

September/
October 2022
Edition 189



USEFUL NUMBERS

Braintree District Council	01376 552525
Colchester Hospital	01206 744491
Doctors Car Service	07845 596092
Freshwell Health Centre	01371 810328
Hedingham Medical Centre:	
Castle Hedingham	01787 461465
Sible Hedingham	01787 460612
Kaaren Berry, Parish Clerk	07341264219
Little Chestnuts Preschool	079018 80914
Little Hedgehogs Toddlers	01440 785778
Pumphouse Brewery	07780 702293
Rev. Caroline Brown	01787 469161
St Margaret's School	01787 237354
The Green Man Public House	01787 237418
Toppesfield Community Shop	01787 236003
Toppesfield Village Hall Bookings	
Wendy Ames	07933743724

TOPPESFIELD COMMUNITY SHOP

Church Lane, Toppesfield. Tel: 01787 236003

Fresh Fruit & Vegetables, Milk, Newspapers, Confectionery, Pet Food, Dairy Products, Meat & Poultry, Coal and Kindling, Cards, Stationery and lots more!

Monday—Friday

8.30 am— 4.00 pm

Saturday—10.00 am—12.30pm

TOPPESFIELD POST OFFICE

Church Lane, Toppesfield

Wednesday - 10.00 am—1pm

Services include: Special Delivery, Mobile Top Up, Insurance Services, Household payments, Travel Money, Moneygrams, Savings Accounts plus more!

Toppesfield Parish Council

Councillors — Alan Collard, Amanda Smith, Chris Neale, Trisha Roberts and Kitty Bourlet. There are currently two vacancies for Parish Councillors, if you are interested in joining the Parish Council please inform one of the councillors or the parish clerk.

Parish Clerk — Kaaren Berry

Parish Council Meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of every month in the village hall. You are welcome to attend the Open Session which starts at 7.30pm.

Toppesfield & Gainsford End Parish Newsletter

Published by Toppesfield Parish Council

Editor: clerk.toppesfieldparishcouncil@gmail.com

Please see our online resources to find out what is happening

Facebook Pages :-

Toppesfield & Gainsford End Community

Toppesfield Village Hall

Toppesfield Village Stores

The Green Man, Toppesfield

Pumphouse Community Brewery

Toppesfield and Gainsford End Neighbourhood and Development Plan

Twitter & Instagram— Toppesfield & Gainsford End Community

Website—<https://e-voice.org.uk/toppesfield-parish-council/>



From the Parish Council



As I sit here on a warm summer evening writing this, the night is drawing in so much earlier. I remain thankful to have moved to a village that is so community minded. This edition is filled with opportunities for you all to get involved and enjoy village life even more.

The village show on 17 September. It would be great to have a many people as possible to get involved. This year (my wife informs me we are going head-to-head in the short-bread and brownie categories – don't tell her but I am feeling pretty confident!). I know it is not always easy for people to bring their slips along on the Thursday before to the village hall 7-8pm so just get in touch with any of the organisers (see article inside) and they would be happy to collect for you in advance.

I am grateful that we received feedback from some members of the community about the size of the font for the newsletter. You will see we have listened and increased it. Please let us know any such feedback and we will accommodate changes wherever possible and appropriate.

A huge thanks goes to those who put out a fire in the village which could have been catastrophic! It was spotted by Clare Dore and Belinda Littler, Victoria Wallis and Richard Evers worked together, as a team to put it out before it had a chance to get out of control. Well done! Thank you.

What an edition for you this month! How lucky are we to have had a village shop for 20 years! If you can please volunteer some time or just use it, it is an Aladdin's cave of wonders! In our household we are huge fans of the ham and eggs (and sweet selection!). There are so many opportunities in this edition for you to take part.

I hope you planted your Jubilee seeds from publication 187, ours have come up beautifully with such vibrant colours.

We remain dedicated to serving our community. Sadly, Andrea Chinery has decided to step down as a Parish Councillor. We thank her for her service. This now leaves two positions vacant. Being a parish councillor enables you to be involved and give back to your community. If you wish to know more, please contact the clerk, Kaaren or speak to any of our acting councillors.

I look forward to seeing you all at the upcoming events enclosed.

