



Wheathampstead Parish Council Business Plan



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2 REVISION HISTORY

Issue 2 approved by Council in October 2014

Issue 3 approved by Council in June 2015



3 INTRODUCTION

3.1 WHAT IS A PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN?

It is a statement of the Parish Council's vision for the parish, its purpose, values, objectives and key priorities.

We do not intend this to be a traditional 'Parish or Village Plan' that sets out aims and ambitions that are delivered by the community and partners as a whole. Rather it is a document that sets out what Wheathampstead's Parish Council itself can achieve either directly or by working with the relevant delivery body such as the District or County Council.

The aim of the Business Plan is to give Wheathampstead's residents a clear understanding of what the Parish Council does and what it is trying to achieve. It details what the Parish Council intends to focus on over the next five years. The Business Plan is a live document that we will review annually, use it to drive the budgeting process, plan activities for the coming year and enable the Parish Council to monitor its progress against key priorities.

3.2 WHY HAS THE PARISH COUNCIL DECIDED TO PRODUCE A BUSINESS PLAN?

Having an agreed strategy provides a framework for the Parish Council to work within, enabling it to operate in a more consistent and co-ordinated way, and to be proactive rather than reactive in its decision-making. We have based the Plan on our understanding of our community's needs gathered from our day-to-day involvement with residents and other documents such as the Village Plan.

At the same time, the Business Plan will help our local community to have a better understanding of what the Parish Council does and to clarify what it doesn't do; in other words to explain what issues fall under the responsibility of other delivery bodies such as St Albans District Council (SADC) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

The Plan is a statement of intent. However, Council may have to make decisions contrary to our stated commitments if events such as budget constraints, new legislation or changes in our policies make that necessary. Any changes will, however, be reflected in an updated Plan.

3.3 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLAN

To ensure this Business Plan is consistent with our residents' wishes, we will consult on its contents through as many channels as possible including our web site and contacts with the leading village organisations. We will promote its availability through the parish newsletter (The Pump). We will request feedback and modify each version in the light of that feedback.

We will include both SADC and HCC in the consultation to ensure the plan is consistent with district and county goals and aspirations.

Many of the Council's activities outlined in this plan are the direct result of our Village Plan published in 2009. We produced the Village Plan after extensive consultation with residents and local



organisations, and we developed a prioritised list of issues for Council to address. We have resolved many of those issues and have updated the Village Plan on two occasions.

3.4 MONITORING THE PLAN

Evaluating progress against the list of activities that make up our three-year plan (Section 6) will take place every quarter at the full Parish Council meetings (January, April, July, October). At each of those meetings, we will seek to understand the progress made in the strategy, where we need to do further work and if there are any blockages to progress. We will review and update the whole Business Plan annually to keep the document relevant and up-to-date.

The Business Plan will be available on the Parish Council website, with hard copies available to view in the Parish Council Office and Library.

Our Business Plan will continue to be the main way of telling you what we are doing to meet the needs of the community. It is a two-way conversation. Please tell us what you think about it. We welcome your comments. If you require any further information that would help you understand what we are trying to achieve, please let us know. We can also provide additional information on the issues raised in the Plan.

As already mentioned, it is our intention to review the Business Plan regularly, publish progress through our newsletter (The Pump) and web site, and make any changes considered necessary as a result. Please respond to:

Julia Warren, Clerk to the Parish Council

info@wheathampstead-pc.gov.uk

**Wheathampstead Parish Council
The Memorial Hall,
Marford Road,
Wheathampstead AL4 8AY**



4 THE PARISH COUNCIL

4.1 OVERVIEW OF THE COUNCIL

There are three tiers of local government, each with different responsibilities. Wheathampstead Parish Council is the first and local tier, with an important role to play in promoting the village and outlying settlements, representing its interests and supporting the work of different groups in the community.

St Albans District Council (SADC) is the second tier and is responsible for services including housing and environmental services. SADC is also responsible for strategic planning policies for all development (including housing and employment sites) via its Local Plan (See 5.6.3). Finally, Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) responsibilities include highways, relating to both roads and footways (pavements), education, health and social services, public rights of way and libraries.

Residents elect twelve Parish Councillors every four years. The Council elects a Chairman and Vice-Chairman annually at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May. The Council reports to the electorate at the Annual Parish Meeting. Councillors are unpaid. We commit our time to improving Wheathampstead and maintaining it as an attractive and sustainable place in which to live, visit and do business. Elections were last held in May 2015. The next election will be in May 2019 and following that in 2019.

The Parish Council owns property and land in the Parish and gains income from some of it. We hold these assets on behalf of the community and are responsible for maintaining their value.

The full Council meets monthly on the last Thursday in the month in the Memorial Hall. All meetings are open to the public with a period set aside for members of the public to address Council. If you wish to speak, please notify the Clerk in advance.

The Council runs its business through executive and non-executive committees. Working groups comprising councillors and members of the public support the work of committees. We show the current list of committees and working groups in Appendix 1 along with councillor membership.

The Council works to its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, these lay down the rules by which we operate and conduct our business. We have based our Standing Orders on a model prepared by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). We also expect Parish Councillors to adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct also adopted from NALC. Committees and working groups work to terms of reference agreed in Council or in executive committees.

The Council has qualified for and has gained the 'General Power of Competence (GPC)' which gives town and parish councils more 'power to act' – this means that councils have the power to do anything that individuals generally may do, such as trading or setting up a company to provide a service. This brings new opportunities for Wheathampstead Parish Council in terms of providing cost-effective services and facilities to meet the needs of local people.

The Parish has 6408 residents (as at the 2011 census).



4.2 THE COUNCIL STAFF AND MANAGEMENT

The Council currently has only one full-time employee – the Clerk to the Council, Julia Warren. The Clerk administers the Council and must carry out all the functions required by law. She is the Parish Council's "Proper Officer" and only the Clerk can sign official documents on behalf of Council. She is also the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

A part-time Deputy Clerk, Louise Harrison, supports the Clerk.

The Council also employs a part-time caretaker/cleaner for the Memorial Hall.

In addition to these employees, the Council uses contractors for a number of tasks including bookkeeping, grounds and general maintenance.

