



Spring News 2022 Founded in 1930

SADC planning cuts threaten conservation aims

Important concerns have been raised by the **Harpenden Society** in collaboration with **Harpenden Local History Society** about the intended streamlining of procedures by St Albans District Council in its handling of planning applications.

The proposal, clearly with cost saving as the driver, to have only one – hitherto four – planning committee for the whole of St Albans District, has inevitably serious implications. So too does the intention to end ‘call ins’ by district councillors of householder and ‘other’ applications, the latter to include **Listed Building** consents as well as proposals to demolish buildings in designated **Conservation Areas**.

The two Harpenden-based civic societies have duly put forward a number of considered suggestions for improving the planning process but, crucially, without losing democratic scrutiny of planning applications that affect individuals and communities.

There are fears that tighter SADC budgets could restrict vital decision-making. In the opinion of the **HS** and **HLHS**, the proposals can be seen as **fundamentally undemocratic**, with cost savings placed ahead of public interest.

The aim of streamlining the ‘nitty gritty’ of the planning process is acknowledged, enabling councillors to focus on strategy and issues of principle. But reductions in officer time are, say the two Societies, outweighed by the loss of democratic representation.

The voices of **Harpenden Town Council**, with the reconstituted Conservation Area Group now under its wing (see our Winter newsletter) and members of the public directly concerned by planning applications would be effectively silenced. And planning officers would crucially lose their link to local on-site knowledge and conditions, inevitably making decisions less transparent.

Elected councillors would be invited to engage in important ‘pre-application discussions’ only if the developer applicant wanted them to. There would be a risk of planning decisions being made ‘by numbers’, regrettably leading to individual rejections having a cumulative effect on whole streets and surrounding areas.

Decisions to make structural and/or visual changes to Nationally **Listed** – typically historic – **Buildings**, or to demolish unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas could well be made by planning officers with little or no knowledge of the buildings or areas concerned.

Councillor ‘call-in’ has hitherto safeguarded the council’s legal duty to approve only applications that protect **Conservation Areas** ensuring applicants’ access to planning officers. Inconsistent decisions should, say the **HS** and **HLHS**, be reviewed – but not by abolishing the present area committees, as is proposed.

Availability of SADC-employed **Conservation Area** Officers would, suggest the two Societies, cut the cost of councillor call-ins. A less costly alternative would be **expert local voluntary community involvement** in Conservation Area management, adding more democratic legitimacy to planning decisions.

Representatives of the **HS** and **HLHS** held a Zoom meeting with SADC councillors, including council leader Chris White, at the end of March to voice the above concerns, which were heard sympathetically. It was pointed out however that any procedural changes, with or without Conservation Area related concessions, could not be implemented before the May local elections.



Regrettably destined for demolition, despite its Conservation Area location – this 1950s ‘eyebrow’ house (so-called because of the curved roofline above the upstairs windows) in Townsend Lane, which the now formally-established Harpenden Conservation Area Group was unable to ‘save’. But it served as an example of the need for future HCAG vigilance should SADC’s pared-down planning application procedures receive legislative approval.

Nevertheless, it was clear that the current Liberal Democrat SADC administration was willing to consider, for example, giving town and parish councils, including Harpenden TC, the authority to ‘call in’ controversial plans, particularly those in a **Conservation Area**.

Cllr White welcomed the idea of a once- or twice-yearly Conservation Area group meetings with council members and officers to review progress and consider planning issues, possibly involving representatives from **St Albans Civic Society** as well as **HS** and **HLHS**.

Our airport growth objections spelled out

At an exhibition in the Eric Morecambe Centre in early March, Harpenden Society representatives had an opportunity to look closely at the plans by London Luton Airport Ltd – now incongruously restyled as ‘Luton Rising’ – for a near 80% increase in airport capacity.



Having scrutinised the proposals in detail, set out in an expensively-produced 166-page consultation document entitled ‘Future LuToN’, the Society has responded formally to Luton Rising’s invitation to submit its considered observations. The Society is not opposed to airport expansion per se. But assent must be dependent on the benefits outweighing the projected local costs and environmental consequences, among which few benefits have been identified for the residents of Harpenden.



