



Summer News 2023

Founded in 1930

Town Council backs L&G opposition

At an extraordinary council meeting held in Park Hall at the end of May, attended by some 200 concerned residents, Harpenden Town Council (HTC) resolved to 'strongly object' to Legal & General's application to build around 550 homes on Green Belt land to the north of Bloomfield Road.

The council recommended that it be refused by St Albans District Council – as the local planning authority – on the basis of non-conformity with Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan policies. There were, it asserted, insufficient justification of very special circumstances for developing on Green Belt as well as insufficient transport mitigation measures. Additionally there was inconsistency of education requirements, negative impact upon adjacent Grade II listed buildings and unacceptable damage to ancient woodland. The capabilities of the existing sewage infrastructure were a further concern, as were the applicant's poor and inaccurate transport assessments, notably regarding traffic volumes on the A1081.

Though the council acknowledged the town's need for new affordable housing accessible to younger people, as well as for social housing, it needed to be in appropriate locations in Harpenden that did not have a significant negative impact. Though L&G had listed what it claimed were eleven 'very special circumstances' for encroaching on Green Belt designated land, none appeared, in the Town Council's assessment, to justify the harm caused to the natural environment, including an unavoidably adverse effect on the immediately adjacent Ambrose Wood which was designated ancient woodland.

The A1081 Luton Road was already heavily congested with several neighbouring residential streets subject to 'rat running', making any suggested mitigating measures unrealistic. The Neighbourhood Plan required submission of independent transport assessments of a quality and accuracy lacking in L&G's development application. Furthermore the cycle path infrastructure proposed by the applicant appeared entirely inappropriate and ineffective; any on-road cycle route (along the A1081 or via Tennyson Road) was particularly unrealistic, unsafe and failed to address the Nickey Line bridge restriction.



SADC Planning Application notices posted at the L&G site make clear the 'Departure from the Development Plan as it is within an area allocated as Metropolitan Green Belt', as well as 'Development affecting a Right of Way'.

HTC had determined that the existing sewage infrastructure below Luton Road, Bloomfield Road and nearby streets did not have the capacity to cope with a development of 550 homes and other accompanying buildings on the site (see Editor's View, page 12). There was no clarity on how the necessary extensive upgrade would be funded or the timescales involved.

Acknowledging that the Town Council was not the decision maker on Harpenden planning

applications, it would nevertheless request that should SADC planners be minded to allow the L&G application, a number of key issues needed to be formally addressed prior to any definitive approval.

And, in accordance with Neighbourhood Plan policies, comprehensive evidence should be provided to show that nearby residents would not be adversely affected by the proposed 550-home development. Nor should planning approval be given before Hertfordshire County Council clarified the – currently uncertain – position on the inclusion of a new primary school on the site.



'Welcome' display board newly installed by the Town Council near the Leisure Centre entrance spells out the multifarious attractions of Rothamsted Park, as a 'Relaxing Place for Sport and Leisure'

Bank Hub prospects remain precarious

Even though Barclays is set to close its Harpenden branch on September 6, leaving the town devoid of full banking facilities, the likelihood of the town getting a Banking Hub of the kind appealed for repeatedly in this newsletter, and which are being established elsewhere in the country, remains regrettably uncertain.



Barclays is set to close its Harpenden branch at the beginning of September.

Strenuous campaigning efforts by Harpenden Town Council (HTC), with the backing of the **Harpenden Society**, have yet to yield (as we go to press) a positive outcome, so that Lloyds, HSBC and NatWest private or business customers face the unwelcome prospect of having to travel to St Albans or Luton for 'human contact' with their banks. Barclays has promised an 'advice only' presence, but with details and location yet to be confirmed.

In the face of unequivocal feedback evidence from residents and businesses gathered through community surveys undertaken by the council during 2022, HTC announced in July that it was convening a working group meeting to agree a letter to Cash Access UK, the organisation responsible for overseeing the introduction of Banking Hubs. It would propose more flexible terms of reference in establishing whether a Hub is justified, specifically in relation to the continuing presence – and 'status' – of the Nationwide Building Society branch in the High Street. Such a policy change would open up the possibility of Harpenden being used as a 'pilot' Hub for other communities which retain a national building society branch.

