

# Airport expansion plans come under fire

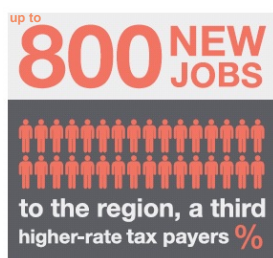
Vociferous disparagement of the proposal to more than double Luton Airport's passenger handling capacity and number of flights came from some 130 local residents at a public meeting in May convened by the Harpenden Society. Their almost universal condemnation of the plans was directed at three Luton Borough councillors who sit on the board of London Luton Airport Ltd, (LLAL) following their detailed presentation of the expansion project.

The audience in Rothamsted Research's Fowden Hall heard **Hazel Simmons**, leader of Luton Borough Council – the airport owner – LLAL chairman **Andy Malcolm** and chief operations officer **Robin Porter**, outline its ambitious and far-reaching plans for the next three decades.

Ms Simmons asserted that the airport 'wanted to be a good neighbour' to surrounding communities and to that end it would be expanded 'sustainably', without the need for either a second runway or a lengthening of the existing runway. She maintained that the planned expansion, at a cost of some £1.5 billion, would bring more prosperity for the whole area, not just for Luton, claiming that the airport already supported, directly or indirectly, some 30,000 jobs.

Mr Malcolm said 16 million passengers passed through Luton Airport in 2017, of which, incidentally, catchment area surveys had shown, about 5 million were from London and some 3 million from Hertfordshire.

**For every million additional passengers...**



*Above from left to right: Hazel Simmons, leader of Luton Borough Council – the airport owner – LLAL chairman Andy Malcolm, chief operations officer Robin Porter and Alan Jackson, acting chairman of The Harpenden Society.*

The airport was therefore approaching its present theoretical capacity of 18 million passengers per annum (ppa), a level expected to be reached by 2021.

Luton Airport's vision for the decades up to 2050 was for passenger capacity to increase to between 36 and 38 million ppa. The job of the airport management team was, declared Mr Malcolm, 'to actively manage the environmental impacts through responsible and sustainable development'. But it was clear from the Fowden Hall's audience reaction that his assertion was widely regarded with disdain, one resident claiming that 'aircraft noise already made life a misery'.

He hastened to remind them however that the proposal to at least double the airport's capacity was, for the first time in its 80 years of growth, contingent on planning approval, not from the local authority – with its built-in vested interest as the airport owner – but from central government. The Secretary of State for Transport's remit would necessarily involve an enquiry on meeting predicted long-term civil aviation demand for all of the Greater London area, with the mooted third runway at Heathrow an inevitable contributory factor.

*Continues*

## Continues

A planning timetable had been established. A 10-week 'non statutory' stakeholder consultation would begin this summer, followed by a statutory consultation scheduled for June next year, leading to the submission of an application to the Secretary of State in late 2019, with the 'hope' (Mr Malcolm's word) of securing planning consent some time during 2021. **David Williams**, leader of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and a Harpenden Town councillor, speaking from the floor, gave an assurance that HCC would be closely involved in the planning consultations.



*Left. David Williams, leader of Hertfordshire County Council*

Mr Porter alleged that the projected doubling of flights and passenger numbers could be achieved with minimum additional aircraft noise or road traffic disruption – something disputed vigorously by many in the audience, based on today's local airport-related headaches.



They cited regular noise disturbance, especially at night, and increased congestion on routes to and from the airport, notably the A1081 and Lower Luton Road through Harpenden, as well as the current crowding on Thameslink trains – before any further airport expansion.

While admitting that airports were, by definition, 'smelly and noisy', Mr Porter said the noise issue in particular was being addressed through a number of measures. There had recently been a narrowing of flightpaths that were routed over less populated areas, and a requirement for today's (less noisy) aircraft, after take-off, to climb more steeply, reducing their noise 'footprint'. Planes taking off to the west would be required to reach an altitude of 1000ft by the time they crossed the Thameslink rail line.

