



## **Welcome to the ABOYNE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION newsletter SUMMER 2017**

Hi everyone - an update of the various issues and events the ARA has been involved in, plus some ongoing problems. Two items have dominated the last few months - the closure of the parking shop at very short notice, with its ensuing host of complications; and problems with a local development that highlighted bigger issues to do with planning enforcement. But first...

### **ZONE A PARKING REVIEW**

Many of you will remember John Charlton coming to our AGM in February and promising to get back to us with his plans. We're still waiting to hear from him on this; until that happens there is nothing to pass on here. We understand that plans to add three parking spaces at the top of Upton Avenue have been dropped for now. You might also have noticed some other minor refinements; and the double yellow lines on the car park side of Russell Avenue are welcome and have made a difference to the Sunday parking madness.

### **CLOSURE OF THE PARKING SHOP AND NEW PARKING PERMIT RULES**

We're guessing this is one of the reasons the parking officers are behind on the Zone A review; the closure of the parking shop was poorly communicated and brought with it a host of issues that no-one seemed to have thought through in any detail. These have taken a lot of time to sort out. John would have known about this at our February meeting; we think it would have been useful to have talked about it there. Instead it came out of the blue for all of us.

The closure brought with it some very confusing changes, with a great lack of clarity - on some days residents were being given different answers to the same questions depending on when they were asked. Many thanks those on the committee who have persisted in nailing the detail here.

Agreed changes-

- with no prior consultation the four hour permits have been abolished (we're told that the cost of printing permits is behind this decision). We think that this is likely to encourage visitors to remain for longer, causing further problems to residents and we wait to see whether the

examination of alternatives to the price rise prompted by Cllr Simon Grover will result in any change of tack

- all existing green four hour permits are now valid as all-day permits; there is no end date on this - in other words, any existing green permits are valid as all day permits in perpetuity
- all applications can be made online at [www.stalbans.gov.uk/parking](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/parking) and those who have done so report that it works well
- where residents prefer to collect permits ordered online rather than having them delivered by post there is a permanent collection point open during normal office hours at the Drovers Way Car Park NCP information window next to Shop Mobility
- for those without their own computer, applications can be made EITHER online at St Albans Civic Centre (Council offices) or local public libraries OR via post to Permit Applications, NSL Services, Drovers Way Car Park, Drovers Way, St Albans, AL3 5EB (although you'll need to ask someone to print off the application form from the online pdf)
- if you are out of pocket because of purchasing the more expensive yellow all-day permits (from January of this year), which of course are no longer necessary, you are entitled to a refund if you return them, with proof of purchase, either by post to NSL Services, Drovers Way Car Park, Drovers Way, St Albans, AL3 5EB or by hand via the letter box located adjacent to the former Parking Shop. Refunds then will be returned by post.

## **EXTENSION IN RUSSELL AVENUE**

Many residents have long been frustrated by the apparent ineffectiveness of planning control within the conservation area and from the moment the scaffolding went up on this extension - with no green permission notification - to the end of a noisy and disputed build, affected residents have been in discussion with SADC Planning Office.

As a multi-stage application, submitted over a number of years, with some permissions granted and others refused, this was a very difficult one to understand. Residents were concerned that, as on a previous occasion, the build was proceeding beyond what was permitted, with the result that many on Spencer Street would be overlooked in a way they were not before.

While we would be concerned about any overbuild that breaks Planning regulations, we feel that effective enforcement is particularly important in the conservation area where houses are generally close together, gardens are small and even small changes to existing dwellings can have a detrimental effect on close neighbours. We therefore welcome the fact that Planning Enforcement have now confirmed that the building has been built too high and will enforce a contravention order. We feel strongly that this is an exemplar of a larger problem; the ARA has submitted public questions on this topic to Planning Control and we will report back on their response.

## **ST CLAIRE'S**

The opening date of St Claire's has been delayed until the autumn. Residents are keen to move forward in as constructive a manner as possible, and to meet with Hightown, the charity who run the establishment, with an emphasis on making this work and building a sense of community, rather than perpetuating any feelings of mistrust. This seems an ideal time to share information and help local residents feel confident about the way the unit will be managed.

In particular we're keen to agree the location of the outside smoking area. It makes sense for this to be located on the Folly Lane side of the outside area, as far away as possible from residents' gardens and the many young children who live on Church Crescent. We're also keen to hear more about staffing and how the hostel will be run; including what procedures will be in place for dealing with any issues that might arise. Church Crescent Street rep Lucy Povoas is leading this initiative, working with local councillors and with the full backing of the ARA.

## **STRATEGIC LOCAL PLAN (SLP)**

We normally stick to very local issues; however, the SLP affects us all. And if you read the Herts Advertiser, you'll know that the Planning Inspector's rejection of the SADC SLP was recently upheld by the High Court. This is a major blow. Most cities that are a similar size to St Albans have a working SLP in place; this one outlined major developments for the district until 2031, including the construction of thousands of homes in the Green Belt. But many neighbouring districts objected, claiming SADC had not met its duty to co-operate by working sufficiently closely with them.

The High Court decision makes St Albans more vulnerable to outside interference; for instance, the government could impose own housing strategy. The council leader (Julian Daly) has already stepped down but, while work is now underway on a new and more workable replacement, a great deal of time and money has been wasted and uncertainly continues for many local communities.

## **LARKS IN THE PARK**

On a gloriously sunny day in early July the ARA was very happy to be a small part of the increasingly successful Larks InThe Park in Victoria Playing Field. We shared a stand with Verulam RA and were sited next to the Civic Society for whom it was a great recruitment opportunity. For us it was an awareness-raising exercise - we did it last year too. We also managed to help raise £70 for Rennie Grove in an inspired raffle for which, to be honest, Verulam RA can take full credit. Apologies to all the parents whose children discovered our lolly bowl and made a great many return visits.

## **JUBILEE RA**

Residents on the other side of Catherine Street now have their own new residents association, the Jubilee RA, serving such roads as Dalton Street, Bernard Street and Church Street. We're very happy to be working with this new group who share a similar focus to the ARA. In particular they want to champion the Jubilee Centre, and its important community role.

## **BROWNFIELD SITES**

Another concerning issue for ourselves and fellow RAs is the publication by the council of the Brownfield Register and Permission in Principle. The inclusion of the Couper's Yard site gives new options to developers; and finding the Aboyne Lodge School Playing Field here is something of a surprise and a concern.

## **BROADBAND - SUPERFAST OR SUPERSLOW...?**

Residents of Worley Road and beyond will have been contacted by our treasurer Nigel Gale re broadband speeds. If you live in the middle of Worley, you're likely to be none too happy at the current speeds. If you want to know more, please get in touch with Nigel via our gmail account - aboynera@gmail.com

## **FINALLY...**

Vice chair Barry Cropper and myself recently met with new Council Leader Alec Campbell and Parking Portfolio Holder Beric Read at the Council Offices. The agenda was mainly the many

issues over the closure of the parking shop, although we also took the opportunity to raise our frustration with the apparent ineffectiveness of planning control within the conservation area (as exemplified most recently by the overbuild in Russell Avenue). We didn't expect to agree on everything as it's inevitable that we will have different points of view and different priorities. However the spirit of the meeting was one of greater understanding and working together and it was useful, as is almost always the case, to talk face to face.