Our conclusion is therefore one of unequivocal opposition to the Luton Airport expansion proposals, informed by the following cardinal issues:

*Climate change and pollution: Greenhouse gases, primarily CO₂, from increased air traffic movements would increase significantly, exacerbating climate change. Luton Rising’s contention that global warming gas emissions are a national responsibility – by implication outside its remit – is flawed and untenable. The projected expansion is a major infrastructure project so national CO₂ reduction targets are relevant. The Planning Inspectorate should accordingly scrutinise in detail how an expanded Luton Airport could meet its claims of limiting greenhouse gas growth, when the projected 70,000 additional flights a year would push a further 1 million tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

There are no proposals to reduce small business jet and helicopter movements (many of them, in practice,



leisure flights), which could cut the total number of CO₂- and pollution-generating aircraft movements. There are also no proposals to incentivise airlines to use more efficient (ie lower emission) aircraft. The Environment Act 2021, designed to ‘Strengthen the local air quality management (LAQM) framework enabling greater cooperation at local level and broaden the range of organisations that play a role in improving local air quality, with responsibility for tackling local air pollution being shared with neighbouring authorities’ is ignored.



With the arguable exception of airport-owning Luton Borough Council, NO neighbouring authorities have expressed approval of the planned expansion, which would, it should be added, threaten Herts County Council’s ‘Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy’ whose aim is ‘clean air for all’ by 2030.

*Increased disturbance: Frequency of excessive noise events would increase because of significantly more flights, inevitably concentrated in the morning and evening ‘shoulder’ periods. And because low-cost (currently mainly easyJet and WizzAir) flights are notoriously late arriving it would mean an increase in night flights traversing Harpenden.

There is a clear indication that the airport is looking to accelerate operational growth of the airport beyond the Phase 1 ‘Core Planning Case’; the consultation brochure refers to getting 23 million passengers per annum (ppa) through the current terminal, despite the Core Planning Case referring to 21.5 million ppa in Phase 1.

Luton Airport has a history of extending its operations through incentivisation, with no regard for the resultingly increased noise. And it is conceded that its so-called 'Green Controlled Growth' proposals are still 'in draft', but they appear certain to allow considerable flexibility in setting targets that the airport would have to meet. What is equally ominous, the anachronistic combined poacher-and-gamekeeper role of Luton Borough Council, the airport's owner, as the noise limit enforcing authority, would remain.



Past experience of the airport's consultant findings point to 'more noise for longer'. Predicted aircraft fleet replacements with quieter planes have not materialised. Perhaps most notably, easyJet's newer Airbus A320neo and A321neo types are as noisy as their predecessors on take-off – aggravated by the high engine thrust needed in lifting off from Luton's short runway. Separately, flight paths are being reassessed and a number of the possible options would mean more planes coming into and out of Luton over-flying Harpenden, something which would clearly be made worse by any increase in flight frequency.



*No shared benefits: The alleged benefits of airport expansion to the local community, by way of jobs especially, would be largely confined to Luton. Predicted growth of employment in Hertfordshire for example is negligible. But Harpenden would suffer the impact of greater air and noise pollution, as well as increased road congestion (on the B653 as well as the A1081) from a predicted 40,000 additional passengers per day travelling to and from the airport. The hope that a greater percentage of passengers would opt to

use public transport can only be that – a hope. Luton Rising's airport access transport strategy remains unclear.

Luton Airport's contribution to the three adjacent counties (Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire) is barely 1% of GDP, which would not change with expansion. There is nothing that compensates for the resulting environmental costs, which is why neighbouring county and district authorities are united in their opposition.

Images courtesy Luton Rising



Ominous flight path changes looming

Aside from Luton Airport's expansion plans, another disturbing aircraft noise issue is threatened, one that has been 'becalmed' during the Covid pandemic. As proposed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), it would mean flight path changes which could adversely affect much of Harpenden, including areas of the town previously less afflicted by airport-related noise and pollution.

Called Future Airspace Strategy Implementation-South (FASI-S), its ostensible aim is 'to modernise airspace in the South of England', that involves all major airports in the south being subject to a seven-stage CAA approval process ahead of any flight path changes being adopted.

Luton Airport has lost no time in presenting draft options to the CAA for approval, which they expect shortly. Those options include new flight paths that will affect Harpenden residents as well as revisions

to existing flight paths. The proposals can be accessed at: <https://airspacechange.caa.co.uk/PublicProposalArea?pID=109> Should approval be obtained, the airport authorities will undertake a Public Consultation which is expected towards the end of this year or early 2023. **The Harpenden Society will closely monitor and report on developments.**

STOP PRESS. Airport facing new noise/growth obstacle – see Page 10

Creative writing talent revealed in Harpenden senior schools.

The 2021/22 competition sponsored by The Harpenden Society proved to be a great success with 34 entries

coming from four schools. The King's School; Roundwood Park School; Sir John Lawes School and Katherine Warington School.