For every existing customer of the big four High Street banks, Harpenden currently faces the prospect of a much diminished 'Deposit Service', yet to be defined, at an as yet undetermined location and which is, more discouragingly, expected to be automated, falling far short of meeting the bank service needs of the town's residents and businesses.

It should be pointed out that a 'deposit service' of sorts is already available, though little publicised, at Harpenden's two Post Offices inside WH Smith and the Co-op, where pay-in envelopes for cheques for all four main banks, as well as RBS, Halifax and



Nationwide Building Society remains in the High Street, but does not provide full banking services

Santander are held, albeit kept behind the counter and available on request. The arrangement however has its limitations, not least the absence of any form of receipts for envelope content. For the benefit typically of small retailers, cash can be deposited at the PO counter.

The present government has pledged to confer more powers on its regulatory **Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)**, notably to include reviewing the rules and criteria that govern the establishment of Banking Hubs. It is hoped that would call, from a Harpenden perspective, for a re-categorisation of the Nationwide Building Society branch as no longer the 'last bank in town', being neither a bank nor a provider of banking services to businesses or, for example, to clubs and charities.

The Town Council is calling for a resolution of the issue, by way of an assurance that definitive plans for a Hub in the town would be in the pipeline before the Barclays branch closure in early September.



Cheque deposit envelopes for the main banks available – behind the counter – at the Post Office, in WH Smith.

It should be added that Nationwide Building Society, in response to an approach from Harpenden-based banking 'guru' Derek French, has declared that it 'wants to see our local communities thrive; we do not want to be, or be seen to be, a block to banking cash access for small businesses or local charities who, as you point out, are often those most in need of local banking services. We fully support your (Bank Hub) proposal, and would have no issue with this being implemented in Harpenden'.

First Lib Dem Mayor takes over

Harpenden's new Town Mayor is Fiona Gaskell, taking over from Lisa Striven, who we profiled in our Summer 2022 newsletter. Fiona's appointment followed the May local government elections when the Liberal Democrats gained control of the Town Council after many years under a Conservative administration. It was a change which necessarily led to a Lib Dem holding the mayoral office.

She is one of the four newly-elected Harpenden West councillors. Any one of the 14 new HTC newcomers could theoretically have been appointed Town Mayor. But her local government experience as a Lib Dem St Albans District councillor clearly counted in her favour. Cllr Pip Liver is the new Deputy Mayor.

At SADC she sits on its all-important planning committee, which made it democratically necessary for her to abstain from voting at HTC's recent hugely well-attended public meeting – which she chaired as one of her first mayoral duties – to discuss the 'hot topic' of Legal & General's application to build 550 homes on Green Belt land to the north of Bloomfield Road.

It might be added that, notwithstanding the voting abstention at the meeting of two joint HTC/SADC councillors, opposition to the L&G scheme, declared by other councillors and some two hundred members of the public, was unanimous.

Fiona and her husband Philip have lived in Harpenden since 1992 and have three sons and three grandchildren. Originally from the Thames-side village of Pangbourne, Berkshire, she attended Bristol University, with French and German her specialist subjects, leading to an important role working for the British Tourist Board, promoting the UK as a destination for overseas visitors.

She then contributed to the organisation of campaigns working with the 'Tidy Britain Group' and, later, the England part of 'Britain in Bloom', the latter signalling the new mayor's especial affinity with the now well-established annual 'Harpenden in Bloom' event that is so well sponsored and supported by local businesses.

Essentially a publicity role, it pointed the way, after she had started her family, into the field of public relations and journalism, through writing and editing such publications as 'Maritime England News'. She

went on to run a post-graduate course in public relations at West Herts College in Watford. In 2001 Fiona received an award as 'PR Professional of the Year' from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations.

In her role as newly-elected Town Mayor, she makes clear she is eager, during her year in office, to encourage the work of the Town Council in helping maintain Harpenden's appeal as a vibrant and attractive place to live, in particular continuing the momentum of those vital improvements in Rothamsted Park and other green spaces which became viable following the transfer of their responsibility two years ago from SADC to HTC.