4.3 CORPORATE VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The Parish Council's vision for Wheathampstead is for it to be a successful, vibrant, attractive place, where people want to live, work and visit.

The Council's Mission Statement:

The Parish Council aims to improve the quality of life for the residents of Wheathampstead by ensuring that it is a desirable, thriving and sustainable place in which to live. We do this in a number of ways:

- We provide a democratic and representative voice for the community.
- Where we provide services, we manage them to a good quality standard, in an efficient, effective and responsive way, at an affordable cost.
- Where others provide services, the Parish Council endeavours to ensure that they deal with them effectively and in accordance with the wishes of the community.
- We work with residents, local authorities and other service providers, businesses and voluntary organisations with the aim of achieving a safe, healthy, prosperous and sustainable community.

To achieve our Mission Statement we need to:

- Serve those who live, study and work in Wheathampstead and those who visit the parish.
- Promote and represent the community's views and aspirations at local, district, county and national level
- Provide high standard, cost-effective services and amenities to help meet the needs and wishes of residents
- Work in partnership (or otherwise) with other statutory and voluntary bodies, businesses and individuals, to ensure an improving standard of services and facilities to meet the needs and expectations of Wheathampstead's residents
- Achieve a greater degree of influence over service delivery and service development bodies to ensure those organisations have the best interests of Wheathampstead residents in mind.
- Seek a fair share of investment in the parish by local, county and regional authorities
- To encourage the devolution of services to the Parish Council where we can deliver them more effectively and efficiently, and ideally with no additional cost to the taxpayer



- Enhance and promote the historic and cultural heritage of Wheathampstead and safeguard its unique identity as a village surrounded by Green Belt
- Encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of the parish and support as best we can the many hundreds of small businesses in the parish
- Strive for a pleasant, clean and safe environment throughout the parish
- Promote and support local voluntary groups and clubs that seek to assist residents and visitors
- Be a professional, competent and caring Parish Council
- Help create a socially inclusive and caring community that embraces all its residents, irrespective of age, culture, income, race, sexual orientation or religion, and which seeks to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding and mutual co-operation.

4.4 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

4.4.1 Income

The residents of Wheathampstead (mainly through the 'precept') fund the Parish Council. The precept is the local tax levied by the Parish Council that St Albans District Council collects on our behalf as part of the Council Tax bill. On average, £72.86 per year (band D property) of Wheathampstead's residents' total Council Tax (i.e. £1.43 per week) contributes to the Parish Council precept. In this document we tell you what you get for your money and you can decide whether or not it represents good value.

The budgeted expenditure for the Council in 2014/15 is £334,166. We get this money from the following:

£212,640 from Wheathampstead council taxpayers
 £57,590 from property rents
 £63,936 from fees and charges

4.4.2 Expenditure

The main items of expenditure are:

- Office Administration, salaries, contractors and on-going expenditure (e.g. PCSO, Christmas Lights, Road Closures, etc.) – 44%
- One-off projects (e.g. car park extension, Memorial Hall upgrade, play areas, artificial turf pitch, village weekend, youth activities, major repairs, etc. where monies are often held in earmarked reserves or sinking funds) – 32%
- General grounds maintenance including Memorial Hall, playing fields, etc. – 24%

We have fully allocated the budget for this year and therefore, unless the Council is able to secure new grant funding, any new activities or facilities that require additional resources would either have to replace an existing activity or we would have to fund them from reserves or via an increase in the precept.

4.4.3 Reserves

Our unallocated reserve is money the Council holds in case there is a major problem that affects the Council's business. This could be any disaster that requires major emergency funding. Currently the Council holds unallocated reserves of £50,000.



The Council also has allocated reserves. We put this money aside for long-term maintenance such as resurfacing the car parks and for future projects such as when we installed the artificial turf pitch and new play area.

4.4.4 Allowances

Councillors are unpaid and receive no allowance for their duties. We review this decision at our Annual Parish Meeting as we could vote ourselves an allowance. However, this has never happened.

4.4.5 Volunteers

The Parish Council could not complete the work we have committed to (Section 5) without the help of volunteers from the community. We cannot stress enough how grateful the community and we are that there is such a group of hard-working individuals who receive not a penny in payment for their efforts.

Volunteers also staff most of our community groups, often with a special interest or special skills in a particular subject such as care for the elderly, conservation of the village buildings, development of the High Street, management of our open spaces, and so on. Despite this dedicated team we still need more – so if you have a particular interest and can afford an hour or two each week, contact the parish office (page 6) and they will put you in touch with the right people.

4.5 PARISH COUNCIL'S MAIN AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Parish Council has the following responsibilities:

- The management, maintenance and development of over 150 acres of open space including the Marford Playing Fields, the Meads, Devil's Dyke, Rectory Meadow, Melissa Field, Gustard Wood, Marshall's Heath, Bower Heath, Folly Fields, Crinkle-Crankle Garden, the portion of Nomansland Common within the parish (maintained by SADC) and 198 allotments. We own minor parcels of land such as the small triangles at the bottom of Bury Green and opposite Mead Hall in East Lane. We also own structures and buildings such as The Forge, Library, Tennis Club, the nursery in East Lane and sections of the two Crinkle-Crankle walls.
- The management and maintenance of sports facilities including 12 football pitches of various sizes (9 on the Butterfield playing field, 2 on the Marford playing field and one at Folly field) and an artificial turf pitch
- Ownership and maintenance of tennis facilities including four courts and the clubhouse
- The management of 5 children's play areas (Folly Fields, Maltings Drive, Marford Playing Field, Marshall's Heath, Rectory Meadow)
- The part funding (jointly with Herts County Council) and maintenance of bus shelters
- The provision of Christmas lighting
- The provision and management of banner display sites across the parish.
- The provision of allotments
- The provision of floral displays
- the funding and delivery of parish events (and support and facilitation of groups providing parish events) including Village Weekend and Christmas Lights-Up
- The provision of small community grants
- Submitting comments on all planning applications and change of use applications in the parish as a statutory consultee of the local planning authority (SADC)
- The provision of litter and dog fouling bins and their emptying
- Maintaining and renting the Memorial Hall facilities