Students across three age groups had to write up to 1,500 words from four subjects, the most popular being a fictitious story on a subject of their choosing. There were prizes of book tokens for the winners in each age group of £100, £50 and £25. All winners would also receive a Certificate acknowledging their work.

The Society secured the services of three literary experts to help with the judging:

• **Leigh Russell.** Chair CWA Debut Dagger Award; Consultant Royal Literary Fellow reviewed the 16 - 18 years group.

• **Ion Mills and his team** from No Exit Press and Oldcastle Books, based in Harpenden reviewed the 14 - 15 years group.

Amanda Thomas. Author of The Nonconformist Revolution, Cholera: The Victorian Plague; The Lambeth Cholera Outbreak of 1848-1849; Editorial Consultant at Harpendia.com reviewed the 11 - 13 years group.

Launched to the Schools in November 2021, students had to submit their work by February 4th for judging. All judges were impressed with the quality of the work and had huge difficulty deciding on the winners.

'TELL ME A STORY'
Writing competition for
senior school students



THE RESULTS - 16- 18 years
JOINT FIRST PRIZE WINERS
A Devilish Game of Uno against Death

Ruel Shepperd
Sir John Lawes School

Joely McPhun 'Untitled'
Sir John Lawes School

THE RESULTS - 14- 15 years
FIRST PRIZE

The Darkness of a Star - Zoe Robertson
Sir John Lawes School

SECOND PRIZE
I Can Remember - Olly Garcia
Sir John Lawes School

THIRD PRIZE
'Untitled' - Neomi Yearwood
Katherine Warington School

THE RESULTS - 11- 13 years
FIRST PRIZE

Tell Me a Story - Jessica Howarth
Katherine Warington School

SECOND PRIZE
Life Support - Lilly Hall
The King's School

THIRD PRIZE
The Raven - Elisha Kyeretwie
The King's School

Praiseworthy comments from the judges

Leigh Russell , judging the 16 - 18 years said: 'I was really bowled over by the creative talent of the pupils who submitted their writing for this competition, and thoroughly enjoyed reading the entries. Both the winners have developed their own individual writing voices, and succeeded in creating powerful and memorable stories, written in their own unique styles.

It was actually impossible to choose between them, so I have awarded joint first place to the two winners. Ruel Shepperd and Joely McPhun'

Ruel Shepperd. Congratulations on producing a really original and memorable story! I enjoyed it very much. I hope you continue to write, as you have considerable ability.

Joely McPhun. This a beautifully written imaginative piece of writing. I enjoyed reading it very much and hope you keep writing, as you clearly have a natural feel for language.

Ellie Lavender - No Exit/Oldcastle Books judging the 14 - 15 years said:

Zoe Robertson ('The Darkness of a Star')

An imaginative, intriguing and beautiful piece of writing. Dark but sophisticated, and rather moving. It has clearly been carefully constructed and Zoe's thoughtful, measured tone lends a poetic lyricism to the prose. It is impactful without resorting to exaggeration, and the anthropomorphisation of the stars is excellently handled.

Olly Garcia ('I Can Remember')

An emotive, well-structured and formally-inventive short story that switches between prose and poetry; we found this piece intriguing and powerful. The use of verse and prose weaves together to construct a beautiful and unique creative voice which carries the reader through the story.

Neomi Yearwood ('Tell Me a Story')

A brilliantly descriptive piece with a sense of developing tension, a pervasive melancholy and powerful undertones of horror. The author builds the landscape well through brilliant use of imagery which helps to orient the reader within the story. We'd strongly encourage Neomi to keep writing and would not be surprised if they rivalled Stephen King in the future!

Praiseworthy comments from the judges

Amanda Thomas judging the 11- 13 years said

Tell Me a Story - Jessica Howarth

This is a beautiful and mature piece of writing. Whilst it is short and may act as an introduction to a longer piece, it also works perfectly well as it is. Descriptive apposition and metaphor create a rhythmic, poetic quality.

Life Support - Lilly Hall

This is a nicely written piece with a clever twist at the end. The story develops well, and there is good use of descriptive language both to relate the scene and the emotions of the protagonist.

The Raven – Elisha Kyeretwie

This is another short piece, well written and interesting. The descriptive language is dark and menacing; abrupt sentences, together with repetition, enhance the tension as the story develops at speed.

Prize Presentations

As the quality of the students work was written to such a high standard ALL students have been recognised with a personalised certificate.

AND a compendium of every student's story will soon be available on the Society web site.