Among a number of specific new HTC projects scheduled during the 2023/24 mayoral year, Fiona mentions particularly the creation of

the 'all year round' artificial grass surface for Harpenden Football Club's ground adjacent to Rothamsted Park. She has also become actively involved in the Town Council (and Harpenden Society) backed campaign to have a Banking Hub established in Harpenden, to serve all those private and business customers being cut off by the closure of traditional bank branches in the town.

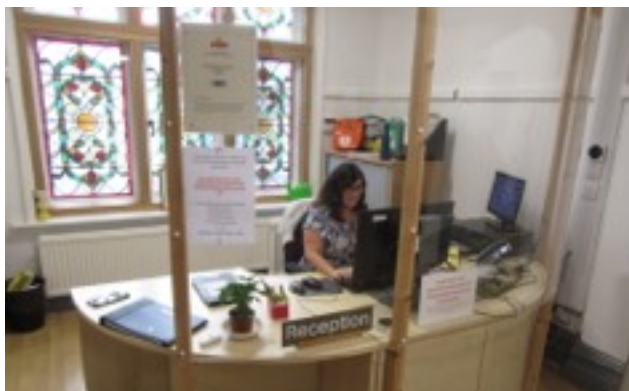
Financial constraints are being felt throughout local government at the present time. But the new Town Mayor is confident that those vital local issues for which HTC is responsible are being vigorously addressed by the new administration, helping to maintain Harpenden as a thriving community.



New Town Mayor Fiona Gaskell heralds the change to a Liberal Democrat council majority.

Red House updates on show to all

Over the last three or four years we have reported on the progressive upgrading of Harpenden Memorial Hospital – or the Red House as it is more familiarly known to many residents of the town. At an Open Day in early July there was an opportunity for all those interested in and concerned about the town's most important health and wellbeing centre, now under the 'umbrella' of the Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust, to see for themselves what has been achieved on the site.



Stained glass windows behind upgraded reception are a reminder of the building's venerable history.

It was explained to the several hundred visitors who came along that the effects of Covid 19 had tended to delay the improvements which were now largely in place, in particular the capacity to handle greater outpatient numbers. There has been a transfer of facilities, notably those of Herts Neurological Service, from Langley House, Watford, to the Harpenden site. It is something necessarily of benefit in terms of access, to those living in and around Harpenden.



Hertfordshire Neurological Service transferred from a Watford site.

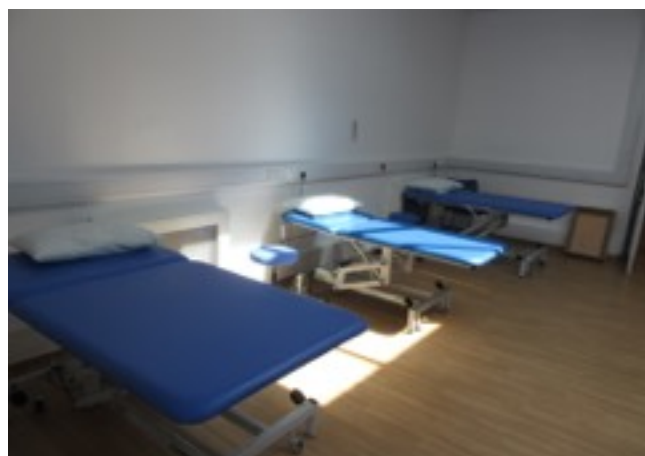
Those include, importantly, a well-equipped rehabilitation unit, including a small gymnasium, providing care for patients recovering from strokes, brain injuries or acute operations – a percentage of whom are necessarily elderly and/or frail. A dedicated

'transformation team' is now responsible for patients suffering from respiratory and 'long Covid' symptoms.

Communication with specialist consultants located off-site, typically by way of online calls, is aimed at achieving a more rapid response than was traditionally possible, to help ensure the best available care for Red House outpatients.