Parish Council Information

A short summary of Parish Council goings-on at the July and August Meetings:

- In July, Essex County Councillor Peter Schweir reported:
 - ◇ The E-Scooter trial in Braintree has not worked so well and has ceased loaning E-Scooters but organisations or individuals can now hire them out as part of another trial.
 - ◇ £750,000 is budgeted for supporting tourism following the covid pandemic.
- District Councillor Richard van Dulken reported
 - ◇ Braintree DC staff attempted to visit the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in Suffolk. This is where the recycling collections go to. Due to unforeseen circumstances this visit had to be aborted and rescheduled. Councillor Neale requested that any publicity materials regarding the recycling of waste be forward to the Clerk for advertising on the Facebook, website pages and in the parish newsletter.
 - ◇ The Local Plan Part 2 has been signed off.
 - ◇ Hunnables Estate in Great Yeldham is being tidied up and there is a possibility that start up units will be available.
- In August, District Councillor Richard van Dulken reported:
 - ◇ Confirmation that the grant for the electrical work at the Toppesfield pavilion was granted.
 - ◇ Planning permission for the retention of the two lodges at Toppesfield Hall has been granted.
 - ◇ Braintree District Council's Climate Action Plan has been approved and they aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.
 - ◇ The Members' Forum has been approved – this is for large/strategic planning applications and will give the developers an opportunity to sit with interested parties to discuss the application and hopefully address any issues prior to the application being submitted.
 - ◇ VAS – vehicle activated signs – Essex County Council will no longer pay for these unless it can be shown vehicles are doing 10pmh more than the allowed speed.
- Information has been received to say that vehicles are parking on the hatchings next to the Pumphouse. Whilst it is accepted people do park there for short periods of time others are parking for longer periods and overnight.
- Councillor Neale to look at replacement backboard for the basketball hoop. Councillor Neale is looking at the best way to replace this with the help of Boyd Page.

Parish Council Information continued

- Neighbourhood Plan update - An application is about to be submitted for funding to retain a consultant to write the policies. This will cost about £8,000 including things such as printing costs, which could be quite substantial. Councillor Collard and David Oxnam had a good meeting with the housing support officer from RCCE who advised that at this stage we need not identify specific areas for possible housing but simply say that we envisage any building being on rural exception sites.
- Update on plans for the Playing Field – it was mentioned that Gainsford End playing field also needs to be included in this project. A quote has been received for the work on the Pavilion on the Toppesfield Recreational ground, but this excludes the water connections. Once the total cost is known the financing of the project needs to be arranged through grants and the parish council's own funds. The Pétanque court installation could be carried out as a separate project.
- Village Coffee Morning –the date for the next coffee morning has been set for the 24th September 2022 from 10am – 12pm.
- A request to consider selling Gainsford End recreation ground for a potential Music, Recording Studio, Radio Station, Dance and Acting building was received. This was considered but it was agreed the land is of value as a recreation ground and the parish council do not own it so cannot sell it.
- An update on the MoJ proposal to build a Mega Prison complex on the former air-base at Wethersfield is provided to the PC each month. It was noted that Highpoint Prison has just been granted permission to extend and in general recruitment and retention of staff is an issue for prisons.
- Essex County Council has issued warnings about the potential dangers of missing drain covers. The reporting of any missing drain should be done online at: <https://www.essexhighways.org/roads-and-pavements/potholes#report>. Reports will go straight to their inspectors who can then assess each incident. ECC has asked people to be vigilant and report any thefts to the Police should you see any take place. Councillor Neale will follow up with County Councillor Peter Schwier regarding the dip in the road on Toppesfield Road, residents are reporting damage to their vehicles due to the defect in the road.
- Comments have been received regarding the size of the font used in the newsletter – should this be increased? This was discussed and it was agreed to keep the A5 size of newsletter but to increase the font size in articles to font 14.

The Parish Council meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7.30PM. Residents are encouraged to bring any issues for discussion to the meeting, the first 15 minutes of which are a public meeting.



St Margaret's Church

The last article I wrote was at the start of the school holidays, where has that time gone? Now we prepare for a return to school and maybe even a new school, uniforms to be bought and holidays finished. I know some people do not enjoy the heat but I hope the dry weather ensured you could at least get out and about even if you did not go away.

We had 2 very successful sessions of Messy Church at St Margaret's, the 1st being Noah's ark, we made a huge collage, Noah's ark wooden plague's, masks, and dove cages to name just a few crafts.

We were able to be outside as the weather was so nice.

The next session was titled What does a vicar do, we talked about weddings, and Baptism and Holy Communion, as well as what I do day to day and what I wear. We made Chalices, tea light holders, stoles, and Prayer displays, and they were very concerned that I was not married - (I obviously did not tick that box in what they thought a vicar should do).