Above: Katherine Warrington School. Amanda McPartlin, Deputy Head of English ; Phil Waters, Chair The Harpenden Society; Jessica Howarth & Neomi Yearwood competition winners; Ron Taylor, competition organiser; Tony Smith, Headteacher.



Above: Sir John Lawes. Zoe Robertson & Ruel Shepperd (competition winners) Phil Waters, Chair The Harpenden Society; Ron Taylor, competition organiser; Joely McPhun & Olly Garcia (competition winners)



Below; Roundwood Park School. Four of the seven students awarded with personalised certificates. Presented by Harpenden Society vice-chair Jeff Phillips -far left; Emily Burke, English teacher; Ron Taylor, competition organiser; and Alan Henshall, Headteacher.



Above The King's School. Chris Armitage, Society Schools co-ordinator; Lilly Hall, competition winner; Andy Reeves, Headteacher.



Above The King's School.; Phil Waters, Chair, The Harpenden Society ; Elisha Kyeretwie , competition winner; Andy Reeves, Headteacher.

The Harpenden Society have been supporters of 'The Arts' in primary schools across Harpenden during 2013 - 2015 with an annual competition including art, photography, writing, drama and music. After consultation with the school heads the Harpenden Society agreed to support a new competition for the senior pupils devoted exclusively to writing.

Full details of the society and its activities can be seen on the web site.

www.harpendensociety.org

Rothamsted Park getting a thousand more trees

An ambitious programme of tree planting has been embarked upon by Harpenden Town Council during recent months, happily chiming with the transfer of ownership of Rothamsted Park, and a number of play areas in other parts of the town, from the district council. The council already had responsibility for over 4000 trees, about half of them on the 240 acres of Harpenden Common.

Between October 2021 and the end of March over 2000 tree saplings were scheduled for planting, the work being undertaken not only by HTC community services personnel, but also by volunteers: notably retirees and young people, including scouts and brownies. Many of the saplings have been donated by the Woodland Trust charity, as part of its declared mission to 'plant woods and trees to combat climate change, build a greener future for the UK and create havens for wildlife'.

It is recognised that in global efforts to combat climate change, carbon sequestration by trees and plants can play a vital role. An assessment of the carbon dioxide absorbing potential of HTC's tree planting initiative is due to be undertaken by the council's Greenspaces Development Officer Tim Austin-Lomas and his colleagues. Comparisons will be made between different species, both seasonally and over their necessarily differing lifetimes.

Meanwhile the town council says its tree planting programme is a vital initiative in its business plan, 'dedicated to developing Harpenden as a sustainable town and to conserving and improving the town's parks and other green spaces, obviously including the Common'.

The programme includes a mixture of trees of varying sizes, species and numbers, to provide aesthetic interest, shade, screening, habitat etc, and with bio-diversity the keynote, endeavouring to position 'the right tree, in the right place, for the right purpose'. It ties in with a comprehensive 12-page 'Residents' Guide to Tree Planting' compiled by the council which can be accessed, via Flipsnack, on HTC's website. It provides an overview of the benefits of tree planting, with three pages on 'things to consider' and two pages on 'planting basics', as well as a rundown on 'types of tree' and 'pests and diseases', before, during and after planting a tree.

The HTC programme dovetails nicely with Herts County Council's separate initiative for tree-planting on roadside verges in many parts of Harpenden, distinguished by the prominent 'PLEASE WATER ME' tags attached to each staked sapling.

Regular leisure users of Rothamsted Park will have noticed the most concentrated area of tree planting during the winter months in the south-west corner of the park between the main football and cricket pitch area and the fenced boundary with Rothamsted Research fields. The programme includes about a thousand new trees in the park, of which about a

third had already been planted by mid-February. Many of the youngest saplings, their 18in or 2ft high 'trunks' barely thicker than one's little finger, are planted in 'clusters', with a view to their eventually forming attractive thickets, including beech 'groves' and hazel 'copses'. Some are planted as close as 3 or 4ft apart, with an acknowledgement that, in practice, only a limited percentage will thrive to maturity.

Recognising the importance of hedgerows for wildlife, especially birds, HTC's planting programme has included what might be called the reinforcement of established hedges, especially along the park boundaries. Those plantings typically include rowan (mountain ash) and crab apple. It should also be recorded that similar hedge augmentation planting has been undertaken by HTC along the boundaries of the Porters Hill football field at Batford.



Unsurprisingly each of the younger planted saplings has a supporting stake, with its more vulnerable length, from the ground up, enclosed in a tubular plastic shield providing protection against gnawing or nibbling wildlife – rabbits being the most likely culprits but also, local experience has shown, muntjac deer on their nocturnal hunt for sustenance.