In recognition of the nationwide shortage of beds in main hospitals, the Red House has also become the operational centre of what has been dubbed a 'virtual hospital' serving the local area, manned by an 'unplanned care team', of community nurses, 15 or 20 of whom, though based at the Harpenden site, are in practice 'out on the road' treating patients in their own homes. The aim is to provide specialist medical support there, of the kind which would otherwise need on-site attention.

It was pointed out that, in the light of Covid experience, where at-home treatment is possible, the kind of cross-infection risks at a busy main hospital, including those in A&E waiting areas, is greatly minimised. But, importantly, those community nurses, like their Red House on-site colleagues, are able, from patients' homes, to maintain direct online contact with consultants, for example cardiologists, and to book hospital visits, perhaps for an X-ray or scan. They can also communicate directly with the ambulance service, alerting the crews to specific patient needs and the related degree of urgency.



New post-operative rehabilitation unit

On the revamped Red House site in Carlton Road, all patient services are located at ground level. The first floor is given over to administration, including back-up services such as HR (human resources), covering the West Herts NHS Trust area served by its three main hospitals, at Watford, St Albans and Hemel Hempstead.

All-weather pitch scheduled for new football season

As we went to press, work on Harpenden Town Football Club's new '3G' artificial grass pitch was well advanced, with completion scheduled for the end of August, ready for the start of the 2023/24 season. The £1.2 million project, for which planning permission was granted earlier this year, and external funding secured for the majority of the cost, is effectively a joint venture between HTFC, Colts (Junior) Football Club and the Town Council.

It is a major civil engineering project, being undertaken by Newbury, Berkshire based contractor S & C Slatter, whose 30 years experience in constructing artificial turf sports pitches includes Eton College and Everton Football Club installations. The 'long-pile infilled' synthetic turf is supplied by FieldTurf Tarkett, a French company headquartered in Montreal, Canada, whose manufacturing plant is located in Calhoun, Georgia, USA.

Situated on the site of HTFC's established ground adjacent to Rothamsted Park, the new 3G pitch will, in the Town Council's words, 'provide an outstanding new facility for the community, creating opportunities for greater participation in sport in the town and promoting physical activities to a wider age group', adding that 'a key focus is providing opportunities for young people and, more specifically, girls in sport'.



Hardcore laid over the pitch area, ready for a Tarmac covering and then 4m x 4m artificial turf sections

HTFC chairman Roman Motyczak says 'we have worked closely with local businesses, partners and sponsors in recent years to create a 'One Team, One Town' mentality and hope the all-weather pitch will help to bound this forward'. Meanwhile Chris Gregory, Harpenden Colts FC chairman says 'our 1400 members and 300 coaches are very excited about the new pitch development. Within the first year the new pitch will allow us to offer regular football coaching to the 450-plus players on our waiting lists, enabling us to become the largest junior football club in the country'.

The newly-equipped football ground will also, points out the Town Council, become a recreational space available to local schools, clubs and other groups as a focal point for the community – an area available for hire for a range of leisure as well as sport activities.



Spectator walkways laid with Tarmac over hardcore.



How HTFC's new 3G pitch should look



First, the Good News... Harpenden's appetite for food shops remains high with two new tasty venues. The first saw the opening in July of **DARLISH**, an ice cream parlour in Leyton road, opposite Waitrose. Their ice cream is made in a traditionally English style - so creamy, and also not too sweet (and no eggs)... and they work really hard on creating magical combinations which excite, intrigue and taste really good!



The second, **SILVER PALATE**, will be opening a fabulous new Delicatessen in Vaughan Road with an amazing range of products. (It will be open by the time you read this in mid August).



Additionally another Turkish Barber - **KZL BARBER** will be opening on the High Street next to Jade. A positive development on that side of the street. Although with three other Turkish barbers in Town it remains to be seen where their business will come from!



Finally **Rosanna's** restaurant in Vaughan Road has new owners (Portofino), who have applied for an Alcohol licence .

Now the Not So Good News... Recent closures of **Map Stores, AGA and HSBC** have left the High Street with three fewer traditional outlets. AND with Barclays Bank closing on September 6th another large unit will be empty.

