



Sopwell Residents Association

NEWSLETTER

Issue 5
March 05

Next Residents' Open Meeting in the Marlborough Club

Wednesday 13th April 2005

7.30pm - 9.30pm

Please put this date in your diaries. This is the date of the next Residents' Meeting which will take place in the Marlborough Club, Old Oak, off Cottonmill Lane between 7.30 and 9.30pm. This is your opportunity to air your views on any issue that's important to you and to discuss those which have already been ongoing in the newsletters over the past year.

The reason for this choice of venue is for you all to see the potential of the Club which at present, for various reasons, is underused. As well as discussing the possibility of utilising the Club, we hope to have a speaker from the Neighbourhood Watch scheme to tell us how to organise our community to prevent crime. *Please come along!* We cannot exist without you and we cannot work on your behalf without your input. We hope to see as many of you there as possible.

Sandy Norman - Secretary

Bus route problems

Following complaints made to the Residents' Association about the route of the S4 bus and the inadequate service it gives to Sopwell, representatives from the Association met with Cllr. Geoff Churchard, District Council Portfolio holder for Transport.

They were told that there is to be a review of bus routes over the next few months. We would strongly recommend that residents write to Mr Churchard telling him how the current routes and timetables affect their lives. We need to highlight the lack

of buses at certain times and the fact that they do not go to appropriate destinations, such as the station.

*Please write to:
Cllr. Geoff Churchard,
District Council Offices,
St Peter's Street, AL1 3JE*

Alcohol free zone!

The District Council recently informed the Residents' Association of its intention to designate an "Alcohol Free Zone" in St Albans. Drinking alcohol on the street or in parks, car parks, etc, will be an offence within the Zone and it is hoped that it will help curb anti-social behaviour in general.

Unfortunately for Sopwell residents, the Zone covers only the town centre. The part of our ward that will

benefit is the western end of Old London Road, Cottonmill Crescent and the area along the river behind Cottonmill Crescent. Residents there will no doubt be pleased because of the problems sometimes caused by the overspill from the many pubs within a few minutes walk.

However, there are other areas in Sopwell, such as around the nunnery ruins and outside the shops in Vesta Avenue and Abbots Avenue

where drinking sometimes occurs. Residents should bring any concerns they have to the attention of Ms Christine Roach, Community Support Manager at the District Council, responsible for liaising with the police on such matters. It may be possible to get the Zone extended or new zones set up if there are ongoing problems.

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SUGGESTION BOXES

Suggestion boxes are placed in the following places:

- **Vesta Avenue Butchers**
- **King Offa pub, Abbots Avenue**
- **Archers, Cottonmill Lane**

WE NEED YOU! on Sunday 3rd April at 2pm

As part of St Albans Litter Pick Week, we are holding a complete *Spring Clean on Sunday 3rd April*, at Sopwell Priory open space, Cottonmill Lane. We are meeting at 2pm by the ruins information board on Cottonmill Lane. Ground-work voluntary workers are lending us litter picks, gloves, rakes and waders.

SRA have entered a competition run by the Civic Trust to gain recognition for Sopwell Priory open space, a wonderful seven and a half acre site. We are hoping to gain a *Civic Trust Green Pennant Award*.

Please report fly-tipping to the Parks Dept on 819366. Anti-social behaviour needs to be logged and must be reported to the community police on 79600. The only reason this large community site is not over run with bottles and cans etc., is the constant help provided by local residents so a big THANK YOU and let us see if we can win that award. See you at 2pm on Sunday 3rd April.

Anne Kaloczi – Committee Member

Vesta avenue post office

The Association is concerned that there has been no progress on the promised disabled access at the Vesta Avenue Post Office. Many local post offices have been closed and one of the promises made as part of the closure programme was that those re-

maining would be improved. It has not been possible to find out whether the Post Office centrally, intends to help with the cost of the work and in the meantime elderly and disabled people are disadvantaged.

Once the Disability Discrimination Act comes into force later this year it may be possible to insist that the work is carried out, but in the meantime the Residents Association will continue to monitor the situation.

Disability and Access

At the last public meeting in June, several of you raised the issue concerning people with disabilities (mainly wheelchair users) regarding lack of access to local shops. This includes the Post Office in Londis, Vesta Avenue, and the problems this causes residents. The SRA, along with the local Councillors, have been trying for some time to remedy the situation. It is understood that there are plans to put ramps into the Londis store but we have not been given a time scale. In the meantime, to put the problem into perspective, here is a brief summary of the law concerning disability discrimination and access:-

From last October, the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations 2003* came into force. This has meant that companies and organisations providing services to the public are required by the Act to ensure that those services are reasonably accessible to disabled people.

For example, access must be provided to shops and businesses if it is reasonable to do so. This is the first time that the law has required businesses to consider whether their buildings are accessible and it is presenting a challenge for many of them, not least to some of the shops situated within Sopwell. It is in their interest, as well as to their customers, to provide access to their services. Customers are more likely to use their stores and failure to provide access could mean not only a loss

of business to the store, but also the shop could face possible litigation and a loss of reputation. The Act says that: 'a person discriminates against a disabled person if' -

- (a) for a reason which relates to the disabled person's disability, he treats him less favourably than he treats or would treat others and
- (b) he cannot show that the treatment in question is justified.