Larger (ie older when planted) saplings are more substantially staked; and those at risk of water deprivation during a dry Summer are equipped with a soft fibrous moisture-retaining ‘mulch mat’ on the ground around the planting, which also serves as a deterrent to foxes who are prone to dig around tree roots. HTC’s main planting programme has been undertaken at the best time of year, that is Autumn and Winter, when ground moisture is at its highest and before Spring heralds the proverbial ‘sap rising’.

Tim Austin-Lomas, a horticulturalist by profession, says the soil quality across most of Rothamsted Park, notably its ‘pH’ nutrient content, is sufficiently high for no supplementary fertiliser to be needed at tree-planting sites. He points out that adding fertiliser would, in any case, tend to inhibit the trees from spreading out their roots and ensuring their stability.

At least ten different species of tree are included in the programme, all of them British native varieties. In many places they are planted cheek by jowl with each other, one intention of the wide mix being to see which varieties dominate in particular sites – something that is not, even with arboreal expertise, entirely predictable, given the variation in soil moisture content and light-and-shade positioning across the park.

Greenspaces development officer Tim Austin-Lomas with one of Rothamsted Park’s newly-planted oak saplings.



HTC’s planted tree species include:

Oak – the common or English oak, as perhaps the best known and loved of British native trees, can grow to an immense size, in notable cases up to 115ft high, with a broad and spreading crown, and living for 150 years or more. Oak trees create a rich biodiverse habitat for many insect species, in turn supplying birds with a vital food source, while their acorns are welcomed by many animals, notably badgers. Oak has also been recognised as the best performing of native hardwood trees for carbon capture.

Silver Birch – the familiar silver birch can grow relatively rapidly to a maximum height of 80ft. Its seeds provide a favourite food for smaller birds in the finch family. Like oak trees, silver birches harbour a host of insect species on which other birds can feed, while also providing nesting holes for woodpeckers.

Downy Birch – very similar to the silver birch though slightly smaller, more upright and with brown and less ‘papery’ bark. It favours damp or even waterlogged conditions and is widely found across Hertfordshire. It is possible to tap a downy birch tree and extract a rich sugary syrup as an alcoholic drink ingredient.

Field Maple – a much smaller tree than the oak or birches, the field maple (unrelated to the Canadian emblem maple though they have similar disinctively-shaped leaves) normally grows to a modest height of no more than 25ft. It is abundant in the woods and hedgerows of Hertfordshire. Its characteristic large winged seeds are dispersed by the wind.

Rowan – also called mountain ash, it can grow to 50ft tall, its dense clusters of creamy-white flowers followed by red berries making it particularly attractive. The berries are sour but rich in vitamin C and can make a tasty jelly to accompany meat dishes.

Alder – widespread in Hertfordshire (Harpenden has its own Alders End Lane), the alder is a large (up to 80ft) tree with a dark fissured bark. Its leathery dark green leaves have serrated edges and in Spring it is covered in catkins, and by small cone-like fruit in Winter.

Hazel – characterised by its round or oval ‘double toothed’ hairy leaves and bright yellow catkins, it will grow into a small tree (up to 33ft). But in practice is often coppiced, its supple shoots being cut for use in making woven fence panels, sheep hurdles. Thicker hazel shoots can also be used to make walking sticks and runner bean poles.

Black poplar – a one-time quite rare tree capable of growing to a height of 115ft, it is prominent in Constable’s ‘Hay Wain’ painting. Because of its size it is quite often pollarded. The thick dark brown bark has numerous fissures and burrs. Its shiny green leaves are heart shaped and smell faintly of balsam.

Wild cherry – mature trees can grow to 80ft and live for 60 years. The shiny reddish-brown bark is marked with horizontal lines while the glossy pointed leaves fade to orange and crimson in Autumn, accompanied by orange or red cherries, enjoyed by birds who scatter the stones for natural propagation.

Crab apple – widespread in woods and hedgerows in Hertfordshire, it’s a small tree (up to 30ft) of irregular rounded shape with spiny branches and sweetly-scented flowers. The small green ‘apples’ are extremely sour but, with the generous addition of sugar make a jelly to accompany pork, lamb or game.

Roof terrace proposal scuppers Kingston House restaurant/pub plan

Oakman Inns' plan, outlined in our Winter newsletter, to turn Harpenden's former Kingston House department store into a three-storey pub-cum-restaurant, has been abandoned following the scheme's rejection at a decisive meeting in mid-March of St Albans District Council planning committee.