## Noise night flights current position

LBC has agreed with LLAOL that night flights will be tightened up for this summer

**No** ad hoc movements

**No** further slots allocated

**No** rescheduling of existing allocated slots from the day time

**No** non emergency diverted flights accepted

**No** early arrivals pre designated landing times before the early morning period



*Above. The Dart rail link train.*

Meanwhile, he added, a new three-minute rail link costing £225 million, connecting Thameslink's Luton Parkway station to the airport terminal was under construction. It was designed to encourage more passengers to arrive and leave by rail rather than by car. The airport was liaising with Thameslink to improve capacity of trains serving Parkway station.



However, few in the audience above appeared convinced that the planned airport expansion over the coming decades would yield worthwhile benefits for those living in its hinterland, despite Ms Simmons' 'good neighbour' pledge. **THS**



# Awards for four new Harpenden developments

Rothamsted Research and Lawes Agricultural Trust (LAT) received The Harpenden Society Award Scheme's *Certificate of Merit* for developments completed in 2017. The accolade was bestowed on De Ramsey Court and Fisher Court, a pair of new student accommodation buildings on the Rothamsted campus, 'in recognition of their architectural quality and construction'. Society chairman Phil Waters presented the Certificate to LAT chairman Graham Birch at the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the new buildings coming into use.



## This year three other developments in the town received Harpenden Society *Letters of Commendation*.

The new housing off Westfield Road, close to the River Lea, adjacent to the Red Cow public house, was recognised notably for the good use, made by the developer **Ridgepoint Homes**, of the land originally occupied by D V Baulk's builder's yard and appropriately named **Baulk Close**.



Closer to the town centre, there was recognition of the sympathetic conversion and extension by **Jarvis Homes** of the large detached house – originally built in 1906 – at no 7 Arden Grove, into eleven apartments, under the name **Arden Court**. Jarvis managing director Mike Peters was presented with the award by Phil Waters and Harpenden Society Awards group chairperson Penny Ayres, who affirmed that the development 'enhances the street scene as well as adding usefully to the town's housing stock'.



A quite different transformation of an existing building nearby, which the Society deemed worthy of recognition is the conversion of the former main Post Office in Station Road into the eye-catching **Côte Brasserie restaurant**. In the words of the commendation, 'it has enhanced an otherwise dull building with attractive awnings and window boxes'. **THS**







**Above from left to right:** Marion Dunstone, Director of Operations, Lynda Edwards, Clinical Lead for School Nursing, Tess Gartside, Team Lead for Health Visiting, Carl Cheevers Harpenden Council Town Clerk, Diane Brent, Associate Director of Estates and Facilities, Phil Waters The Harpenden Society chair, Right at the back with blonde hair – Laura Catterall, Locality Manager (Adult Services) for St Albans and Harpenden, Nikki Sharkey, Locality Manager (Children's Services) for St Albans and Harpenden, Jeff Philips, Non-Executive Director

# Health Centre 'ready for use' by late 2020, says project team

In our Spring newsletter, we carried an update on the plans for Harpenden's new Health and Wellbeing Centre on the Red House site in Carlton Road. A more detailed account of the project's progress came from key executives involved, at a meeting in mid-April convened by the Harpenden Society in Rothamsted Research's Fowden Hall.



An audience of some 150 of the town's residents heard that construction work would begin during 2019, with the new centre being 'ready for use' in late 2020. **Russ Charlesworth, Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust's (HCNHST) strategic project manager, said he had every confidence that the target completion date would be met, conditional on the planning application – due for submission to St Albans District Council (SADC) in late May – being successful.**



*Marion Dunstone*

By way of introduction at the April meeting, Town Clerk Carl Cheevers said the social infrastructure and community facilities of the kind embodied in what he called the planned 'specialist hospital', were a key element in the Harpenden Town Council (HTC) Neighbourhood Plan (NP), which was itself being progressed through its final stages, namely an

independent examination and a referendum on residents' views, the latter scheduled for September. He conceded that, on planning issues, HTC was only a 'consultee', but that, in regard to the new Health Centre, 'SADC will have to consider the Harpenden NP'.

