

bridge

Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

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WBC Local Plan Update Make your views known before it's too late!

Patrick Hamblin and Jeremy Gilmore



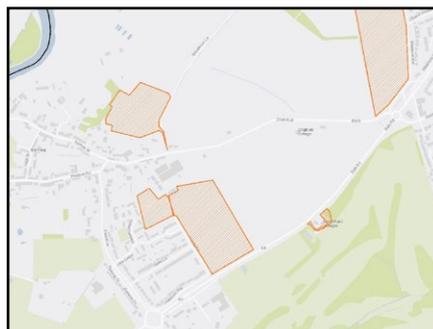
The public consultation on Wokingham Borough Council's Local Plan Update is open until 15th February 2019. This consultation asks you about where you think development should go and whether there are locations suitable for higher densities and taller buildings. You will be able to see all of the land being put forward for development as part of this process and provide comments on its suitability.

It is understood that every household within the Borough will receive a leaflet inviting comments. Briefings for residents are being held and our local ones will be between 7pm and 9pm on these days:

- 10th Jan – Twyford – Loddon Hall, Loddon Hall Road, RG10 9JA
- 12th Feb – Woodley – Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, RG5 4JZ

Six sites have been put forward within Sonning, the majority being for housing development. Particular cause for concern is that a number of the sites are currently agricultural land and if developed will inevitably lead to Sonning village and Charvil merging. This is in addition to increased pressures in terms of infrastructure.

You should make your views known by attending a briefing or completing the online survey. Links



to this and to other parts of the consultation can be found on the Society website. **You have until 4pm on Friday 15th February to respond.**

The intention is for Wokingham Borough Council to produce a draft local plan by Autumn 2019 that will guide where and how growth will take place in the Borough in the years up to 2036.

You can be assured that your Society will be represented at least at one of these meetings.

Bridge is the newsletter of the
Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

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The Sonning Branch Royal National Lifeboat Institution

David Bates, Branch Chairman

The RNLI, as most of us are aware, is an organisation dedicated to saving lives at sea, in the Thames estuary and many popular beach destinations. The lifeboat stations operate from around the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, all under one RNLI organisation based in Poole Dorset.

Lifeboat crews receive specialised training and are supplied with the latest all weather equipment. Crews are voluntary, but there is a very small number of permanent crew members, such as mechanics who are permanently required and so are in full time employment with the RNLI.

There is a long waiting list at most lifeboat stations to become crew members, despite the dangers, risks and hardships involved. Their bravery is clear to see and to be grateful for.

The annual budget required to run the organisation is around £177 million. This is funded by donations from various sources, such as fund raising and bequests from the public. It is independent from the government in terms of funding and control. The RNLI works closely with other emergency services such as the Coastguard and Air Sea Rescue, which until recently was operated by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. Bristow, a UK company, won the Air Sea Rescue contract and now run the Air Sea Rescue service for the government.

A large part of the funding comes from hundreds of branches set up in villages and towns across the U.K. & Ireland, Sonning Branch is one of these.

Our branch was started nearly 50 years ago. Corrie Wright and Caroline Rimell were responsible for founding Sonning RNLI and were the first committee members. We have been fundraising ever since.

Our committee is currently made up of 7 committee members who run the fund raising events in Sonning. The committee includes Lynn Woodhouse, Judy Baldwin, Heather Thomas, Jo Garrard, Glen Beard, David McIlroy and myself. I have been chairman now for over 25 years. We have a President - Roger Hicks, who was also a chairman for many years.

We run two fund raising events every year. Our Garden Party is held in a Sonning garden in June and has been running since Corrie and Caroline introduced it. This event is where we have a traditional marquee with modest food and wine. We have a free bar and nibbles for the duration of the event, all funded by one ticket price. This

event raises in the region of £1,500 with every penny going to the RNLI. We are very grateful to all those Sonning residents who host these events in their beautiful gardens. This is a classic English Village Garden Party, where everyone in the community is welcome and it has always proved a great success.

Our second event is the RNLI Music Night, it includes a supper and is held in the Pearson Hall in February. We encourage local people of varying musical ability to perform. Over the years we have seen some very highly talented performers and regularly have Sam Brown's Ukulele Band. Everyone, including performers, buy a ticket and they perform free of charge. The Music Night is now 20 years old and is as popular as ever.



Everyone spends a great deal of time preparing for this event and we are extremely grateful for all their help. We raise £1,500 - £2,000 for the RNLI at the Music Night.

Whenever possible we try to hold a third event in Sonning to raise extra funds. In the past we have auctioned a wooden oar painted in Olympic colours, which we managed to have signed by Redgrave Pincet and other winning Olympic crew members. This raised over £4,000. Another event was a talk by the inventor Trevor Bayliss who invented the wind up radio.



My thanks go out to our committees over the years and all of you in the community, who have supported our fund raising efforts for the RNLI.

>>Bridge Ends

Notes and queries

Roadworks

Electric Trains & Smart Motorways

Network Rail report that Butts Hill Road Bridge should be fully open to traffic in time for Christmas. The published plan is that the new electric trains will run on the Elizabeth line connecting West to East via central London from 2019.

According to Highways England the central reservation works on the M4 between junction 8/9 and 10 are ahead of schedule and their new logistics compound is almost complete. However the narrow lanes and speed restrictions will remain in place for the time being.

Watchout! Thieves About

A Sonning resident returned home mid-afternoon last Tuesday to discover a van parked in her driveway. A big burly man approached her and implied that he was a courier and asked her to let him out. She complied, at which point the van exited at high speed leaving her to discover that they had been in the process of removing a significant amount of york stone paving.

The police have been made aware of this matter but you are urged to keep your eyes open for unusual activity generally and in particular around the Christmas holidays when properties are left unattended.

In this case the van was a very clean, black pick-up with a bull bar and containing two large gentlemen you wouldn't want to approach. Be careful out there!



As a result, we now have secured £50K for what I am calling the Sonning Habitat Enhancement Programme (SHEP), to be spent on a number of wildlife habitat improvements within the parish.

**Sonning Field Pond
after completion of the work
and awaiting some rain**

Thanks to Ali for these photos

Sonning Habitat Enhancement Programme

Fencing off and planting of native shrubs in a grassland buffer strip on the barren pastureland alongside the A4 between Sonning and Charvil.

Planting of native shrubs in a grassland buffer strip in arable fields alongside Broadmoor Lane.

Thinning of unwanted non-native invasive trees and shrubs including Laurel and spindly Sycamores etc in Reading Blue Coat School woods and replacement with native trees and shrubs.

Clearance of choking vegetation in Sonning Field Pond in the RBCS-owned nature reserve field. (Completed)

Sowing of a wildflower seed mix at Sonning Field and Ali's Pond LNR meadows. (Completed)

We have already carried out the pond clearance, which was done when the pond was dry in September to minimise the impact on wildlife – we just need a solid month of rain to fill it up again! In addition, by the time you read this, the wild flower sowing will have also happened. We have just received consent from Historic England for the work at Reading University Farm because there are scheduled archaeological sites in both sites (although the planting areas are nowhere

near any of the historic find locations). The planting here and that at RBCS is expected to happen in the New Year. If anyone thought this kind of process was easy however, you can think again! I have already spent over 60 hours on form-filling and in phone and email conversations to get us to this stage and we have hardly put a spade in the ground yet! It'll be worth it though and I will be reporting in future on the wonderful wildlife that I fully expect to prosper in these areas.