And in this time, we have also held the fete, which was very successful and raised a significant sum for the Church, and those who commented seemed to like the new arrangement of having it at the Church. We thank all those that helped, supported us, and spent money on the day.

The most significant donation some would say was from Mira a little girl from one of our Ukrainian families in the village, she donated 10p. In the Bible we are encouraged to give from our own store to benefit others for some that can mean several £ for some 10p, however the motivation is the same, I feel fits this act of generosity fits the commandment to Love your neighbour as yourself. I of course do not know the motivation behind what Mira gave, but she gave generously from her store as we in our community have given and supported our Ukrainian families in the village. These families truly are now our neighbours.

I also had a very funny conversation about what a vicar does and wears with adults, (you know who you are), I love the village and how you have made me welcome, I may not be what you expect in Clergy but I am a curate for sure and do have a certificate to say so! And at a recent memorial tea after a service as I was going round talking to people someone said 'Oh good a vicar that drinks !' (as I had a Gin in my hand)I obviously still have some perceptions to break down of who , what and how a vicar is !..... But so good that people are honest and open and we can laugh, hug and cry together.

Please remember the Church is not just here for the sad milestones in life, but also for christenings and weddings. So, if you are thinking of planning either of those get in touch and we can have a chat.

And the normal pattern of services continues on Sundays with services starting at 11.00am.

In addition, the Church is open every day for private prayer.

And as always if you know anyone in need of a visit, or you would like a visit yourself. Please get in touch.

revcarolinebrown@gmail.com: 01787 469161

Queen's Jubilee Lunch - A Belated

Thank you

On behalf of the Village Hall Committee, I would like to say a big thankyou to everyone who attended the Queen's Jubilee Lunch held in the Village Hall at the beginning of June. The Committee received many favourable comments following this occasion and as a lot of hard work goes into organising events like this, it is always good to get positive feedback.

Many, many thanks also go to our Committee Members who put a lot of time and effort into making the day successful, plus thanks to the extra helpers on the day who just offered to help there and then.

A once in a lifetime event that was held in our Village Hall.

Jean Bagnall on behalf of the Village Hall Committee



St Margaret's Church



Upcoming Services

Church services this Autumn – all at 11.00am unless indicated otherwise

- Sept 4 Morning Prayer with Rev Caroline
- 11 Holy Communion with Revs Liz and Caroline
- 18 Morning Prayer
- 25 Holy Communion with Rev Graham
- Oct 2 HARVEST FESTIVAL 4PM with Rev Liz, followed by HARVEST SUPPER
- 9 Holy Communion with Rev Caroline
- 16 Morning Prayer
- 23 Holy Communion with Rev Graham
- 30 Benefice Holy Communion at Great Yeldham
- Nov 2 (Wed) All Souls Service 2pm with Rev Caroline
- 6 Morning Prayer with Rev Caroline
- 13 REMEMBRANCE SERVICE 10.45am with Rev Caroline
- 20 Morning Prayer
- 27 Holy Communion with Rev Graham

Rev Caroline's Priesting service now confirmed for Saturday 1st October 3pm at St Mary's High Easter. All are welcome to support her on this final stage of her journey to priesthood.

Special events

HARVEST SUPPER SUNDAY OCTOBER 2ND in the Green Man 5.30pm after Harvest Festival



SUPPER AUCTION FRIDAY NOV 11TH in the Village Hall 7 for 7.30pm



TOPPEFIELD

Community Shop

The shop is approaching its 20th Anniversary! As a committee representing past and present members, we are incredibly proud of this and intend to have a celebration in October.

After our AGM in the summer we have to admit and express our disappointment by the lack of attendance. Your opinions are required to allow us to provide the village with a worthwhile service.

The reality of keeping the shop open is simple. We need your support and more volunteers. The shop provides an essential service to some of our elderly residents. We do not only supply papers and milk. We also provide support and a listening ear.

We have an amazing committee, a dedicated team led by an exceptional chair and vice chair who give freely of their time for the good of the village.

This year we have given donations to the pub and the school which we do gladly.

The shop does not just exist. it takes a lot of time and effort. We feel it's a valuable asset to the village and we hope you do too.

We are a band of few and we need your help. Please, if you can spare a couple of hours a week it would be greatly appreciated.

I refuse to be trite and use the phrase "Use it or lose it". All I can say is we won't be able to maintain current opening hours without more volunteers.

So come on ... Support your village shop... Lets keep going for another 20 years !!!