Marion Dunstone, HCNHST's director of operations, then spoke of the trust's collaboration with other local organisations in planning the new centre. Together they had been obliged to address the question 'what is driving the need for such a facility?' It had become clear that three key drivers were: a numerical increase in the town's population; people were also living longer, in consequence requiring additional services; and the advent of new technologies in health care, needing to be made available locally. The plans for the centre were therefore geared to a 'five year forward view'.

On the crucial issue of funding, Diane Brent, the Trust's assistant director of facilities said the plans for the site, which amounted to a major upgrade of and extension to 'The Stewarts' current health facility, involved an up-front investment of between £3m and £4m. However, said Ms Brent, the adjacent housing planned on the Red House site, made the creation of the new centre effectively 'self funding'. There would be 26 new-build homes, concentrated on the north of the site, adjacent to Maldon Court, on the east and west sides of the Red House itself, comprising nine 'town' houses and a block of 17 apartments. In addition the Red House itself would be modernised for conversion to residential use. The aim was for between 10 and 30% of the housing development on the site to be 'affordable' within the current definition of the term.



*Diane Brent*



*Russ Charlesworth*

**Continues** ➔



## Continues —→

Once completed the new centre would, said Ms Dunstone, receive an NHS operating budget of around £3 million per annum. She added that a vital benefit for Harpenden would be the provision at the new centre of numerous consultations and treatments for which local people currently had to travel to mainstream hospitals, such as Luton & Dunstable, Watford General and Lister (Stevenage).

There was also 'potential' for GP services to be provided at the centre, though Ms Dunstone gave no indication of how those would fit in with those of Harpenden's existing nearby doctors' practices. In answer to a question from the floor, she said an outreach day-clinic service from the likes of Moorfields Eye Hospital 'would be welcome'.

It was expected that space would be available at the new centre for local organisations with a broadly-defined wellbeing remit to provide part-time scheduled services. Citizens' Advice was cited as an example, as well as fitness groups catering for older or disabled members of the community. The current blood test clinic on the Red House site would be transferred to the new facility, and it was likely that a mobile X-ray unit would come to the site on a scheduled basis.

On the somewhat mundane but vital question of car parking provision at the new centre, Mr Charlesworth said consultants had been employed to analyse the likely demand for spaces, taking into account the inevitable 'coming and going' of both service providers and patients through the course of an average day. As a result of their deliberations, a total of 77 spaces was planned, in a car park accessed from Stewart Road. Several means of enforcement to restrict the use of the car park to bona fide users and bar unscrupulous commuters were being evaluated.

Mr Charlesworth said the HCNHST planning team had not lost sight of the need for the new Health and Wellbeing Centre to create a pleasant and welcoming impression for patients and staff alike. Accordingly, as much green space as possible would be retained, together with woodland including a large red oak tree thought to be 160 years old. **THS**



**Above:** Nikki Sharkey (left) with Ruth Bradford. Goody bags included information about becoming a member of HCT.

**Below from left to right:** Society discussion with Phil Waters, Chair, John Harris and Bob Fletcher, committee members.



**Below:** Visitors examine the Health Centre plans



## A Luton Airport message from Bim Afolami

'I had the honour of speaking to the Harpenden Society in September (back when I was a fresh-faced new MP!), and faced a bit of a grilling from my constituents. It was a brilliant event, so to be invited back to write for your newsletter is wonderful.

'I spoke then about planning in Harpenden, and how the town itself feels like a village. While there is no question that more housing is needed, planning should respect and reflect the existing community.

'Another hugely important issue facing Harpenden which will have an impact on the atmosphere of the town is the recent and future proposed expansion of Luton Airport – the subject of this newsletter's front page report. Since being elected, I have paid close attention to the issue and the effect on Harpenden, in particular the increase in noise and impact on existing infrastructure.

'Increasing the number of planes landing at Luton by such a huge amount, with the number of passengers every year set to rise from 18 to 36 million, will have massive side effects when it comes to noise, which is not only annoying but also disruptive. People choose to live in Harpenden for many reasons, including

its closeness to both areas of natural beauty and London, making it a very popular area. I do not want to see people leaving Harpenden, which is a fantastic place to live, because of a noisy airport (or because of train service problems!).