- The Diamond Jubilee riverside garden (3 year lease)

The Council also represents the parish on a number of external organisations, including:

- The Nomansland Joint Management Committee
- The St Albans and District Association of Local Councils
- The James Marshall Trust
- Wheathampstead Business Group (WEB)
- Scouts

It is difficult to assess the amount of time spent on each activity, however the Maintenance Committee has the largest budget and maintenance of our land and other assets probably consumes the greatest resources. These include meetings with the Clerk and councillors, and the use of contractors and volunteers. We also spend a lot of time on planning issues and dealing with general queries from members of the public often resulting in liaising with other tiers of local government. As with all public bodies, there is a lot of paperwork, consultations and finance we have to take care of, and the need to keep residents informed of decisions and proposals that may affect them. We also experience peaks of activity when we are running specific projects such as the Heritage Trail and installing an Artificial Turf Pitch.

4.6 OTHER ORGANISATIONS WITH SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITIES

St Albans District Council (SADC) is responsible for environmental services (refuse and recycling), the public convenience in the village centre, traffic wardens and the provision of housing services (including Housing Associations). SADC also is the local planning authority with responsibility for all planning approval including in our conservation area. Residents can get extensive information on their property, planning, waste management, council tax, crimes in their area, etc. from the district council's web site at www.stalbans.gov.uk and selecting "Where you live" on the home page.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) is responsible for all highways issues including street furniture (lighting, pavements, bollards, etc.), coordinating and funding some bus routes, health and social care, library services and schools. Residents report all maintenance issues such as potholes, streetlights, etc. to HCC via their web site at www.hertsdirect.org/services/transtreets/highways.

Hertfordshire Police (www.herts.police.uk) is responsible for addressing crime and anti-social behaviour in Wheathampstead and the Parish Council funds in part our Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) and provides space for the rural police office in the Memorial Hall.

The Parish Council at the time of writing part-funds the provision of a Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) outreach service in the Memorial Hall.

Retained staff man the village fire station. That is, volunteers given an allowance to be on call should an emergency happen.

Where others provide services, the Parish Council endeavours to ensure they deliver them effectively and in accordance with the wishes of the community.



4.7 PARISH COUNCIL GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNICATIONS

4.7.1 Good Governance Objectives

Wheathampstead Parish Council aims to be a professional, competent and caring Parish Council, to be open and accountable in all it does and to ensure the sound financial management of Parish Council resources.

The Parish Council aims to:

- Be well-informed about the needs and opinions of the parish's residents and businesses by consulting them on major issues
- Improve services to the public by encouraging members and staff to develop their skills by undertaking appropriate training
- Ensure we give Councillors the opportunity to keep abreast of new opportunities and policy
- Be a good and fair employer by providing fulfilling work opportunities and conditions for its staff
- Continuously promote public participation in all Parish Council meetings and initiatives
- Deal with enquiries and fault reports from members of the public speedily and efficiently
- Be an effective custodian of the Council's property and documents

The Parish Council recognises the role of good communication in building positive relationships with the public and with organisations that provide services in the parish. We will continue to seek to improve established channels of communication and find new ones.

4.7.2 Governance Activities:

To achieve the objectives detailed above, the Council will:

- Maintain a Parish Council website providing information about the Council and signposting people to other service providers.
- Post regular news of Council initiatives on the website.
- Review and improve other methods of distribution for Council news including the quarterly newsletter (The Pump) and features supported by the website
- Provide an opportunity at each Parish Council meeting for public speaking and comments
- Make updated versions of the Parish Council Business Plan available on the Council website
- Share a report covering Council activities during the previous twelve months at the Annual Parish Meeting
- Agree and carry out a Governance Review with any recommendations for changes at the next Annual Parish Meeting in May
- Conduct a review of training needs of both Councillors and staff following any Governance changes and then review annually
- Invite representatives of outside agencies to address the Council on key matters of interest (to Parish Council Meetings but also to round table discussions with the Council)
- Set up working groups with other statutory and voluntary bodies, businesses, residents and other stakeholders as appropriate, in order to facilitate coordinated effort
- Appoint representatives to appropriate external agencies and committees
- Attend relevant conferences and meetings
- Be involved with appropriate village organisations



5 COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND OUR COMMITMENTS

In this section, we explain what we do and where our responsibilities lie. We also tell you what we are ready to commit to on a continuing basis. In Section 6 we explain what we hope to do in the future.

5.1 LEISURE AND COMMUNITY

The Parish Council is responsible for the delivery of a number of community services and amenities:

5.1.1 The Memorial Hall

We run the Memorial Hall as an amenity for the whole village. We want to keep charges at a low rate so that all voluntary village groups feel they can afford to make use of it. At the same time, we are conscious that we need to collect sufficient revenue to maintain the hall to a reasonable standard and attract some commercial bookings. Expectations on facilities are much higher than when the then council built the Hall in the 1960s and the hall is showing its age. We are therefore putting together a plan for a major upgrade in the coming years – see 6.2.2

Our commitment: We will endeavour to keep charges for the community's use of the hall as low as practical while ensuring we have sufficient funds to maintain it at a reasonable standard.

Our commitment: We will strive to upgrade the hall to modern standards as funds allow (see 6.2.2).

5.1.2 Allotments

The Parish Council owns two allotment sites and rents two more, one from Herts County Council and one from St Albans Diocese. There are 198, allotments in total made up of 79 x 5 pole, 8 x 2½ pole and 111 x 10 pole plots. The allotments are located at The Folly (Folly), Gustard Wood (Baxendale) and Marford Road (Glebe and Hitchens). The non-executive Allotments Committee looks after the day-to-day operation of the plots and there are representatives from each allotment site on the committee. The allotments use a significant amount of our administration resources and, in recognition of this, we recently increased the fees for allotments to bring them to a more realistic level and in line with other parishes.

Our commitment: We will continue to run our allotments at a fair rent and will resist any external pressure to give up the land to building.