Jacqueline Anne Burnett

**The Next Village Markets will be held at
Toppesfield Village Hall on:**

Saturday 10th September 1.30pm—3.30pm—CANCELLED

Saturday 1st October 10.30am—12.30pm

Saturday 5th November 10.30am—12.30pm

Please pop along to see what is on offer from fresh meat, jams, pastries, and cakes to handmade crafts, cards, jewellery and more.

Or pop in for a tasty bacon roll and a cuppa with friends.



TOPPESEFIELD

Community Shop

CHURCH LANE TOPPESEFIELD CO9 4DR



Come and help us celebrate, from 10.30am until 12.30pm

Saturday 15th October

WINE - TEA - COFFEE - CAKES

PRIZE DRAW 12.00PM

Halstead & District Photographic Society



Come and join us!



We are a small friendly club that meets at 7.30 every fortnight, from September to April, in the Methodist Church, New Street, Halstead. Our photographers range from novices to those with photographic distinctions who are always happy to give practical advice. We also have lectures from experienced photographers and practical workshops to help increase your knowledge. No need to join in order to attend a meeting, in fact as a visitor you can attend up to three meetings, subject to a fee, before you need to decide whether you want to join.

For more information, take a look at our website: <https://www.halsteadphoto.org.uk/home>

If you would like to talk to somebody, then feel free to call Mark on: 07840 204 734

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!



News from the Footpaths



Hi Everyone

I hope you are all well and have survived the heatwave. As I write this we have just had some promised rain but not very much. It is so distressing to see the countryside in such a state of drought with verges and pasture, not to mention the lawns, absolutely brown. It is amazing how although the grass has apparently died back the weeds still seem to manage to grow! I have to admit the heat has been a bit too much for me in terms of walking the footpaths this last month and I did find the ground so hard it was almost like walking on a rocky path.

Although the harvest seems to have been finished much earlier this year the fruits are already shining in the hedgerow. I did have a feed of blackberries. There is nothing quite like the taste of wild blackberries and promise of delicious puddings and jams to come. I did spot a blackthorn bush with a good crop of sloes and again the promise of sloe gin!



Also, a wonderful crop of red apples almost glowing in the sunshine.

The excitement this year has been the sighting of humming bird hawk moths. I think the warmer weather has brought them to this country from the continent. They love the red valerian. The first ones I spotted were on the red valerian growing in the shop garden. I subsequently have seen them many times in my garden drinking from the verbena and the Salvias, such a beautiful sight to see. They hover over the flower and you can see them put their proboscis into the flower to drink the nectar just like the humming birds hover and put their long curved beak into the flower to drink the nectar. Unfortunately I haven't managed to get a photo. They are too quick for me!

This time last year I said that we would normally be looking forward to the Village Show but of course it didn't happen. However I am delighted to say this year it is happening on 17th September at 2.00 pm in Toppesfield Village Hall. I do hope you can all find some classes to enter. Have a look through your photos and come and enjoy the show.

Take care and enjoy your walking.

Ann Read

Toppesfield and Gainsford End Village Show 2022

Saturday 17th September 2022

Toppesfield Village Hall 2.00pm

Show day is fast approaching. As I write this, still in the heatwave, I am sure some of you are saying "Why bother?" The flowers are going over so quickly and vegetables are in short supply but with some rain I am sure there will be some flowers and fruit by the time we get to show day. I have seen some apple and pear trees already loaded with fruit.

But the show is not just about flowers, fruit and vegetables. There are lots of other classes to enter such as cooking, eggs, beer and wine classes, handicraft, photography, art and of course all the children's classes so do not despair. Come on. We have not had a show for two years so make this one to remember and there are cups to be won.

There is going to be a fantastic raffle with super prizes, stalls by local suppliers and games and fun activities. And when you have had a good look around the exhibits a delicious cream tea to sit and enjoy and catch up with friends.

So all in all a great village day.

Dates to note:

Between now and the show decide what classes you are going to enter.

Thursday 15th Sept bring your completed entry forms to the **village hall between 7.00pm and 8.00pm** to collect your exhibitors' cards. You can leave your entry slip at the shop if you can't get to the village hall on Thursday evening and I will sort the exhibitors cards for you. Please note that age must be on the children's slips.

Saturday 17th Sept Please bring your exhibits, complete with exhibitors' cards, to the **village hall between 8.30 am and 10.00 am.**

Saturday 17th Sept 2.00 pm Come back to the village hall to see what prizes you have won and enjoy the show.