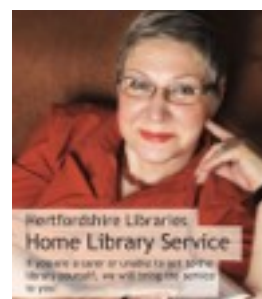


Harpenden's booming Charity Shops. Every time I visit the High Street I'm astounded by the popularity of these shops, and the sheer range of products they sell to raise funds for their respective charities. Talking to some of their managers recently I was assured that their offerings are of the highest quality thankfully donated by Harpenden residents.



So whilst the Charity sector booms the traditional stores continue to need residents to support their sector to ensure their presence in the ever rising tide of rent and rates increases.

Harpenden's Library continues to attract younger readers with their Children's Summer Reading Challenge . Loads of fun and learnings too. PLUS a NEW Home Library Service for people who are unable to get to the library.



RON TAYLOR

Exciting new format for Society Annual Awards 2023

Background

The **Harpenden Society** has been helping to maintain the Town's unique visual image for more than 40 years by recognising building design & site developments of a high architectural standard that blend within the town much of which is a designated Conservation Area.

In fact the first ever award can still be seen on the wall of the now Brown's Hair Salon. This block also includes the recently opened Twisted Angel cocktail bar and in the late 70's was almost acquired by a developer to knock down and develop with new shops/bars. It was saved thanks to local opposition and the efforts of the Harpenden Society and its then chairman Paul Usher.

With over 40 years of awarding in its present format with nominations primarily from members it is time for a change.

The New Format

- Extending the qualification for nomination to include buildings/developments that serve the interests of the Town, not just architecturally designed structures.
- Include buildings within the Conservation area that have been developed to maintain standards.
- Expand nominations to all residents in Harpenden for work completed during the year ending December. (Not just Society members)

The Awards Categories

- Two prestigious Harpenden Society Plaques
- Certificates of Merit
- Letters of Commendation

The Society can award any number of Certificates or Letters of Commendation provided they meet the criteria set by the Awards committee.

The Awards Committee

This will be composed of four people to represent the Society and residents of Harpenden, chaired by Ron Taylor.

Timelines

The new format will be launched in September with a press release on the Society Web Site + local media and social media.

- Call for nominations in Autumn Newsletter
- Nomination close Dec 31 2023
- Review nominations by early March 2024
- Announce winners at April AGM 2024

Previous Winners

Here are just a few examples:

Harpenden Cricket Club's Pavillion

The Welcombe House conversion from Harpenden House Hotel (pictured)

The new Salvation Army building

Jarvis Homes Ltd. for 1-11 Arden Court, Arden Grove

The Club House for Harpenden Common Golf Club

Katherine Warington School

The Eric Morecambe Centre (pictured)



Resistance grows to airport's grotesque, near-80%, growth aspiration

Notwithstanding air traffic control issues and strikes by baggage handlers afflicting civil aviation across the country, the Summer holiday season has boosted aircraft activity in and out of Luton Airport. In mid-June it saw a year-to-date tally of almost 6.2 million passengers, up by 45% on May 2022 figures.

It has inevitably meant the area around the airport, necessarily including Harpenden, suffering increased levels of flight noise as well as more frequent slow-running on the M1 motorway, with greater resulting congestion on local roads, notably the A1081 and B653 Lower Luton Road.

But the already daunting picture could become far worse should the airport succeed in its **Development Consent Order (DCO)** application to increase its permitted capacity from the current 18 mppa (million passengers per annum), by almost 80% to a grotesque 32 million ppa.

Swathes of opposition to the airport's DCO application, from 'interest parties', ie organisations such as the **Harpenden Society** and pressure groups like LADACAN, as well as from numerous local authorities from the surrounding area, notably Herts County Council, have been formally registered and forwarded to the government's decision-making **Planning Inspectorate (PI)**. Their representations are available on the PI website.

