



## Welcome to the ABOYNE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION newsletter for NOVEMBER 2015

*This newsletter aims to keep our members up to date with any developments, major and minor, that may have an impact on where we live.*

### GET CLICKING! ENTER OUR PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION AND WIN A BOTTLE OF FIZZI!

We want to celebrate our streets and our neighbourhood - with the help of your photographs. Get clicking - any device, from simple phones to the most elaborate Leica, is eligible for entry. The theme is SEASONAL - be inspired by autumn, Christmas or winter. We want pictures of or taken around the fifteen streets that make up our ARA territory. Simply upload them to this link – <mailto:aboynephotocomp@gmail.com>. Closing date is February 28, 2016 - the winner will be announced at our AGM in March. (Sadly you are not eligible to win if you're on the ARA committee, a street rep, or a professional photographer - though we'd still love to see your pictures.)

### A NICER NEIGHBOURHOOD

A call to arms - can we enthuse you and involve you in a “clean and weed” of our area? Many of our streets would look instantly better after some TLC - a basic clean up and weed would make a noticeable difference. Maybe we could create a wildflower corner or garden - there is a great example which you may have seen, opposite the turn into Etna Road, where Church Street meets Bernard Street. We'd like you to nominate a space that would benefit from some collective action, and then we will sort out the rest. Cllr Alex Campbell has offered to cover plastic gloves and bags, so let's see if we can create a spirit of community pride for the ARA district - that's what our **better sense of neighbourhood** is all about. Contact us at [www.aboynera.org](http://www.aboynera.org). We will then set out a few dates and hope you can join in.

### STREET REPS AND ANNUAL SUBS

Street Reps and some committee members will be very visible in the next month – they'll be knocking on your doors, saying hello and listening to any concerns and issues. As well as delivering this newsletter, they will also be collecting annual subscriptions. We're asking each household for £3, which we use towards the maintenance of our website, the costs of our AGM, plus other small but regular costs. Street Reps can be identified by their ARA ID card.

**If you want to BE a street rep**, then we'd love to hear from you – we have quite a few vacancies (Folly Lane, Church Crescent, and the middle of Worley Road). It's a great role if you have a small

amount of time to spare, and you like talking to your neighbours. Go to our website for more details [www.aboynera.org](http://www.aboynera.org)

## **ST CLAIRE'S**

The planning application for the St Claire's proposal was given the go-ahead by the Planning Referrals Committee on September 21. The property, in Church Crescent, which was until recently a nursing home, is to be redeveloped as accommodation for ten homeless people.

Nigel Povoas of St Claire's Action Group and Cllr Simon Grover spoke against the application. But in the end it was a question of "material planning considerations" and the Committee saw no reason to deny the application. The council is legally bound to provide accommodation for homeless people in the area, and St Claire's offers an obvious solution.

ARA is aware that local residents hold a range of views about this proposal. Real progress was made much earlier in the debate about this scheme, when the numbers being proposed went down from 17 to ten. There are currently many concerns about how well this new homeless unit will be run, and this was addressed by Roma Mills who chairs the committee. She made a number of recommendations, in order to strengthen St Albans District Council (SADC) and local Councillors engagement in the management of the site. At the planning meeting, there was further talk about the need to achieve a workable management agreement and contract between SADC and Hightown, the charity who will run St Claire's. A commitment to involve councillors in this was reiterated. We will be staying abreast of how this develops and watching to ensure the recommendations are implemented.

## **PLANNING DEVELOPMENT IN ST ALBANS**

It may at times be flattering to believe we live in one of the prettiest, fastest growing and popular commuter areas close to London (according to the Evening Standard). However, as a committee we are increasingly demoralised to watch major decisions, such as the changes to the iconic Zigurat building, go through and see that our own elected councillors and SADC can do little, as it and many others fall under "Permitted Developments". Meaning simply, that offices can be changed into housing and they can do nothing about it; you can see this all over the City. The government introduced this as a temporary measure, we are now informed that this is a permanent change and it will affect and impact on our City.

We're aware, too, that there are many other similar proposals in the pipeline. Cllr Alec Campbell came to a recent ARA meeting to talk specifically about this. We appreciate the value of working together when possible, but we were not in agreement. Cllr Campbell displayed remarkable confidence that the increased demand on vital everyday services would be absorbed. The ARA is more inclined to the view that everyday living for ALL residents – in terms of school places, parking, traffic, the environment, health and not least housing for everyone, in all income brackets – will become much harder. This problem is being faced by many councils and towns throughout the UK. In St Albans this is exacerbated, and decisions with huge future implications are being taken, with no over-arching strategy or vision. This is due to the lack of a Strategic Local Plan, something that has been promised, but we are now told will be delayed, yet again.

## **VICTORIA PLAYING FIELDS - A WHOLE NEW WORLD!**

The Friends of the Victoria Playing Field have launched a campaign to raise funds for improving the children's play area on the playing field. The council has set aside funds that would allow for replacement of the existing old equipment for younger children, but the FVPF want to do a whole

lot more than that. They're planning to raise funds to put in a facility for children up to 12 years old to play, enjoy and learn in, PLUS an exercise circuit for those aged 13 to adults.

They want to do this by getting support from the local community through crowd funding, plus sponsorship from local businesses. Once that's achieved, they will apply for a number of significant further grants, allowing them to create an outstanding play facility in the VPF.

It's a great initiative, and one the ARA fully supports. Crowd funding starts in early November on Spacehive - [www.spacehive.com/StAlbansPlayground](http://www.spacehive.com/StAlbansPlayground). If you would like more information contact the FVPF on [facebook.com/fvpfstalbans](https://www.facebook.com/fvpfstalbans) or twitter @FriendsVPF or email <mailto:fvpfstalbans@gmail.com>

## **XMAS LIGHTS**

Gripes about the Xmas lights - or lack of them, especially in St Peter's Street, our main shopping area - have been going on for a couple of years now. Councillor Alun Davies has also been frustrated, and he's done something about it - his successful crowd funding initiative means there is money for lights once more. Click here to link to find out more about his project - [www.spacehive.com/light-up-st-albans#.Vg-Hp8x-uVg.mailto](http://www.spacehive.com/light-up-st-albans#.Vg-Hp8x-uVg.mailto)

## **MORE CLEAN-UPS!**

Verulam Park also benefits from a regular clean-up, and their system is up and running - click here for further information if you would like to join in – <http://jessicachivers.yourcldr.com/litter-picks-other-events>

## **WIDER INFORMATION AROUND ST ALBANS**

If you are interested in further information of ongoing issues and developments around St Albans, Councillor Chris White's regular newsletter is worth reading - it's available here - <http://chriswhite.mycouncillor.org.uk>