5.1.3 Grazing and Small Holding

There are three grazing plots in the Parish owned and run by the council and one smallholding. We rent these out on an annual licence. Hertfordshire has a strong horse owning community and there is pressure on grazing sites. The Council is conscious that we may not have a fair balance between making grazing generally available to residents and having long-term licensees.

Our commitment: We will strive to ensure that our grazing fees are fair in terms of the market rate.

Our commitment: We will endeavour to have a licensing policy that is fair but allows for some turnover of licensees.



5.1.4 Marford Playing Fields

A previous parish council placed our main playing field off the Marford Road in trust during the 1950s to secure it for the village as an open space for sport and recreation. The playing fields currently have two full-sized football pitches with a pavilion, a smaller artificial turf pitch for all weather sport. There is also a tennis clubhouse with three adult and one junior court. Although the Parish Council owns the clubhouse and courts, we lease them to Wheathampstead Lawn Tennis Club. One court is reserved for members of the public and can be booked through the parish offices.

The playing field also has a children's play area. Following a public consultation, we recently upgraded this to include modern play equipment for 8 to 12 year olds. Equipment now covers all age ranges from toddler to teenager.

The Council charges commercial companies such as fitness groups for the use of the playing fields.

Our commitment: We will keep the playing fields open at all times for public access.

Our commitment: We will maintain the playing fields for the whole community keeping the grass cut short for games and recreation.

Our commitment: We will maintain the two football pitches by mowing, major line marking and the provision of goals, nets and corner flags.

5.1.5 Football Pitches and Pavilions

In addition to the Marford Playing Fields, we also have football pitches at Folly Field and Butterfield Playing Fields (off Old School Drive). *Wheathampstead Wanderers* and *Wheathampstead 89* teams mainly use the grassed pitches. Dry rot forced the Council to abandon the pavilion at Folly Field but we hope to replace it after we build the replacement Butterfield Playing Field pavilion (See 6.2.4).

The pavilion on the Marford Playing Field is in reasonable condition though requires on-going maintenance.

Our commitment: We will continue to provide football pitches with changing facilities. However, we have an immediate problem as those available on Folly Field and Butterfield Playing Fields are inadequate. We will work to put this right.

5.1.6 All Weather Turf Pitch

Our Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) installed in 2014 is the result of several years of fund raising and extensive consultation with residents. The requirement came from our Village Plan, which identified the lack of all-weather facilities in the village and the winter training needs of the younger children at our successful youth football club, Wheathampstead Wanderers FC. The Wanderers have over 400 players and field teams of all ages up to young adults.

Our commitment: We will keep the ATP in good working order and make it available to support a wide range of football users and other sports as appropriate. We will also allow for some periods of open access and free use of the pitch when we have not hired it out, provided users respect the conditions of use.



Our commitment: We will endeavour to keep ATP charges low for Wheathampstead residents but need to raise sufficient revenue to maintain the surface and replace it at the end of its natural life. We have created a “sinking fund” for this purpose and will report on its value at our annual parish meeting.

Our commitment: We will make it a condition on the use of all of our sports facilities that users are respectful of local residents and users of the playing field, and that they adhere to the conditions of use.

5.1.7 Tennis Courts

The Parish Council owns the tennis club building and courts on the Marford Playing Fields. The Wheathampstead Lawn Tennis Club (WLTC) operates the club on a long lease from the council although one of the three courts is specifically reserved for the use of residents who are non-members.

Our commitment: The Parish Council has obligations under the terms of the lease including to maintain the courts in a reasonable state and we will continue to meet these commitments.

Our commitment: We will ensure the public court is available at all times as agreed with the WLTC.

5.1.8 Children’s Play Areas

The Parish Council owns five children’s play areas and these are located at:

- Folly Fields
- Maltings Drive
- Marford Playing Field
- Marshall’s Heath
- Rectory Meadow

There is an additional play area in the Butterfield Playing Field but the Parish Council has so far refused to accept this from Persimmon Homes, the builder of the Old School Drive Estate. The builder’s installation was inadequate and the play area is subject to flooding. There are also issues relating to the state of the car park and disconnection of services to the pavilion. We are in on-going discussions with Hertfordshire County Council who are the responsible authority.

Our commitment: We will continue to provide play areas for children of all ages keeping them well maintained and safe. Our staff or contractors and Register of Play Inspectors International will inspect them regularly.

Our commitment: We will continue to push HCC and Persimmon Homes to complete the Butterfield play area project satisfactorily.

5.1.9 Activities for Young People

We recognise that modern life in a village for young people can be difficult with limited facilities available and that the provision of youth sport and leisure activities is an effective means of combatting anti-social behaviour and building a stronger and better community. Having relatively poor public transport makes the larger facilities in St Albans and Harpenden relatively difficult to access. In addition to our support for sports facilities, we have therefore agreed to fund and/or support several other activities for young people in the village. These include:



- A weekly youth club run by Youth Connexions
- Top Hat Stage School
- Artskool on a Saturday morning
- Provision of a youth shelter
- Support for SADC's Play in the Park events
- Other events for young people that are organised on our premises or with our support from time to time

Our commitment: The council will continue to fund and support organisations and events for younger members of the community and encourage their participation in village life.

5.1.10 Open Spaces and the River

The parish is lucky to have so much open space available to it. In particular, those that live in the centre of the village have easy access to the Meads and Marford Playing Fields that lying within a few minutes' walk of the High Street. The Meads has the River Lea flowing through it and in the summer months is a great place to have a picnic and let the children play in the river.

For those who like quieter surrounds there is Bower Heath, Marshall's Heath, Gustard Wood, Melissa Field, Folly Field, Nomansland Common and Devil's Dyke, our English Heritage Scheduled Monument.

The open spaces in the parish some of which are used for football and children's play grounds at:

- Devil's Dyke ** *
- Melissa Field
- Bower Heath*
- Gustard Wood*
- Marshalls Heath* ***
- The Meads (Meads Dell*)
- The Rectory Meadow (including the Rectory Copse)
- Butterfield Nature Reserve *** (Wheathampstead Nature Reserve)
- Butterfield Playing Fields
- Nomansland ****
- Folly Fields
- Old Station Yard
- Station Platform
- Crinkle-Crankle Garden
- The Diamond Jubilee Garden (3 year lease)
- The Bury Green Triangle

* County Wildlife Site

** Scheduled Ancient Monument

*** Local Nature Reserve

**** Owned in part by Wheathampstead Parish Council and The Althorp Estate and managed by a joint management committee comprising representatives from Wheathampstead and Sandridge Parish Councils and St Albans District Council.