The architectural feature which led to the planning application's refusal was its rooftop bar including 'a retractable fabric awning and glazed screen sides', which was deemed to be visually dominant and, though appropriate for a city centre, was unacceptable in a designated Conservation Area which was central to Harpenden's country town character.



Rejection of Oakman Inns' plans centred on the controversial roof terrace.

District councillors also criticised the lack of associated car parking and questioned whether delivery lorries would be able to service nearby businesses if the plans went ahead. Harpenden Town Council also lodged an objection to the scheme, declaring that the rooftop extension would be 'an unwelcome and out-of-keeping addition to a Locally Listed building'.

Defending the design, Oakman Inns said it was 'unapologetically 2022', while declaring that without the roof terrace, the project would not be a viable investment for the company.

Reactions to the Oakman scheme's planning refusal have, unsurprisingly, been mixed. Harpenden Society member Michael Weaver, one-time owner of C&A Builders Merchants, which for many years occupied the Kingston House premises, expressed disappointment that the proposed rooftop terrace was the prime cause of the application's rejection.

He maintains that 'viewed from the High Street the part of the extension visible would clearly not be above other roof lines, adding that the view from

Leyton Green is already rather that of a typical untidy mess of rear buildings and roof lines. The roof level extension would therefore be hardly noticed at all. And it would', he says, 'give incoming visitors to Harpenden (potential diners) the opportunity to view the town from a novel perspective. Dining al fresco with the canopy retracted would be an additional attraction'.



As a former district and town councillor, Michael Weaver says SADC's further reason for refusal, namely insufficient car parking provision to cope with 'an influx of visitors' doesn't bear scrutiny. 'That implies an embargo', he says, 'on any town centre business expanding, when surely such an influx of visitors is exactly what the town needs if it is to meet the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan's aspiration to satisfy the "three Vs": vitality, vibrancy and viability'. Following the Oakman scheme's rejection, 'there is a risk', he says, 'that the historic Kingston House building will remain empty, becoming a blight on the town centre.'



Kingston House premises remain emblazoned with Oakman publicity material.

As this newsletter went to press the Harpenden Society had received no response from Oakman Inns when asked whether they intended to submit a revised version of their Kingston House plans.

Pedestrianisation – a ‘shared space’ suggestion

In our Winter newsletter the editor invited proposals which could take some of the heat out of the Lower High Street pedestrians-vs-cars antagonism voiced by shoppers on the one hand and retailers on the other.

Former Harpenden Society chairman Chris Marsden responded with the suggestion that the thoroughfare (possibly including Bowers Parade) could be formally designated as ‘shared space’, pedestrians to have priority, as at pedestrian crossings.



There should, he says, be a 5mph speed limit, enforced with a camera or two, and pedestrians should be encouraged to catch the eye of drivers with a friendly wave as they walk freely in front of crawling cars. The present parking spaces should remain though with a one-hour stay limit. The black cast-iron bollards marking the roadway/footpath boundary (except in front of the Methodist Church) should, he suggests, also remain, affording protection for those with pushchairs and the less agile.

A good idea? Let us know at editor@harpendsociety.org



That boardwalk – another view

From Harpenden Society member John Davis

The illustrations in the Winter newsletter of the ‘sandy tracks’ access to/from the Southdown ponds – simple, cheap and safe in wet/icy weather – made a striking contrast to the preceding item about the new Batford boardwalk. Bearing in mind the designation of Batford Springs as a ‘Local Nature Reserve’, the boardwalk introduces a visually intrusive and, I would submit, unwelcome ‘urban’ ambience. It is regrettably very different from the more acceptable provision for visitor access in most national nature reserves, with their open gravel tracks (except over open water), like that across the nearby Marquis Meadow downstream from the ford.

Some forewarning in the local press of the intended plans for the boardwalk would have been welcome. However, as now a fait accompli, it is to be hoped that with the encouragement of more family visits to the Springs, ‘undergrowth restricted’ public access to other parts of the reserve, especially the

reedbeds, will be maintained. With minimum disturbance there, we are more likely this summer to welcome back such long-distance migratory birds as reed and sedge warblers.



Boardwalk - visually intrusive and ‘urban’?

Airport growth faces new government obstacle

The attempt by London Luton Airport Operations Limited and the Airport owners Luton Rising to legitimise its contravention of agreed noise contours between 2017 and 2019, and its intention to set aside both noise and growth limits until 2028, has been stymied by Secretary of State Michael Gove's early-April decision to 'call in' the proposals.