The next stage of the process will take the form of a 'preliminary meeting', scheduled, as we went to press, for Thursday August 10 in Luton Town Hall, at which

all the aforementioned 'interested parties' will have the opportunity to expand on their views to the PI inspectors, not least on procedural matters, ie how the subsequent and crucial main Inquiry should be conducted, its timetable, and on what it should focus.

At the Inquiry the Harpenden Society will submit detailed (necessarily written) evidence about its reservations, principally environmental impact (including noise, global warming carbon emissions, air quality pollutants and local transport) concerns. We also intend to question whether there is an economic case for expansion by way of **Luton Borough Council's** ability to fund the expansion itself or to find an investor willing to do so in the face of considerable uncertainty regarding government responses to climate change.

The Inquiry is scheduled to finish on February 10 2024 and the

Inspectors have then to report within three months to the **Secretary of State for Transport**, who will then have three months to, in legal language, 'determine' the application, so that a decision can be expected in August 2024. The likelihood and timing of a General Election could though affect the course of events.



Meanwhile there are, as we go to press, indications that the outcome of the airport's earlier planning application to increase its capacity limit from 18 to 19mppa is likely to be published on or prior to Tuesday August 22.

Wider choice for 'Leisure learners'

Harpenden Learning for Leisure, the locally-organised and run adult educational group, which last year effectively supplanted the curriculum offered by the WEA (Workers Educational Association), has introduced a number of new courses for the academic year beginning in the Autumn.

A number are being run by tutors already familiar to HLfL students, though there are three new tutors. Janet Berenson who is running a Creative Writing course, while Ian Waller is to lecture on Social History in the 19th Century. And in the 2024 Spring term a

new course on family health and well-being will be run by Brian Isbell.

HLfL courses are run from the Harpenden Trust Halls in Southdown Road and the function room of the Plough and Harrow pub opposite. More information can be found at www.harpendenlearningforleisure.org.uk.



Have your say on latest Local Plan

At a St Albans District Council exhibition scheduled for Wednesday September 13, from 2 till 8pm, in the Rothamsted Conference Centre restaurant area, Harpenden residents will have the opportunity to question SADC officials – both councillors and senior planning officers – on the details of the latest **Local Plan (LP)** in draft form. It is expected that potential development on Green Belt land and the related issue of housebuilding targets will be high on the agenda.

Harpenden Society members will recall that two previous attempts in the last five years to compile an **LP** which met government inspectors' approval proved unsuccessful. A consultation period on the new draft plan, prepared by consultants Arup, started on July 12 and will finish on September 25. Its proposals are designed to meet the original (2014) Government-imposed housing target of 15,000 new homes through to 2041, maximising the use of so-called brownfield sites, before considering the need to encroach on Green Belt.

It is acknowledged however that a nine-year old target is no longer relevant and may well be subjected to revision, as suggested recently by Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

In any case the housebuilding targets for Harpenden in particular are viewed by the **Harpenden Society** as being excessive first and foremost because the local infrastructure will not support such plans. Existing congestion on the town's roads, especially the A1081, is already recognised as one of the most severe in the county, with high levels of air pollution in the town centre at peak periods.

To look at this issue in more detail, the **Society** has engaged the University of Hertfordshire to analyse current traffic levels and to outline practical options to address the further congestion/pollution threat from significant additional housebuilding encroaching on Harpenden's protective Green Belt. **The findings of the UoH report will be the subject of a Harpenden Society convened public meeting on Thursday September 21 at 7.30pm at Katherine Warington School.**

It is hoped that the SADC's new draft **LP** will also

acknowledge other serious issues affecting the people of Harpenden. Car parking and basic services such as water, drainage and sewage are all beset with problems requiring local government attention. Meanwhile, healthcare facilities and school places are under pressure and will require substantial investment to cope with currently proposed new housing development.