'Another issue that further expansion of the airport would bring is the effect on roads, rail, and parking. Existing infrastructure needs to be overhauled to cope with the sheer increase in the number of people who would be flying in and out of Luton. It is essential therefore that the infrastructure upgrade comes before and not after any airport growth, and that it must meet long-term demands. Likewise with the need for more housing in and around Harpenden – there must be an understanding of the wider impact of growth, and not just a sticking plaster solution.

'I held a debate in Westminster Hall earlier this year on the Luton Airport expansion issue, and raised many of the concerns expressed to me by constituents. I am currently focusing on reducing the impact on Harpenden of aircraft noise. Luton Borough Council, the airport owner, and the Spanish-owned operating company need to take this seriously, and rest assured I will continue fighting on your behalf.'



# Did You Know? From Harpenden's history 'Cat's Eyes' Cunningham

One of Harpenden's most distinguished and officially honoured residents was John Cunningham, (right) whose service as a night-time fighter pilot during the Second World War earned him his famous nickname 'Cat's Eyes'. A life-long bachelor, he lived for most of his later life, up until his death aged 84 in 2002, at 'Canley', the house facing Kinsbourne Green Common which still bears the same name.



**Canley – John Cunningham's later house**

Though born in Croydon, Surrey, he moved in 1935 much closer to his eventual Harpenden home, becoming an indentured apprentice with the de Havilland (DH) Aircraft company at Hatfield. Cunningham, no doubt encouraged by his employers, joined the Royal Auxiliary Air Force based at Hendon, where he learned to fly, and in 1936 was awarded his RAF 'wings'.

Cunningham and his fellow students would from time to time go to the cinema, the nearest in those days being in St Albans, most likely the picture house in Chequer Street, thereby establishing, albeit unwittingly, a geographical affinity to Harpenden.

Those leisure hours were however scarce. He was putting in a full week's work at DH in Hatfield and flying with Hendon-based RAAF squadron 604 at weekends. Perhaps not surprisingly, having achieved his air force 'wings', Cunningham was invited to join DH's four-strong team of test pilots at Hatfield.

But his career as a civilian test pilot was cut short by the Munich crisis of August 1939, when 604 squadron was mobilised for a full RAF wartime role. His first recorded 'kill' came on November 19 1940 when, over the Sussex coast in his Bristol Beaufighter, he shot down a Junkers 88 bomber. He later inflicted the same treatment on two Heinkel 111 bombers, an encounter which led to his being awarded the DFC and bar.

By the end of the Blitz in May 1941 he had become Britain's most famous night fighter pilot, claiming fourteen Luftwaffe victims using what was then termed 'airborne interception' – later to become known as radar. Further recognition of Cunningham's achievements came with promotion through the ranks, to wing commander and eventually to group captain.



As commanding officer of 85 Squadron RAF through 1943-44, he was regularly flying Mosquitoes, designed and produced by his old firm de Havilland. The Mosquito, famous for its all-wooden but lightweight and rugged construction, was developed largely at Salisbury Hall, London Colney, an old manor house whose grounds today house the de Havilland Aircraft Museum.

His soubriquet 'Cat's Eye's' was said to come from British propaganda explanations of his high rate of enemy 'kills' at night, designed to keep from the Germans the fast developing technology of radar. Cunningham disowned the nickname, especially when it was used in fanciful stories about pilots' night vision being enhanced through an over consumption of carrots.

After the war Cunningham returned to de Havilland as a test pilot. He was at the controls of the revolutionary Comet airliner and later the Trident on their respective maiden flights. Back in civvy street, he put down his first roots in Harpenden. He went to live with his mother and sister, who had bought a long rambling old farmhouse with stables and acres of land alongside Kinsbourne Green Common. Today it bears the name Kinsbourne House and is the home of Harpenden Society stalwart Penny Ayres.

In the early 1950s John and his mother had a smaller though nevertheless substantial new house built on the north side of the old farmhouse. It remains there today, the new owners having done very little to its outward appearance, which arguably typifies none-too-distinguished 1950s architecture. The name Canley was 'transferred' to the new Cunningham residence.



