



NEWSLETTER

Sopwell Residents
Association

Issue 8
Summer 2006

Annual General Meeting for Sopwell Residents

12th June 2006 - Your opportunity to have a voice!

Our AGM this year is at 7.30pm on 12th June 2006 and will be held in the Marlborough Pavilion, Old Oak (off Cottonmill Lane).

We hope to have two guest speakers: one from the Abbey Rail Community Partnership to talk about who they are and what they are doing; and a representative from the Council who will explain about the new powers the Council has to make St Albans a cleaner, greener city. We are also talking to our ward councillors and the community police about attending to answer questions from the community.

As always there will be opportunities to voice your concerns and views about living in Sopwell.

Please do come along to support us and ensure that your voice is heard.

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SRA General Meeting Marlborough Pavilion - 26th April 2006

Over 50 Sopwell residents attended our 3rd General Meeting and listened to reports on activities and issues affecting Sopwell from members of the Committee and special guests. In the Chair was Giles Hanford, assisted by Sandy Norman (Secretary) and special guests were the three Sopwell Councillors: Eileen Harris, Janet Smith and Dawn Pratley.

Gill Clutterbuck of the newly formed Sopwell Community Partnership, Richard Bullen of the Credit Union and our Community Police Officers PC Sharon Foster and CSO Jill Brown also attended and their contributions were greatly appreciated.

Many of the items discussed are already reported separately in this newsletter. The Marl-

borough Pavilion, where the meeting was held, is still under-used and could be utilised for many different types of community meetings/events, and although it does not have an entertainments licence, a temporary one can usually be obtained for special events. Anyone interested in hiring the Pavilion should note the following number: 01727 866100. or if you have access to the Internet go here: <http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/leisure/parks/marlborough.pdf>

Sopwell residents interested in helping further the aims of the SRA were also invited to contact the Chairman or Secretary as a few places on the Committee are available.

To enquire about joining the SRA Committee, contact: the Secretary on sandyn@dsl.pipex.com.

Cleaning up Crime in Sopwell

PC Sharon Foster and CSO Jill Brown confirmed their commitment to cleaning up crime in Sopwell. They are getting on top of nuisance youth and effectively making arrests but warned that it does take time.

In understanding their contribution, it's important to appreciate that they may have to limit the amount of information given, so as not to prejudice ongoing investigations at a sensitive stage.

There have been many problems at the Abbots Avenue West flats over the past year but PC Foster confirmed she has a very large file, which should lead to a court case.

Scooters and mini-motors are still a problem on the Alban Way but many have been seized. Speeding is also a problem in Sopwell, especially along Cottonmill Lane and Belmont Hill/Thorpe Road.

How can you help? Everyone was reminded that for police work to be effective, crime must be reported and notes taken of date, time, and any clothing or license plate descriptions, which will help the police find the offenders and then caution or arrest as appropriate.

As always, in an emergency, call 999. For all Hertfordshire non-emergency police calls dial 0845 33 00 222. To contact your Community Police, call 01727 796042 and ask for the Sopwell team.

Drop a fag-end and be fined £2500!

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 came into force on 6th April this year. This new law gives local authorities greater powers to deal with various anti-social issues such as crime and disorder, abandoned and nuisance vehicles, litter and refuse, waste, graffiti, other defacement, dogs and noise. Anyone interested in reading up about it can find it on the DEFRA website at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/legislation/cnea/index.htm>.

Although it has always been an offence to drop litter, the new law makes it clear that litter may not be dropped on any land which is open to the air (including private land) and land covered by water. So someone can be fined heavily for throwing litter or waste into the River Ver as well as anywhere on the

pavement, road or in someone's garden. The definition of litter includes cigarette ends and chewing gum. Someone found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500.

The council now has powers to make persons clear their land of litter, so businesses and private landowners can now be forced to clear up their environment.

The Magistrates Court can make Litter Abatement Orders to force people to clear up their patch.

We have asked the council Litter Enforcement Officer to explain about these new laws at our AGM on 12th July (details on page 1). If you want to know more, please come along.

Sandy Norman

Sopwell Priory news: from asbestos to wildlife

Some of you may be wondering why a certain area near the ruins in the Priory has been fenced off. This is for health and safety reasons, as asbestos, buried there since the Second World War, has been found. The asbestos is being removed by the Museums Service.

