunnel for Symondshyde? *Cont'd from p.5*

known as Main Modifications to the Draft Plan. Or he could decide that because the Council has not identified enough sites to meet the full OAN, it is 'unsound' and a completely new Plan would have to be prepared.

Whatever happens, it is almost certain that a further Examination hearing will be held in the new year to consider the evidence on the most appropriate OAN. If the Inspector decides that Main Modifications could be made to make the Plan sound, they would be subject to a further round of public consultation before a final decision is made.

So, it will probably be well into 2021 before we know whether or not Symondshyde has been saved.