**Kinsbourne Green House**

To anyone who knew his famous face, he was a familiar Saturday morning Waitrose shopper, driving his rather old BMW. He said he couldn't afford a better car, the reason undoubtedly being related to the heavy losses he suffered as a Lloyds 'name' when, in 1988, that venerable institution effectively collapsed.

He told friends he had no aspirations to move away from the Harpenden area and the Hertfordshire countryside he loved. John Cunningham CBE, DSO and two bars, DFC and bar, died, just six days short of his 85th birthday, on July 21 2002.

**Acknowledgement: the website of Harpenden Local History Society** THS



# EDITOR'S VIEW

Alan Bunting

## Pavement parking - a necessary evil?

My late father, even back in the 1950s, had an apt description for motorists driving forwards, rather than reversing, as they attempted to squeeze into a tight kerbside parking space. He somewhat contemptuously dubbed them 'nosey parkers'. His admonishment is as valid as ever today, when many more drivers are in search of parking places.

Street parking anywhere near the centre of Harpenden has become a gamble; at most times of the day, even at weekends, you're lucky to find a space. Streets ever further from the town centre which are free of weekday parking restrictions are, from Monday to Friday, clogged with commuters' cars from 7am to 6pm or later.



Furthermore, in narrower roads the regrettable phenomenon of 'pavement parking' is now commonplace (note for American readers: our 'pavement' is not the highway; in your terminology it's the sidewalk).

To the scorn for 'nosey parkers' can now be added the annoyance from 'pavement parkers'. That annoyance is most likely to be felt by pedestrians and of course wheelchair users, who quite reasonably expect to negotiate roadside footpaths without let or hindrance – or vehicular obstruction. Under the generic heading of pavement parking one ought also to include 'grass verge parking'. Many drivers, especially of delivery vans and trucks, have no compunction about allowing their wheels to churn up a respectable strip of greensward into a mini Ypres salient.



Unfortunately, as far as victims of the pavement parking syndrome are concerned, it cannot be categorised as law-breaking – not that is unless, in a specific instance, it can be proved to cause an unreasonable obstruction. And that takes us into the regulatory nuances on which lawyers depend to maintain their Rolls-Royce and caviar lifestyles.

Consider for example the debatable question of whether it is more of an offence, at least in layman's language, to park your car with all four wheels up on the path, rather than just two wheels. One or two retailers in Harpenden High Street regularly park their vehicles with all four wheels on what is admittedly a fairly wide pavement outside their premises, causing minimum pedestrian disruption. But elsewhere in the town, where the pavement is much narrower, a vehicle with just its nearside wheels up on the kerb, can create considerable inconvenience.

So, what's to be done, bearing in mind that at busy periods there may be few if any bona fide parking spaces available in Bowers Way or Amenbury Lane public car parks or in those provided for Sainsbury's and Waitrose customers?

A good start would be to encourage fewer people to drive into the centre of town, though clearly today's supermarket trolley-filling clientele, out to do their big weekly shop, have become unflinchingly 'car dependent'. But for others, needing to get into the centre of Harpenden for let's say social reasons, or for 'minor shopping', and who shrink from the challenge of finding somewhere to park, there could be a solution at hand, at least at weekends.

Harpenden could, as suggested by Ron Taylor, editor of Harpendia, the town's on-line news bulletin, emulate other towns with similar parking problems by instigating a park-and-ride service. It could become an adjunct to the Harpenden Hopper minibus service, helping to boost its passenger numbers and hence its viability.

Getting down to specifics, the mooted weekend park-and-ride service would be based at Rothamsted Research's extensive staff car parks – largely unused on Saturdays and Sundays – from where a Hopper minibus would take the erstwhile car occupants to one or more drop-off points close to the town centre. Lydekker Park and Rothamsted Park main gate in Leyton Road are possibilities.