Harpenden Society members are encouraged to respond to the **LP** consultation, either through the website link:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/new-local-plan>
or email to planning.policy@stalbans.gov.uk



HARPENDEN'S
CAR CRISIS

Congested roads with too many cars

Poor air quality from polluting vehicles

Health impacts from air pollution

Constant parking problems

**THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY
TRANSPORT REPORT CONDUCTED
by the University of Hertfordshire
Smart Mobility Unit
WILL BE PRESENTED AT A PUBLIC
MEETING ON SEPT 21 AT
KATHERINE WARINGTON SCHOOL
7.30PM**

Putting Harpenden in the picture

Photography has rightly become a respected branch of art and at Harpenden's annual Art on the Common event one of the long-time exhibitors which never fails to attract visitors is the 'Original Image' show of eye-catching pictures created and displayed for sale by local 'fine art photographers' Paul Johnson and Brian Cooke. Their work, which has been

part of the June weekend Summer art show on the Common for more than two decades, covers a wide variety of visual subjects, from wild landscapes in distant climes through to clever still life images.

Their pictures of Harpenden and the surrounding countryside especially are always guaranteed to appeal to townspeople passing by the Original Image gazebo.



Original Image's wide variety of Art on the Common pictures.



Brian Cooke



Evocative Autumnal scene in Rothamsted Park



Paul Johnson

Future Public Meetings

Better health care for our local communities thanks to Harpenden's PCN.

The Harpenden Primary Care Network will be the subject of the **Harpenden Society** autumn Public Meeting.

We will be explaining how the three GP Surgeries are now working together to improve patient care. Collaborating with one another and sharing resources to ensure full utilisation of the skills and expertise from all medical staff and social services.

A Wellbeing Hub is also being developed with services to support physical and mental health.

Full details with date and location will be published on our website.

www.harpendensociety.org

**Harpenden Health
PCN**

85-year-old business continues to flower



Sonia Duffy has owned the long-established Perry florists business for twenty years.

Twice a week a large boldly signwritten articulated vehicle with a Dutch registration number is to be seen unloading its cargo in Harpenden town centre. It is delivering flowers and plants from Holland in bulk to Perry, Harpenden's long-established florist at no 5 Lower High Street – arguably the town's oldest business to have retained its original name.

Sonia Duffy, who took over Perry twenty years ago in 2003, says that nowadays nearly all its flowers are sourced from wholesalers in the Netherlands, the prices she pays being determined online, through a huge international flower growers' auction (in a building over 5.5 million square feet in area) based in Aalsmeer, sometimes referred to as 'the flower capital of the world', some 8 miles south-west of Amsterdam. Nevertheless some, particularly seasonal, flowers such as daffodils sold by Perry, continue to come from UK bulbfields.

Demand locally for flowers, bouquets, potted plants and other 'floral accessories' has, says Sonia, remained satisfactorily healthy over the last two or three years, despite Covid-related and other restrictions, including the Lower High Street's controversial pedestrianisation.

As well as the obvious florist's necessarily perishable merchandise, Sonia has endeavoured to broaden Perry's offerings to include a range of items which, as well as flowers, are in demand for 'special occasions', typically weddings and birthday celebrations. So when you're ordering the floral decorations for a wedding reception for example you need look no further for those balloons and presentation boxes of chocolates – or indeed your



drink requirements. Perry has an alcohol licence to supply wine and champagne for special events, though not for open sale in the shop.

Home delivery, now a byword with all the supermarkets, is likewise now a routine Perry van service, for its customers across Harpenden as well as further afield, notably in Wheathampstead and Redbourn as well as St Albans.

The Perry name, in a florist's connection, must be familiar to Harpenden's oldest residents. Its origins go back to pre-war days when, in 1938, Mr Henry Perry took over Kinsbourne Nursery, a market garden which occupied several

acres of land alongside and behind 'The Pavement', the short parade of



The 85-year-old Kinsbourne Green cabin is an unlikely part of Perry's business history.

shops at Kinsbourne Green. He then opened up a shop at 29b High Street (close to where Sainsbury's are today) under the Perry name to sell his nursery produce, including fruit as well as flowers.

He also sold his produce, on what amounted to the nursery's doorstep, from the Cabin at no 379 Luton Road which, incidentally, remains there at Kinsbourne Green 85 years on, having undergone several commercial transformations, as a specialist bookshop and latterly a printing business office.

