

Newsletter March 2015

School Buses in Romeland

APRA was at least partly formed to protest against the 2013 Romeland traffic scheme. Our complaints led to a referral to the Council's scrutiny committee and the creation of a task force (SACTAF) to review the matter. After our presentation of the dangers SACTAF recommended a full safety audit before bus use of the Romeland Hill car park bays.

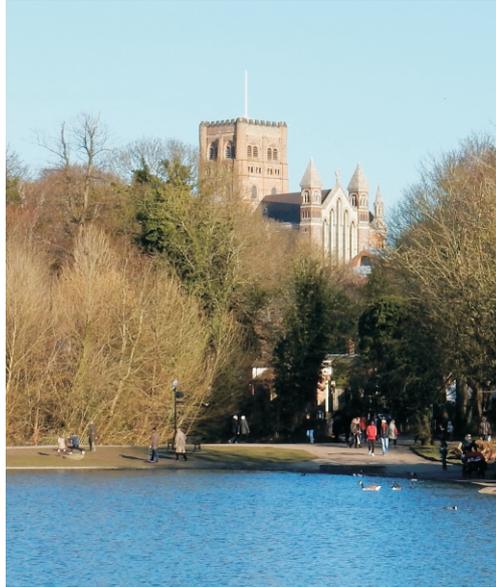
However, St Albans District Council (SADC) side-stepped this recommendation, simply asking Herts County Council (HCC) for a safety audit to approve 'coach waiting' in Romeland Hill. This got the green light so the Car Parking Working Party (CPWP), chaired by Beric Read (Sandridge local councillor) has approved this to go ahead in July. This is a pretext for legitimising what will at times be one of the most intensively used bus stops in St Albans - without the SACTAF safety audit and despite clear danger to pupils and other road users.

Due diligence has been abandoned and the scrutiny process subverted. It is a scandal. We continue to complain to the Council's Chief Executive and its Chief Legal Officer but so far to no avail. However, Sandy Walkington (our County Councillor) is seeing whether HCC can fund and do the proper audit.

We have insisted that SADC should set aside the CPWP decision and make no changes related to school buses in the Romeland area until this is done. We need to increase the pressure on SADC so please let us know if you have any legal contacts, particularly with experience of local government, who might be willing to help.

[John Hedges 01727 861164, 07947 034234].

We hope you enjoy reading this, our second printed Newsletter. Further details of our organisation, contacts and periodic updates on current issues are available on our website: www.aprastalbans.org E-Mail contact: secretary@aprastalbans.org



We would welcome your comments (and your 2015 subscription, if overdue!).

If you have a local issue with which you think APRA might be able to help, please contact any member of the Committee, directly or through your Street Representative.

Car Parking Survey Results

Last autumn SADC sought residents' views on Controlled Parking in some zones in the Conservation Area. It is thought that results for Zone B (where many APRA residents live) will be presented to the CPWP on 18 March, but we have courteously been shown preliminary results. It is claimed that the response rate was below the threshold at which action is required (we argued that the figures are not representative since the number of questionnaires sent exceeds the number of residential households in many streets). Nevertheless, we believe that recommendations will be made, including extending controlled hours to 10 pm every day, and making additional parking bays available. We pressed hard for such changes, in line with a previous exercise to seek residents' views. The details will be critical. For example, we do not think it reasonable to start controlled parking before 8.30 am, as overnight visitors would have to move their cars even earlier than they do today. Although Council car parks are free after 6.30 pm, charging at most starts at 7.30 am. We will send more information when it becomes available, but you can check on the CPWP agenda at:

<http://stalbans.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=304&Mid=7607&Ver=4>

Other Sorts of Bus

HCC wants to cut its subsidy to local bus operators, with the prospect of some St Albans services stopping at 7.30 pm. There is a consultation open until 10 April -<https://consult.hertsdirect.org/bus-services/>.

There is also a new SADC Bus Forum to help link residents and operators. Its first meeting at 7 pm on 10 March at the Civic Centre is open to all.

Work begins on the "Holy Well"

As water continued to mysteriously flow in Romeland, APRA, Edgar Hill and Sandy Walkington have all put pressure on SADC, HCC and Affinity Water to find a solution. It seems that Affinity Water is now starting to work on the "Holy Well", fencing the area off and suspending parking for a couple of days. The saga has been going on for about eighteen months with hundreds of gallons of water running down the street - dangerous when it freezes. The source is still unclear - the favourite theory is that it is surface water or a spring, as the water quantity seems to increase after a wet spell. Let's hope that Affinity gets to the bottom of it and it doesn't surface somewhere else!



Photo: Peter Trevelyan, 17 February 2015

Caring for our Environment

There are many issues, both long- and short-term, that affect the appearance and pleasant enjoyment of our beautiful area, such as the state of the blue brick pavements, the management of rubbish and recycling, the suppression of graffiti and the sensible control of heavy traffic. There is always room for interested individuals to take their own initiatives. Jude Dyson is leading a project to plant shrubs in the wall-enclosed 'dead' space on the corner of George St and Spicer St. Mollie Kennedy and Edgar Hill have been trying to get SADC to solve the dumping of rubbish on the pavement outside Nos. 15-17 Verulam Road.

Please think of getting us involved so that we can help by providing support and, if appropriate, broadcasting topical news through our website.

Brickyard Brick Wall

With the Planning Inspector's decision to accept the redevelopment of this site as it now stands, all objections by residents and the weak arguments offered by SADC have been swept aside and the premises are now free to operate according to the licence. As feared, assurances that it would be run as a 'sophisticated' wine and tapas bar in a well-controlled way so as not to disturb neighbours meant nothing - so far it has been just another late-night noisy drinking den on Friday and Saturday nights.

Those councillors and businessmen who supported the owner's case should recognise that, unless it is run much better than this, it is *not* the sort of business that will enhance the attractions of the St Albans Conservation Area. Our only recourse now is to monitor instances of public nuisance and make official complaints about any disturbance, so that the Council can react more strongly in future to support residents.

24-hour noise complaint line: 01727 811155 (ask for a reference number to make it official)

What is APRA?

We are a non-aligned, voluntary association for all local residents, formed in November 2013.

This Newsletter will be delivered in the area around the Abbey enclosed by Holywell Hill, High Street, Verulam Road, New England Street, Welclose Street and Romeland. It is also available as a pdf from our website.

Your 2015 Committee:

Peter Trevelyan (Chair, Abbey Mill End)
Geoff Dyson (Vice Chair, College St)
Andrew Yaras (Treasurer, Fishpool St)
Robert Pankhurst (Secretary, College St)
Gillian Field (George St)
John Hedges (Abbey Mill Lane)
Justin Douglas (Lower Dagnall St)