It follows the calls from campaigning groups, notably LADACAN and HarpendenSky, supported by the Harpenden Society, local MP Bim Afolami, Herts County Council and St Albans District Council, who have consistently objected to airport-related noise limits being broken, while opposing airport expansion.

In its decision letter, Gove's Department for Levelling Up cites concerns over climate change, policies for enhancing the natural environment, and the local development plan, all of which would potentially be set aside to allow more airport growth. Should the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol refuse LLAOL's application, it would, in LADACAN's words, 'send a

clear signal to the council and the airport operator that planning rules are to be respected'.

At the same time it would address the conflicted situation in which Luton Borough Council derives significant revenue from the Airport while also, some would say bizarrely, being responsible for planning decisions which affect its environmental impact on the whole local area, including air as well as noise pollution together with traffic congestion.

Airport growth objections spelt out – see page 2

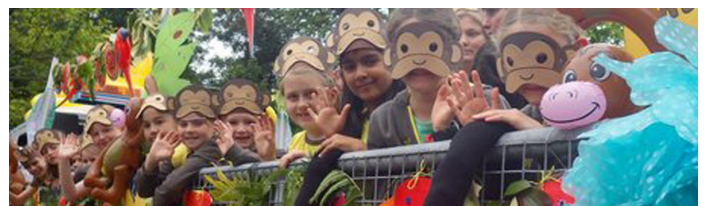


COME ALONG TO OUR STAND AT THE SUMMER CARNIVAL. LOTS OF FUN EVENTS AND NEWS ABOUT OUR FUTURE ACTIVITIES.

This year's theme is "Harpenden Superheroes", a chance for those of all ages to have fun, dress up and join in throughout the day. To embrace this there will be best dressed prizes, face painting for children, main arena acts, and dance and fitness groups with the

opportunity to all join in! All on top of popular regulars including racing ferrets, the Savills Dog Show, and a host of acts on stage. Tring Brewery and a variety of food stalls and bars will keep you fed and refreshed throughout the day.

Carnival starts with a POW! at midday with the Procession working its way from Lydekker Car Park, passing through the town centre of Harpenden and onto the Common. This is open to all, we encourage superhero themed floats and fancy dress which is annually embraced by many local groups including Cadets, Scouts and Guides.



Come and look after our membership!

The Harpenden Society is looking for a new Membership Secretary after the present holder of the role steps down for health reasons. It involves principally maintaining our membership records (primarily on an Excel spreadsheet), while working with our Treasurer to follow up subscription payments (now mainly via standing order) and with our newsletter distributors to update delivery details.

In a more proactive capacity the Membership Secretary has a more 'promotional' role in our ongoing efforts to encourage new members, notably at Society-organised meetings and other public events, as well as liaising with the newsletter distribution team.

If you are interested and would like to know more about what is involved in a not-too-demanding role, please contact Society Secretary Bob Fletcher on secretary@harpendensociety.org

Did You Know? From Harpenden's history Early 1900s philanthropy in Ambrose Lane

In 1905 the Rev Thomas Bowman Stephenson, a Methodist Minister and founder of the National Children's Home and Orphanage (NCH – Now Action For Children) appealed for funds to open a sanatorium to treat children suffering from consumption (tuberculosis), their condition often resulting from their deprived living conditions, typically in London's East End.

Money was made available from the Wesleyan Methodist 20th Century fund and a generous amount of land was donated by Sir J Blundell Maple, owner of Maples furniture store in London's Tottenham Court Road, who lived at Childwickbury between Harpenden and St Albans.

The chosen site in Ambrose lane, being 430ft above sea level, was deemed ideal, as 'fresh air' was the only accepted treatment at the time for TB. Elmfield sanatorium was duly opened in 1910, adjacent to what would become the main site of the NCH at Highfield Oval.

Nearly 3000 children, mainly aged five to fourteen, passed through 'the San' over the next 25 years, most of them coming from London and the Home Counties.

Many children slept in chalets or on long open-air verandas. The chalets could be winched round during the night to enjoy the supposed health benefits of the rising sun. But in Winter you needed to be hardy to survive such spartan living conditions. However, many had previously lived in such poverty that they must at least have appreciated the space and nourishing food at Elmfield!

It should alas be recorded however that there is a little cemetery between the adjacent Highfield Oval (now YWAM) and the nearby Thameslink railway line where the unfortunate children who didn't recover are buried.