In 1951 Mr Perry emigrated to Australia, the business being taken over by Mr Robert Allingham, and for several decades it traded under the 'dual' name of 'Perry Allingham'. During that time it occupied different premises in Harpenden High Street, initially triggered by the development of the town's first Sainsbury's supermarket, resulting in a move across the road in 1967 to no 70 High Street – now Dickens hair salon.

Then in 1974 Perry Allingham florist's moved southwards to 10b Leyton Road, now the premises of Stevensons school outfitters. But it remained there for barely twelve months, until September 1975, when its present Lower High Street site became vacant following the closure of Harridens, Harpenden's long established specialist grocery store, noted for its unrivalled variety of cheeses and, more particularly, its range of coffee, ground on site by a traditional and historic grinder which stood prominently in the window, generating an enticing aroma for passers-by.

**Perry's history acknowledgement:
Geoff Woodward**

EDITOR'S VIEW

Alan Bunting

Planning criteria down the drain?

Of all the legitimate objections to Legal & General's plans to build over 500 homes on 62 acres of farmland on the north side of Harpenden, the vital twin issues of traffic congestion and the sacrifice of Green Belt have perhaps diverted attention away from a no less critical matter: the provision of mains services for so many new dwellings, most pointedly the question of drainage and sewage.

Anyone who has experienced the regular rush-hour hold-ups on the A1081 along the lower boundary of the sloping L&G site, will also have witnessed its frequently inadequate drainage. After moderate to heavy rain the drains cannot cope with the volume of water. Deep puddles collect in the gutters and, crucially, at the bottom of Roundwood Lane, Park Mount and other Luton Road side turnings; pedestrians risk being swamped by the spray thrown up by passing vehicles.

Those flooded junctions are made much worse by the number of side road gutter drains which, from personal observation, can remain totally blocked for months or even years with an accumulated combination of leaf mulch and grit from road surface wear. The result is that, after a deluge, the volume of storm water flows undiminished down to make the junction flooding that much worse.

It is evident that a massive upgrade in drainage – and necessarily sewage – capacity would be required to cope with the added toilet and bathroom effluence from five hundred or more additional homes and the accompanying infrastructure, including of course so-called storm drainage from roofs and from the new streets.

Because most neighbourhood drains and sewers are located under or adjacent to public thoroughfares, there must of necessity be a close operational relationship between the water companies



responsible for drainage/sewage provision and the highways authority. It means collaboration in our area between Thames Water and Herts County Council.



Gutter drains like these in Roundwood Lane can remain blocked for months or even years.

But the aforementioned and ongoing blocked gutter drain issue is surely an indication that such collaboration falls well short of the ideal, and does not bode well for what would need to be a bold and imaginative scheme to provide adequately for L&G's proposed development. It would of course be costly but it is likely, going by recent local council planning resolutions that any approval would be conditional on the developer footing the bill for drainage/sewage infrastructure. Recent media publicity about Thames Water's questionable finances and the tight budgets afflicting local authorities including Herts CC, must surely strengthen that likelihood.

Thames Water's public image has also suffered in recent months through its role in contributing to countrywide concerns on river pollution caused by what it terms 'sewage spills', data on which is collected by water level sensors. They detect the extent and duration of releases of untreated, ie raw, sewage overflowing directly into the environment.



There is evidently better control of overspills up river at East Hyde treatment works.

Its record of sewage spills in the Harpenden area, into the River Lea, is not encouraging. During the most recently recorded 12 month period there were just five overspills into the river from the Piggottshill Lane treatment plant. Further analysis of the statistics reveals however that those five events added up to a total duration of 47 (forty seven) hours. Meanwhile, two miles up river, Thames Water's much bigger East Hyde plant alongside Lower Luton Road was responsible for four overspills but they lasted cumulatively just four hours.

It is perfectly clear – unlike our polluted river water – that the drain and sewer network in and around Harpenden needs to be significantly upgraded to cope adequately with today's population and today's weather. But in order to handle a) the 'outpourings' from hundreds of new homes and b) the likely weather extremes of continuing climate change, much more radical advances are demanded.