A person also discriminates against a disabled person if he fails to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments imposed on him in relation to the disabled person.' *Reasonable adjustments* to premises depends on several factors, in particular the size and resources of the organisation. A small corner shop will not have to do as much as a large supermarket. For those of you with disabilities who are still having problems with access, there are information and advice sources. The Council has a page about disability and access, albeit from the shopkeepers' points of view, at www.stalbans.gov.uk/tourism/disability/disability.htm. Also, the Disability Rights Commission can give advice to disabled people who feel they may have been discriminated against. Telephone: DRC Helpline on 08457 622 633 or by text on 08457 622 644. Emails can be sent via their website: <http://www.drc-gb.org/>

Sandy Norman

Making a difference to your community!

We thought you might like to know about some of the issues your committee has been pursuing over the past few months – and a few successes! The following is a summary and you will find details of many of them in other articles in this newsletter. – by Chris Pudsey

- Promised wheelchair access to the Vesta Avenue Post Office has still not materialised. Sopwell councillors are pursuing it, and we are also hoping to contact the council's disability officer.
- Concerns were raised with the council over the condition of the steps from the recreation ground to the Alban Way, and improvements have been made.
- Litter and general untidiness continues to be an ongoing issue. In addition to regular notification via the council's phone-line, we're continuing to meet with the various parties involved to try and resolve some of the worse problems. The portakabin has now been removed from the bottom of Wilshere Avenue, and we are told the land opposite Macdonalds will be planted up in the spring. More about litter elsewhere!
- Problems caused by motorbikes being ridden dangerously and/or illegally continue to come up in various places. We are in touch with the community police officer over this, and encouraging people affected to keep records and report incidents.
- We submitted comments to the council's review of no-alcohol zones. See p. 1
- Problems with the revised S4 bus route have been raised with the portfolio holder for transport, and we understand that a review of this and other routes is being carried out. See p. 1.
- Parking on pavements and verges is another perennial problem. See p. 3 for a possible solution in at least one area.
- Committee members planted a considerable number of daffodils around the area last autumn.
- Work and lobbying continues regarding Sopwell Priory – see p. 2.
- The graffiti 'tag' published in the last newsletter helped identify a culprit!
- We have been approached with regard to better use/promotion of the Marlborough Club – see p. 3.
- We now have a tenant representative on the committee. We're also represented on a number of other local committees such as the Community Safety Forum and the Environment Forum. We keep in regular touch with the Sopwell councillors, and have arranged meetings with other councillors who have responsibility for specific issues.

Neighbourhood watch

The SRA Committee are continuing to talk to local ward constable PC Paul Beecher and new Neighbourhood Watch coordinator Ken Lane to see if more schemes can be introduced in Sopwell to help reduce crime and make Sopwell a safer place to live. Some wards in St. Albans have 70 schemes in operation whereas Sopwell only currently has nine! Ken will hopefully be attending our next Public Meeting on 13th April to outline to residents the benefits of setting up a NW scheme in your road (including reductions on home insurance!) so do come along if this interests you. – by Linda Bateman

If you cannot attend the meeting but would like information to be sent to you please contact the Committee or Ken Lane direct (Tel.: 01727 796087 or ken.lane@herts.pnn.police.uk)

Marlborough club

The Sopwell Residents Association are currently talking with representatives on the Council about injecting some more life into the Marlborough Club, located in Old Oak, off Cottonmill Lane, and currently quite under used.

Members of the Committee recently visited another community centre (Fleetville) in St. Albans where they witnessed a vibrant centre, playing host to a colourful array of community and commercial bodies, from nursery groups to pensioners

meetings and sports and social clubs. If anyone is interested in holding regular events at the Marlborough Club please advise the Committee or contact the Council direct (Sue Vale on 01727 819365). Current charges are approx. £26 per session.

Our next Public Meeting will be held at the Marlborough Club on Wednesday 13th April at 7.30 p.m. so please come along and see what the club can offer!

Linda Bateman

Doggetts Way/Wilshere Avenue Verges – Calling residents

Earlier this year Sopwell Residents Association representatives met with Councillors Donald and Lee and council officers to discuss the continuing heavy litter on Doggetts Way and Wilshere Avenue particularly the open land around the Centrium office block and McDonalds. Also raised was the problem of the verges in these roads being used as ad hoc car parks and building sites.

Councillor Lee said if the SRA canvas residents in these roads she would see if funds were available to modify the verges. The options are:

- Leave the verges as they are.
- Convert the larger verges into parking bays.
- Replant the verges with shrubs and trees and add bollards to prevent the parking of cars and lorries.

The SRA will be planting leaflets detailing these three options through the letterboxes of Doggetts and Wilshere in the near future asking you to make a decision.

Len Lewsey

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
problem with the trains	08457 114141

*To report faults online (anything from fly tipping to potholes) go to www.hertsdirect.org and click on **highway fault reporting**

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

2. Contacts

Herts County Council	01992 555555 or www.hertsdirect.org
St Albans and District Council	866100 or www.hertsdirect.org (24-hour hotline for the above) 01438 737320 or 01923 471320

Sopwell councillors:

Janet Smith	763907 janet.smith1@ntlworld.com
Eileen Harris	831611 harris@stalbans555.fsnet.co.uk
Dawn Pratley	840031 dawn.pratley@ntlworld.com
Abbey Flyer Users Group	872736
The Community Police Officer	PC Paul Beecher, 796042, paulbeecher@herts.pnn.police.uk
Sopwell Churches:	St Stephen's, Watling Street, St Albans (C of E) 01727 862598 St Julian's, Abbots Avenue (C of E) 01727 730746 St Bartholomew's, Vesta Avenue (RC) 01727 850066

3. 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