The idea has been put before a number of town councillors. Their response is awaited with interest. It is quite a bold project and one that is admittedly unlikely to relieve the aforementioned pavement parking issues to any measurable extent. But it must be worthy of consideration within the wider context of Harpenden's immense car parking and road congestion problems. **THS**



# Schools find things to smile about

Harpenden's three secondary schools are noted throughout Hertfordshire and beyond for their high standards of academic achievement, as evidenced by the number of families moving into the town with their children's education a prime motivator.

Early summer is the time of year when students are preparing for exams, the results of which could determine their career paths as they enter the Sixth Form or move on to university. Although they have necessarily been working hard, they will also have enjoyed their celebratory 'Proms', Sixth Form dinners and final school assemblies.

A team of Year 8 students from Roundwood Park School have this year taken part in the less academically-formal Hertfordshire Schools 'Maths Challenge' and now they await the final rounds of the competition.

Meanwhile, at St George's, on an even more genial note, students took part in the National Smile Month campaign, sponsored by the Oral Health Foundation. Apart from raising the awareness of dental health, it gave Helen Barton the head teacher an opportunity to highlight the wellbeing benefits of smiling. They include the release of neuropeptides (chemical signals in the brain) to combat stress. It had been shown, she pointed out, that smiling could also increase life-span, while obviously showing the world that you're enjoying life.

Another way of engendering student smiles has been introduced at Roundwood, with the latest member of staff 'recruit'. He has four legs and a tail and – hopefully – answers to the name of Bertie. (below) A black-and-white Cocker Spaniel, he arrived at the school as an eight-week old puppy in early April. In assistant head teacher Alexandra Gray's words, Bertie is being trained as a 'wellbeing' dog who will spend time with students (and staff) if they need some 'TLC' or dog therapy. He is, she says, already being used by some students who are taking exams, as a means of relieving stress and making them glad to come to school.



In recent months students and staff from Sir John Lawes School represented their peers at a number of receptions at 10 Downing Street, where Theresa May paid tribute to members of the teaching profession. Another group from the school visited the University of Oxford for a 'Women in Computer Science' event which included lively debate and participation in workshop sessions on Computational Medicine and Quantum Computing.

No review of Harpenden's academic landscape could avoid reference to the Katherine Warington secondary school planned for the Common Lane/Lower Luton Road site at Batford, and to which recent issues of the Harpenden Society newsletter have devoted extensive coverage.

Because some of the nearly 50 pre-commencement planning conditions set for the KWS project by Herts County Council proved exceptionally challenging to meet in the expected timeframe, the opening of the school has, disappointingly, had to be put back twelve months to September 2019.

The delay was offset to some extent by the agreement of Harpenden's three existing secondary schools to take some additional numbers as a 'one-off' to help meet need. But the revised KWS opening date has taken on a new urgency. Because of a primary school demographic 'bulge', secondary schools in St Albans which have till now taken children from Harpenden and the villages (Wheathampstead, Kimpton, Whitwell etc) have had to restrict admissions from outside their St Albans catchment area. The new school at Batford will therefore be needed even more to meet the demand from families in our area.

That urgent need is now, regrettably from an educational authority standpoint, up against the application for a Judicial Review of the KWS planning decision submitted by a number of residents in the Batford area under the 'Right School, Right Place' banner. As we go to press the upshot of the Judicial Review has yet to be determined.

The Harpenden Society's view is that, whatever the outcome, the town does need a short, medium and long term solution to the lack of secondary school places. And given the numbers of children moving towards secondary transfer, that solution must be in place by September 2019. **THS**

## SOCIETY PUBLIC MEETING DATES

**David Lloyd, Police & Crime  
Commissioner to speak at a public meeting  
on Wednesday 26th September.  
Details to be announced**

**Further dates and speakers are yet to be confirmed,  
check our web site for details  
[www.harpendensociety.org](http://www.harpendensociety.org)**

Please send comments on articles or any other issues raised in this edition to the editor: Alan Bunting  
[editor@harpendensociety.org](mailto:editor@harpendensociety.org).

Sub-editor Harry Downie  
Visit the Society's website –  
[www.harpendensociety.org](http://www.harpendensociety.org)

Designed by Ron Taylor  
Published by The Harpenden Society, printed by  
D2D, Harpenden and distributed by hard-working  
Society members.