Our commitment: The Parish Council will maintain for each of our open spaces a current management plan balancing public access, visual appeal and the needs of wildlife promoting biodiversity.

Our commitment: We will work with key organisations to help with our management plans to maintain these sites as best we can given the resources available to us. These organisations include the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, the Countryside Management Service and the Environment Agency.

Our commitment: We will encourage teams of volunteers to help maintain the sites within the scope of the management plans and we will seek grants to help with that effort.

Our commitment: Our open spaces will remain open to all members of the community at all times regardless of any events that may take place on the land. We would advise members of the public to keep clear of the area designated for archery on Folly Field, football pitches and for model aircraft on Nomansland when clubs are using the allotted space.

5.1.11 Village Weekend

Each year the Parish Council organises and sponsors a community weekend. In recent years this has included a talent show for all comers on the Saturday afternoon, a public picnic on the Meads with music on the Saturday evening and a village fair on the Sunday.

Our commitment: We will continue to organise the talent show on Saturday for all comers.

Our commitment: The picnic event on Saturday has become extremely popular with several knock-on consequences. For now we will continue to organise an evening event on the Saturday but may have to change the format for safety reasons.

Our commitment: We will continue to organise and fund (with the help of residents and village groups) the Sunday fair known as Village Day

5.1.12 Remembrance Day

Councillors participate in the Remembrance Day service in early November and the Chairman leads the ceremony by laying a wreath on behalf of the Council. We also have a duty to maintain the war memorial.

Our commitment: We will continue to participate in the Remembrance Day services in the parish and support St Helen's Church in the ongoing maintenance of the war memorial in the High Street.

5.1.13 Christmas Lights-Up

During November the Council pays for the installation of street lights to celebrate Christmas. On the last Thursday in November in partnership with WEB, the local business group, we organise a "lights up" event where we close the High Street to traffic and have a winter fair.

Our commitment: We will continue to pay for and organise Christmas lights and arrange a "Lights-Up" event in November.



5.1.14 Floral Displays

Each year we pay and arrange for floral displays to be installed in the centre of the village. A commercial company maintains and waters these regularly.

Our commitment: We will continue to install floral displays during the summer.

5.1.15 Signage



In recent years we have installed new village signs with the help of external grants from St Albans District Council. We have adopted branding for the parish and endeavoured to keep our signage to a high standard. Our branding consists of the wheat sheaf with gold lettering on a

green background. The technical specification is available from the parish office.

Our commitment: We will endeavour to maintain a high standard for our signage as funds permit and as appropriate to their use. Unfortunately, we can only influence road signage, as the County Council is responsible for installation of signs prepared to a national standard.

5.1.16 Grants

We have been very successful in recent years obtaining grants for the benefit of the village. Recent grants include money for signage, the Heritage Trail, tree work in Devil's Dyke, play areas and the artificial turf pitch. The power company EDF also made a generous grant available to us for village projects. In partnership with volunteer groups, we have helped to raise funds from residents, businesses and local councils for projects such as the railway platform restoration, Diamond Jubilee garden and red telephone box.

Our commitment: We will continue to seek grants and match funding as projects arise.



5.2 HERITAGE

Wheathampstead is an historic village with a timeline stretching back at least 6,000 years to the late Stone Age (Neolithic). We have well over 100 grade listed buildings with two Grade I and two Grade II* - these are buildings that are highly significant and should be preserved at all costs. We have 117 Grade II buildings or structures in the parish and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Devil's Dyke). Less than 5% of Grade Listed buildings in England are Grade I.

As part of our review of building plans submitted to St Albans District Council, we pay particular attention to plans associated with our heritage. We want to preserve these assets for the village and whenever possible have them accessible.

Our commitment: We will oppose plans to screen or have a change of use for our special buildings if the result is that they are no longer accessible or visible to the public.

The Parish Council has strongly supported the group of volunteers from the Wheathampstead Business Group, the Wheathampstead and District Preservation Society and Councillors who created the Heritage Trail. This trail, initially conceived to promote the High Street through tourism, has proved to be very popular with both residents and visitors. The maintenance of the trail has now passed to the Council.

Our commitment: We will maintain and develop the website associated with the Trail:
www.wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk.

Our commitment: We will encourage the History Society to continue the work started by the Heritage Trail project team.

The Parish Council has supported and partly funded the restoration of the remains of our disused railway station. The result is an outdoor museum accessible to all and drawing visitors to the village.

Our commitment: We will continue to maintain the site as a public attraction and outdoor museum.

5.3 PARISH APPEARANCE, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

5.3.1 Litter and Bin Emptying

The Council installs and pays a contractor to empty our litterbins. This costs us in the region of £3,700 per annum. However, if it were not for the efforts of our volunteers in the form of the Litterblitz team and the open spaces rangers, the cost would be a lot higher and possibly unaffordable. The Litterblitz team gather periodically and attack litter black spots. They also form an important part of clearing up after public events such as Village Weekend.

Our commitment: We will continue to provide and empty our litterbins, and fully support our Litterblitz volunteers.



5.3.2 Dog Fouling

Dog fouling has increased in recent years. The Council has 21 dog waste bins installed and it costs us £2,300 per year to have them emptied. Despite this as well as providing plastic bags for dog owners to use, unthinking owners continue to allow their pets to foul areas where children play or hang plastic bags on branches in the hope that someone else will take it to the bin. Over the course of time we, like most parish councils, probably receive more complaints about inconsiderate dog owners than on any other issue.

Our commitment: We will continue to provide dog waste bins and plastic bags for residents to use. We will continue to empty those bins regularly.

Our commitment: We will work with our open spaces rangers to monitor dog walkers and try to find ways in which we can minimise the impact of thoughtless dog owners.