As the scourge of TB gradually became curable with the advent of new drugs, especially after the Second World War, the sanatorium's role diminished and around 1955/57 it was turned into a boarding school for physically-handicapped children. They lived in term time in three family groups, each under the supervision



Outwardly little changed in some 112 years: the western side of the King's School main building, formerly Elmfield Sanatorium, where children suffering from tuberculosis were subjected to the (now questionable) benefits of fresh air in all weathers on the long terrace and first-floor balcony.

of a Sister from the NCH, with at least three staff to assist her.

Overall management was in the hands of a superintendent, whose wife was the Matron, her duties augmented by another state-registered nurse. Dr Alan Akeroyd, a respected local Harpenden GP, affiliated to the NCH, made regular weekly visits, monitoring the health of the boarders.

The youngsters received appropriate – ie age-related – education on site at a three-class school in the Elmfield grounds next to a large playground which catered for their sporting aspirations, including quite boisterous games of wheelchair football, cricket etc, which under today's health-and-safety concerns would not have been countenanced! They were also able to join Scout and Guide activities.

Film shows were very popular with the children at Elmfield. Members of staff (including myself) would push the children into Harpenden in their wheelchairs, sometimes to the Embassy cinema at weekends. At Christmas time the Variety Club of Great Britain would organise a large party at Elmfield and one year Cliff Richard came to perform, which thrilled the youngsters!

Each Sunday the children were taken to morning service at the NCH's Highfield Oval chapel, after which parents were able to visit in the afternoon, many having walked from Harpenden Station.

By 1982 new parliamentary rules were passed stating that all children's education should be in mainstream schools, so Elmfield School with its NCH connections was closed in 1987, and remained 'mothballed' until taken over by The Kings School, a privately-run Christian school which continues to use the buildings in Ambrose Lane to good advantage for today's children.

Judy Hamblin

EDITOR'S VIEW

Alan Bunting

Bins obstructing footways

We are constantly and rightly exhorted to recycle much of the stuff which, a few decades ago, we'd have thrown, without a second thought, into the household's single waste bin. No one now questions the desirability of conserving natural resources by helping to recover, for use in a second or third 'life', as much as possible of the plastics, metal and glass that are part of everyday living in the 21st Century.

Having conscientiously deposited those 'finished with' (we shouldn't say 'waste') materials in the recycling wheelie bin provided for each Harpenden household by St Albans District Council, we are then required, once a fortnight, to put the bin close to the boundary, but – if at all possible – inside, our premises, readily accessible by Veolia's bin-emptying teams.

So far, so good. But here in Harpenden, and I would guess elsewhere in the district, there is an increasing tendency for the binmen, after emptying our recycling and garden waste wheelie bins and paper salvage boxes, to then leave them blocking the public footway. There, as well as inconveniencing pedestrians, including Mums with prams, most seriously they obstruct the disabled with 'walking frames' or in wheelchairs. Where footways are narrow (and made even narrower by overhanging hedge growth, for example in Roundwood Lane) the disabled can be forced into the roadway, with the hazards that implies.

It is surely not too much to ask Veolia's guys to put the emptied bins back where householders are required by the council to leave them, namely inside their property boundary. Back in early November the matter was brought to the attention of your Editor's local SADC councillor who in turn referred me to Community



Services' principal waste contract officer, with responsibility for such matters at the Civic Centre.

The officer expressed thanks that the matter had been brought to the council's attention, agreeing that 'the crews should be (and will be reminded) returning the containers to the collection point' and pledging that the issue would be raised with the Veolia operations manager and supervisors concerned.

Regrettably, more than five months on, there seems little evidence of any change for the better in Veolia bin's emptying practice. As always with 'Editor's View', any constructive comments from Harpenden Society members on the 'bins obstructing footways' issue will be welcome at editor@harpendsociety.org.



We're still seeking that newsletter back up

Society members might recall from our Winter issue that in order to maintain the acknowledged high standard of our quarterly newsletter, we could do with some additional man- or woman-power to put together what one or two members have called the Harpenden Society's 'Jewel in the Crown'. Others have expressed the view that the people of Harpenden can learn more from the contents of our newsletter about

what is going on in the town than from the Herts Advertiser – which, by the way, at the time of writing, has suffered a drastic cut-back in news pages.

In order to spread the editorial load we would accordingly be pleased to hear from anyone with wordsmith aspirations, or actual experience, who would like to come on board and help Alan Bunting, the Editor, to produce what many members say they eagerly await every three months. Would anyone who's interested please contact Alan on editor@harpendsociety.org.

Phil Waters, Chairman

Please send comments on articles or any other issues raised in this edition to the editor: Alan Bunting
editor@harpendsociety.org. Sub-editor Harry Downie
Visit the Society's website – www.harpendsociety.org
Designed by Ron Taylor

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