Soil has been put either side of the easy access bridge for safety reasons and this will eventually be grassed over. The council are currently considering whether handrails are necessary to improve safety. A non-slip coating has been applied to the bridge which will be renewed as necessary. The two benches, which we reported on in the March 2006 issue of this newsletter, will be installed soon and will be placed on either side of the easy access bridge.

In order to continue to enhance and improve the area, the SRA with the Countryside Management Services (CMS) are hoping to obtain permission to plant wildflowers and medieval roses near the ruins. A small fund was left to the SRA by Anne Kaloczi for this purpose. However, permission has to be obtained first from English Heritage which manages the site.

Finally, there will be a wildlife walk led by staff of the CMS between 2-4pm at the Priory on 19th August. All are welcome so do join us.

Sandy Norman

History of Sopwell - Part One

This is the first instalment of three articles about the history of Sopwell by Councillor Eileen Harris. The next two instalments will appear in later newsletters.

Where is Eywood Road now? There are clues to our history in the road names in Sopwell. 1000 years ago, Sopwell known as Eywood was a large forest and hunting ground between the River Ver and the Roman Watling Street. Odo, half brother to William the Conqueror, was the Bishop of Bayeux and he gave Eywood to the Monastery of St Albans in the hope of gaining favour in his quest to become Pope. He did not succeed, but his claim to fame is that he commissioned the Bayeux tapestry for his cathedral in Bayeux..

For centuries the road in front of the ruins was called Green Lane and many roads, which passed through grazing land, were called Green Lane. We still have one in St Albans, off Batchwood Drive. The name was changed to Cottonmill Lane after a mill was established which produced cotton for the wicks of candles. This was in 1810. This eventually closed

down and there is evidence of an early swimming pool there. In 1905 an outdoor pool was built and my husband has memories of his school swimming lessons there when the water temperature was 53 degrees Fahrenheit.

We have the names of Holywell and Sopwell in our ward. The water from the Holy Well was reputed to perform cures and John Churchill made it a water feature of his garden in the middle of Holywell Hill. The well was rediscovered when De Tany Court was built on the St Albans School Playing fields. It can be seen today through a grill not very far beyond the first pedestrian entrance to De Tany Court from the river, at the rear of Prospect Road. Richard de Tany gave land near Tyttenhanger for the benefit of the priory. The name Sopwell apparently comes from the practice of nuns dipping crusts of bread (sops) into the water of the holy well before offering it to travellers on their way to the shrine of St Albans!

Planning Blight?

You may have noticed increased activity recently by local campaigners against proposals seeking to establish developments of flats in the area - 64-70 Tavistock, 11a Vesta and 1 Doggetts being three examples. All three sites share the same planning agent – is Sopwell being targeted for such projects? The fundamental issue is not whether, in global terms, more 1- or 2-bedroom flats are needed (given the change in demographics, the arguments for this are sound), but whether the sites proposed for such developments are suitable. In these recent cases, density of development is an issue – the applications have all been well over the government’s recommended upper target of 50 dwellings per hectare.

So what can be done about planning issues?

1. Monitor the local press – the “Review” carries public advertisements of planning proposals on its letters page; alternatively, check the www.stalbans.gov.uk site (Planning/Applications) regularly to see what is being proposed.

2. Invite your local councillors to inspect and call in plans - assuming they share your concern, then “calling in” means that any recommendation must go to a planning committee and can’t simply be dealt with by the planning department under “delegated powers”. Otherwise you may find that the application never goes to committee.

3. Make sure that neighbours are aware and have a chance to write in with objections. The green planning notices which should be displayed at any site where a development is proposed don’t always stay up for long (or at all) – funny, that! So don’t just assume that other people will have seen it, or indeed have received a notice letter from the Council.

4. Register to speak at the planning committee meeting; one speaker is allowed 3 minutes to put the case against a planning application. Plans (South) meet 3-weekly on Mondays – a good turnout of ‘concerned residents’ at the meeting can only support your case.

5. Monitor all reasons for refusal closely – since a developer can always appeal, and the more comprehensive the reasons for refusal the less likely any appeal is to succeed. Make sure your councillors are aware of all the grounds for your objections, for that reason.