5.3.3 Planning

As part of the statutory planning process, SADC has to consult the Parish Council on planning applications. Our Planning Committee scrutinises hundreds of applications each year providing feedback to the District Council. We give a local view of any proposed building work and our feedback can be broad ranging. Interested residents frequently ask us to support their view of a proposed development and developers will often seek our input before they submit their application.

Your council believes that we need to maintain Wheathampstead as a village and not become part of a greater urban area linked with Harpenden, St Albans or surrounding villages. We recognise the need to develop housing but wish to avoid over development and building in the Green Belt. We believe that if the village grows too much, too quickly we will lose the sense of community that we have developed in recent years.

Our commitment: We will defend the Green Belt where we believe its loss will negatively influence our parish.

Our commitment: We will resist at all costs attempts to coalesce our communities both within and outside of the parish.

Our commitment: We will resist overdevelopment of sites in the parish.

5.3.4 Working with the Police

The Parish Council part funds a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) and works closely with her and our assigned police officer. Unfortunately, recent police cuts have seriously affected their ability to patrol our streets and they are frequently called away to scenes of crime elsewhere in their policing district.

However, Wheathampstead continues to have a relatively low crime level but we do occasionally have peaks such as anti-social behaviour or burglary. We have regular meetings with the police. These take two forms. We have a regular Community Safety Meeting organised by us and includes the Police, Fire Service, Community Group, Churches Together, Neighbourhood Watch and other



village groups. At that meeting we discuss matters affecting public safety such as village events, crime levels, speeding and so on.

The second meeting is a wider police priority-setting forum comprised of councillors from across the police district. There we establish priorities for policing in the area.

Our commitment: We will continue to work with the police to keep crime low in the parish.

Our commitment: We will continue to part fund a PCSO for our community.

5.3.5 SADC Safety Advisory Group

When organising village events we consult with the St Albans District Council's Safety Advisory Group (SAG). The SAG comprises professionals associated with public safety such as the police, fire service and safety officers. Their role is to advise us on organising successful events that minimise risks to our residents and visitors. Advice can cover a wide range of activities from the number of marshals at an event to managing an alcohol and music licence, and crowd management.

Our commitment: We will work with the SAG to ensure our events are as safe as practicable, minimising risks to members of the public.

5.3.6 Flooding

The village centre has a history of flooding because the Mill constricts the flow. The Parish Council has been working with the Environment Agency to reduce this risk and they have recently made changes to the flow under the Mill itself. These works should reduce the chance of a major flood in the area in any given year from 1 in 5 to 1 in 20.

Climate change, however, has increase the chance of localised flooding on roads. Existing drainage systems struggle to cope and there are black spots across the parish such as The Forge in Meads Lane, Lamer Lane, Marshalls Heath Lane and The Slype.

Our commitment: We will continue to press Herts County Council Highways department to resolve these and other localised areas of flooding through improved maintenance or road improvements.

5.4 TRANSPORT, ACCESS AND HIGHWAYS

Transport and Highways issues are not part of the Parish Council's area of responsibility. However, they are extremely important to our residents so we spend a lot of time working on your behalf bringing our influence to bear on the relevant authorities – principally HCC.

Our public transport system is limited to bus services. Since deregulation neither the District nor County Councils has control of these. Bus companies are free to choose where and when services run, though Herts County Council sponsors 119 uncommercial routes for the benefit of the community (2014) and thus has influence on the service. However, as of October 2014 and because of budget constraints, they are withdrawing funding for some late evening and Sunday services.



Your Parish Council is very much aware that this hits our rural community. It primarily affects the ability of younger and older members of the community to participate in activities outside of the village such as the sports and recreational facilities in St Albans. The district council has paid for these with our Council Tax and developer contributions towards community facilities arising from major building projects in our village but people who rely on public transport are denied their use.

Our commitment: As a rural community, the Parish Council wishes to see improved bus services in the area. We will work to improve local sports facilities putting pressure on our District and County Councils to provide funding and improve transport to existing facilities.

Wheathampstead suffers from being a north-south and east-west intersection. We also suffer from the over use of the Lower Luton Road. We have long campaigned to have the Lorry Ban enforced and for improvements to be made to the Lower Luton Road, and we are very concerned that the planned development of Luton Airport will exacerbate the problem.

Our commitment: We will continue to lobby Herts Highways to improve traffic flow and safety along the Lower Luton Road.

Our commitment: We will also continue to try to find ways to reduce the volume and speed of traffic through the village.

5.4.1 Parking

Our free car park in the centre of the village is very popular although on-street parking in an on-going problem in the village centre.

Our commitment: The East Lane car park will remain free of charge to users.

Our commitment: We will continue to work with the police, HCC for highways management and SADC for traffic wardens in an effort to reduce congestion in the High Street. We will also continue to work with shop owners and managers to minimise the impact of delivery lorries and to find alternative methods of delivery.

Many parking issues arise because new properties have insufficient parking associated with them. This is not necessarily the fault of the planners but is a result of government legislation. We have a good working relationship with St Albans District Council and have liaised with them on a number of plans to get improved access and parking for particular developments.

Our commitment: We will try to ensure that plans to build new properties have sufficient parking.

5.4.2 Gritting

The Parish Council has a gritting policy for its properties. We have a grit spreader and a stock of salt. We may make these available for use by residents and shopkeepers to grit public areas such as pavements but we do not have the resources to do these ourselves.

Herts Highways are responsible for gritting some roads and paths and you can find gritting routes on their website.



Our commitment: Because of Wheathampstead’s location in a valley, a number of our roads and pavements are at risk in ice and snow. We will work with our colleagues at District and County to ensure salt bins are filled and gritting takes place at key locations.

5.4.3 Fault Reporting

Residents should report highways faults directly on the HCC website:

www.hertsdirect.org/faultreporting. Examples include potholes, signage and faulty streetlights, dog fouling, litter and street cleaning.

Our commitment: Where residents have extreme difficulty reporting faults or getting faults acted upon, we will work act on their behalf and raise the issue with our contacts at the County Council.

5.4.4 Scheduling Repairs

Our High Street is fragile and lengthy road closures can seriously affect the viability of some High Street businesses. Lengthy road closures also affect public transport that many residents rely on.

Our commitment: We will continue to take a pro-active role in keeping businesses informed of planned road works and, if necessary, coordinate meetings between stakeholders.

Our commitment: We will do our best to ensure that alternative public transport arrangement are well publicised during closures.

5.5 PARISH ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT

Wheathampstead Parish Council wishes to encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of the parish to ensure its future prosperity and sustainability by:

1. The Parish Council wishes Wheathampstead to be a vibrant and viable location for Commercial businesses therefore we will carefully assess the overall impacts of Change of Use planning applications.
2. Working closely with the Wheathampstead Business Group (WEB)
3. Allowing local businesses to advertise in the Pump quarterly magazine and provide marketing opportunities at village events run by the parish council. WEB will handle the advertising and marketing.
4. Where practical, and in accordance with our Standing Orders, try to source services from local business.
5. Supporting the principle of a ‘Buy Local’ campaign
6. When WEB is providing a village or marketing event for several companies at one time, then WEB will receive the standard community discount for hiring facilities. Individual businesses organising marketing events will pay the commercial rate.
7. Represent village businesses when dealing with other tiers of local government. In particular when events such as road closures directly affect traders or there are opportunities for traders by joining forces with District or County initiatives

Our commitment: Wheathampstead Parish Council is committed to having a thriving High Street and vibrant business community for the benefit of all residents. We will seek to promote the parish



as a place to do business and encourage tourism and local visitors whenever we have the opportunity.

5.6 HOUSING, HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Hertfordshire County Council is responsible for the provision of Health and Education services while St Albans District Council is responsible for Housing. As such, your Parish Council can only lobby on these issues. In recent times the District Council has also taken on a role associated with Health and wellbeing.

5.6.1 Education

The population in the District is growing and this is putting pressure on our education system at both primary and secondary level. Although previous Parish Councils resisted the closure of Wheathampstead's secondary school, the result has been that Wheathampstead has suffered since closure with pupils failing to find school places even after two appeals. The County Council is now hunting around trying to find a site in the Green Belt to accommodate the increase in demand for secondary school places. The current Parish Council finds the situation insupportable.

Our commitment: We will continue to support parents who fail to find a place for their child in a secondary school of choice.

Our commitment: We will continue to work with our County representatives to find a solution to our secondary school problem.

Our commitment: We will support building a new secondary school in the district but it must solve Wheathampstead's problem and be in a suitable location.

Our commitment: We will work with HCC to ensure there are sufficient primary school places for our residents' children.

5.6.2 Housing

Your council recognises the need for new housing in the local area but are concerned that there is extreme pressure from developers to build large, high value properties with few affordable homes for local residents and first time buyers.

Our commitment: We will try to influence planning applications for medium and large developments so that the District Council places sufficient emphasis on affordable homes.

Our commitment: We will support limited housing development in the parish when it does not fundamentally alter the nature of our community – that is, a large village in the Green Belt. See also

5.3.3

5.3.3.

Our commitment: We will demand that provision is made for additional infrastructure if development is approved.



In the 1960s, the District Council built some housing in the village that might now be considered substandard.

Our commitment: We will try at every opportunity to get substandard council-owned properties enhanced or replaced.

5.6.3 The Strategic and Detailed Local Plan

The Detailed Local Plan is made up of a suite of development management policies, site allocations and related maps. It supports the Strategic Local Plan which sets out the long-term planning and development framework for St Albans District. The two documents together will form the Local Plan and are developed by St Albans District Council in consultation with stakeholders.

These documents are crucial as they determine development strategy for up to 20 years and are used when considering development of housing, infrastructure, schools, etc. They are used in the planning process as evidence of need or suitability for individual planning applications. They can be used to preserve business areas, Green Belt and open spaces, and are of particular importance to villages such as Wheathampstead.

The aim of the District Council is to achieve adoption of the Strategic Local Plan in November 2016 with the Detailed Local Plan following soon after in February 2017.

Our commitment: At every opportunity your parish council will try to influence the Local Plan for the benefit of our residents.

5.6.4 Neighbourhood Plans

As part of the government's push towards increased local power (Localism Act), local communities can create a Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood planning is a new way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work.

As a community, we are able to choose where we want developers to build new homes, shops and offices. We can have our say on what those new buildings should look like and the infrastructure required. We can also grant planning permission for the new buildings we want to see go ahead.

Of course, there is a down side. Our Neighbourhood Plan has to conform to the Local Plan (5.6.3) and we cannot use it simply to prevent new building. The District Council has to approve the plan and local residents have to pass it in a local referendum. This makes the production of a Neighbourhood Plan complex and expensive, and dependent upon the Local Plan being in place.

Our commitment: We will continue to monitor the development of the Local Plan with a view to creating a Neighbourhood Plan when the District Council's strategy is clearer. We are also considering combining a Parish Plan (we decided to call it a Parish Plan and not a Village Plan to make it clear that it includes outlying communities within Wheathampstead) with a Neighbourhood Plan, as there is a lot of overlap in the two documents.

5.6.5 Health and Wellbeing

The Parish Council has no specific responsibility for health and wellbeing. However, we do contribute through the provision of sports and leisure facilities, and by supporting groups such as the



Wheathampstead Community Group. We also support Wheathampstead's Cricket, Lawn Tennis and Football Clubs, and sports events (such as the Wheathampstead 2K and 10K runs). We allow for the use of our facilities by commercial companies (such as Regiment Fitness).

Our commitment: We will continue to support activities that promote health and wellbeing of our residents.

6 THREE YEAR PLAN

Our three year plan is a statement of what we would like to see develop in the parish in the short to medium term. It is important that we set our residents expectations correctly. We cannot guarantee that these projects will all be completed within the timeframe as we are dependent on many factors including getting planning permission, budgets, Environment Agency approval, manpower and legal constraints. As explained earlier, we are also heavily dependent on volunteers.

A number of the projects listed below are a direct result of facilities requested in the Village Plan of 2009.

6.1 SHORT-TERM PROJECTS (1 YEAR)

Short-term projects are those we hope to finance in next year's budget and then deliver within twelve months.