By Iain Grant. If you wish to contact Iain, please do this via the SRA email address – info@sopwell.org.uk

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PLANNING ISSUES! Road v Rail WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Some residents will be aware of proposals to build a rail freight terminal on the old Radlett Aerodrome site now that gravel extraction has finished. This would allow goods to do a larger part of their journey by rail instead of road. The issues involved are complex, because although transporting things by rail is obviously good, the site is in the Green Belt, and local people were expecting it to revert to County Council ownership as a public green space. We would like to know whether residents have strong views about this proposal, and how you think we should respond. We are also interested in people’s ideas for the accompanying country park.

Some figures:

- the development will total 3.5m square feet
- full capacity would be 12 trains a day
- there will be 2,652 car parking spaces and 617 lorry spaces

Benefits offered by the developers include:

- transfer of goods from road to rail
- a ‘by-pass’ for Park Street
- a 614 acre country park – and opportunities for local people to have a say in its development

- 3,000 new jobs

Some arguments against:

- Although there may be a countrywide reduction in lorry journeys, there is bound to be an increase in traffic on the A414, M25 etc.
- Park Street’s lorry problem has already been helped by better signage and closure of warehouses.
- Although not ‘open access’ at present, the public is already able to use much of the ‘country park’ area via footpaths and bridleways. Some is currently managed as sheep and cattle grazing, a traditional landscape which might be lost under more intensive public use.
- The developers admit that most of the new jobs will have to be filled from Luton, Watford and North London – a further increase in traffic.

A public meeting (organised by Lorries Out of Park Street, opposed to the proposal) will be held on Saturday 10th June 10.30 at Frogmore Church Hall, with speakers including Ann Main MP and the local county councillor. The formal planning application is expected some time in July.

Football Crazy!

We have just heard that it seems likely that the proposal to build a new stadium for St Albans FC on a site near the Park Street roundabout is back on the cards now that they have been promoted. Watch this space!

There were two meetings held. The evening meeting was well attended by the Sopwell Steering Group, SADC staff, Councillors and the residents of Sopwell. We were divided up into groups to discuss different topics. The key concerns identified included the following:

- the state of the roads in Sopwell
- the litter including Sainsburys
- trolleys and parking on grass verges

We were informed at the close of the meeting, that all issues identified would be collated and acted upon. Updates will be given at a future meeting with the date to be decided. A raffle was held with several prizes and a delicious buffet was laid out with hot and cold drinks. I talked to several residents and councillors afterwards, and all agreed that it proved to be a very friendly and positive evening.

Pamela Marshall. Tenants' representative of the SRA

Useful Contacts for Sopwell Residents

1. Problems - if you want to report:

an abandoned vehicle	819391
flytipping*	819285
litter on paths/highways	819465
problems with parks & open spaces including litter	819366
problems with refuse collection	819285
mice, wasp nests, etc.	819440
non-working street lighting	01438 737320
abandoned Sainsburys trolleys	847707
abandoned Homebase trolleys	857113
noisy neighbours	819406/out of hours 811155
litter to be cleared by McDonalds	864676
a damaged bus shelter	0800 590889
potholes, broken pavements*, etc.	01438 737320
a water or sewerage leak	08459 200800

*Fault reporting online (anything from flytipping to potholes) go to <http://www.hertsdirect.org> and click on **highway fault reporting**

2 .Police

PC Sharon Foster	796042 sharon.foster@Hhrts.pnn.police.uk
PCSO Jill Brown	796042 jill.brown@herts.pnn.police.uk

3. Sopwell councillors:

Janet Smith	763907 janet.smith1@ntlworld.com
Eileen Harris	831611 harris@stalbans555.fsnet.co.uk
David Poor	833670 david.poor@ntlworld.com

4. Recreation - if you want:

to rent an allotment	819329
to join the Youth Club	753116
to join St Albans Sub-Aqua Club	07905 104697
to contact Tots and Teddies	730746
to hire the Marlborough pavilion	866100 ask for Sue Vale

If you to advertise and reach 3000 homes, then please contact us via email: advertise@sopwell.org.uk

Contact the Sopwell Residents Association

Sopwell Residents Association
23 Tavistock Avenue
St. Albans, Herts
AL1 2NQ
Email: info@sopwell.org.uk
Internet: www.sopwell.org.uk