6.1.1 Provide improved access to the Meads for the disabled

Access to the Meads for disabled drivers or those who find it hard to walk long distances is difficult. The nearest car park is in East Lane, which is a quarter of a mile walk from the Meads Bridge. The Parish Council will try to find a better way for disabled drivers to access the Meads.

6.1.2 Build a boule court

Although the Council spends quite significant resources on the young, we have delivered less for the benefit of the older residents. We intend, therefore, to create a boule court in a central location yet to be determined. This will provide an opportunity for matches between pubs and clubs and teams from local villages.

6.1.3 Develop the Tithe Barn Yard and Crinkle Crankle Garden

The newly acquired land around the Old Rectory gives us an opportunity to not only enhance this part of the centre of the village but also provide additional facilities for residents. The Crinkle-Crankle Garden may be a suitable location for a boule court. The Tithe Barn Yard has a disused garage that may be a good location for a village heritage centre.

In the first instance, however, we need to clear the yard to make it less of an eyesore and enhance the garden before finalising longer-term plans for the sites.



6.1.4 Redevelop the Bury Green triangle

The WDPS (Wheathampstead and District Preservation Society) in partnership with us plans to redevelop the small triangle of land at the bottom of Bury Green into a small village centre garden. We will support and help fund this project.

6.1.5 Replace our nine council notice boards

Our nine Council notice boards are now old and in need of replacement. We will budget for and fund new boards in a modern style that complement our brand.

6.1.6 Place noticeboards on our open spaces

We will identify Council owned land by installing noticeboards. These will provide limited information on the site and will have space so that any activity planned for the site such as tree work or general maintenance can be publicised in advance.

6.2 MEDIUM-TERM PROJECTS (2 TO 3 YEARS)

6.2.1 Create a Heritage Centre

Residents have told us that Wheathampstead could benefit from a heritage centre or small museum, similar to that in Redbourn. We will actively plan and place money aside for this project

6.2.2 Redesign and modernise the Memorial Hall

This is a major task and after consultation with our users we have commissioned an architect to help with the design. Ideally we would like to demolish the current hall and start again however we do not have the space and we would struggle with loss of revenue. Our current plan is to take a phased approach to a major refurbishment and implement changes as funds allow.

Some of the goals for the new facility include: increased space for hirers, ability to conduct civil weddings (this requires a carpeted room and we are considering a separate council chamber to act as both), increased storage, improved access and a separate room for a youth club.

We will actively seek outside funding for the work.

6.2.3 Develop the railway sidings into a community space

The railway sidings site (opposite the railway platform and across Station Road) is a pleasant green entrance to the village centre. The site has a wide range of different types of tree and a flat open area. It is also relatively shielded from the road as it is low-lying.

We are open to residents' suggestions.

6.2.4 Build a new pavilion at the Butterfield Playing Fields

Wheathampstead Wanderers FC is very successful and regularly features at county awards. The club now provides football opportunities for more than 400 players aged 5 to 18. They base most of their teams at Butterfield Road playing fields. Since the old school buildings were developed for housing in 2008, there has been no provision for changing, shelter or permanent sanitation for the children



and 5,000 visitors, mostly young families, who attend every year. The Butterfield Road playing fields are also used for an annual running event that is increasing in popularity.

We would like to build a new community pavilion that could act as a clubhouse at weekends and that we could hire out during the week to other village groups; examples include short mat bowls and dance classes. We plan to get funding from, amongst others, the Football Foundation.

6.2.5 Replace the dilapidated changing facility at Folly Fields

Work with Wheathampstead Wanderers and the Archery Club to provide improved facilities for both football and archery at Folly Fields.

6.2.6 Improve tennis facilities

We will work with WLTC to source funding from external bodies to maintain the court's playing surface and improve the tennis facilities when the time is right. Currently the courts are in reasonable condition but at some point in the future they will need refurbishing.

6.2.7 Provide a second river crossing on the Meads

Residents have asked us through the Village Plan to create a second river crossing in the Meads. This would enable less mobile members of the community to have a circular walking route on the flat ground in and around the Meads and take advantage of the river.



7 PLAN APPROVAL

Your Parish Council has adopted this Business Plan in June 2015:

 <p>Annie Brewster Honorary Vice Chairman</p> 	 <p>Gill Clark</p> 
 <p>Adrian Dante</p> 	 <p>David Davies</p> 
 <p>Elias Habib</p> 	 <p>Linda Halford</p> 
 <p>Steve Haynes</p> 	 <p>David Johnston Chairman</p> 
 <p>Tessa Reason</p> 	 <p>Judy Shardlow</p> 
 <p>Paul Wilby</p> 	 <p>Peter Woodhams</p> 

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk implement the plan on Council's behalf

 <p>Julia Warren Clerk</p> 	 <p>Louise Harrison Deputy Clerk</p> 
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Appendix 1 – Councillor Membership of Committees and Working Parties, 2014-15

ch = Chairman, vc = Vice-Chairman, x = member

	Committees						Working Groups										
	Council	Allotments	Community Involvement	Finance	Maintenance	Personnel	Planning	Bury Green Triangle inc District in Bloom	Crinkle Crankle Garden	East Lane car park	Facilities Management	Memorial Hall Management	Memorial Hall Refurbishment	Pump	Station Platform	Village Weekend	Parish Plan
Iain Begg			x	ch													
Annie Brewster	vc		vc	x	x												
Gill Clark		x	x	x	x		ch	x			x	x	x	x			
Niel Clements			x	x	x		x		x				x				x
David Davies			x	x		x	x		x								
Linda Halford			ch	x	x	x	x	x		x				x		x	x
Steve Haynes		ch	x	x	x				x	x	x					x	
David Johnston	ch		x	vc	x	x			x	x	x		x	x			x
Tessa Reason			x	x	ch	x		x	x	x		x				x	
Judy Shardlow		vc	x	x	x		vc	x			x						x
Paul Wilby			x	x			x										x
Peter Woodhams		x	x	x	vc				x		x		x		x	x	x
		4	12	12	9	4	6	4	3	5	7	3	3	4	1	4	6



Appendix 2 - Map of the Parish