I am looking forward to seeing you all and your exhibits at the show!

Ann Read

St. Margaret's C of E Primary School



Welcome back to the new school year!

We have only just returned to school following the summer break and are delighted to have welcomed 5 children into our reception class.

This year, we have reorganised our classes and now have three classes as shown below:

Seed class	Reception, year 1 and year 2	Miss Carrington
Sapling class	Years 3 and 4	Miss Mill
Blossom class	Years 5 and 6	Mr Parker

Of course, our teaching team remain supported by our amazing team of support staff.

In addition, we have now established our reflection garden, intervention room and nurture room. These spaces will enable us to provide even more targeted support for our pupils. Our thanks to FOSMs who have supported our changes through their fundraising and to members of the community who have made donations to the projects.

We look forward to an amazing year ahead and I look forward to keeping you up-to-date with school life.

Facebook: [St. Margaret's CofE Primary School, Toppesfield](#)

Twitter: @StMargaretsTopp

Instagram: stmargaretstopp



PUMPHOUSE

BREWERY

After the satisfying peak in sales during the Jubilee, pub sales continue in much the same manner as before. Writtle market once a month is proving to be a very lucrative outlet for our bottled beer and we have also provided bottled beer to the Colne Valley Railway. More recently we have begun to supply The Green Man with their own brand 'Toppesfield Ale'. Do go along and try it; we are sure you won't be disappointed.

Bottles are also for sale Monday to Friday, from the brewery at £2.50 each.



To our regret, Richard Evers has resigned from the Committee after six years of service, although he will continue as a volunteer. Richard was responsible for applying for much of the grant funding that we received, and forged our relationship with the Prince's Countryside Fund. He has also been a mainstay of the sales and delivery team.

This leaves four Committee members, the absolute minimum required for the Committee to function, under our rules. Running the brewery is a heavy burden for four people to bear and we desperately need more Committee members.

Please consider whether or not you can spare time to help us on the Committee. Failing that, volunteers would be helpful with tasks such as:

- Sales and delivery to pubs, clubs and retail outlets.
- Manning our own sales outlets.
- Managing social media, our website and on-line outlets.
- Bottling
- Cask and bottle cleaning.
- Stock taking.
- Equipment and building refurbishment and maintenance.

TOPPESFIELD ALLOTMENTS

July and August have been difficult times at the allotments, whilst we have been very careful not to use too much water, we have also not had any chance of using captured water from the rainwater harvesting systems around the site.

Beans and Beets have all been successful, as well as Lettuces of various breeds, Noushy has been growing fabulous Cucumbers, and the Syder Clan have a very unusual crop of exotics! In their poly house.

The site is still a wonderful place to be as tranquil 'go to' venue.

WE STILL HAVE A PLOT TO RENT OUT FOR NEXT SEASON so don't be shy! put your name forward for health and wellbeing.

Don't forget we have cooking Pears and Apples and the Herb Garden to pillage if needed, for that tasty Sunday lunch (thanks Linda). Thanks go out to George for tidying the Bonfire Heap before we get it burnt off when weather permits.

ATTENTION ALL DOG WALKERS ---- Please take your dogs POO to the bins provided PICK IT UP ! you know who you are !

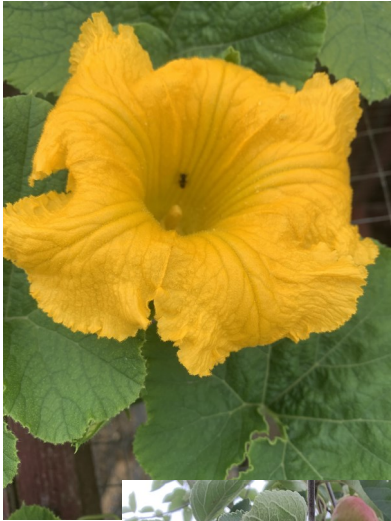
TOMMO'S TIPS

As we head into Autumn, the transformation of our allotments is incredible. There's loads of spent plant foliage to tidy and, as the month progresses, this increases as summer-cropping vegetables come to an end. It's a great time to start a compost bin if you don't already have one.

September is a month of tidying and preparing for winter. At least the weeds slow down too, so any ground work goes a long way. It's also the last chance to plant out overwintering cabbage into their final growing positions. If you didn't have time to start them from seeds, there's no shame in ordering a few plants!

Also try to get garlic sets in as soon as there's space. The longer the growing season, the better, to sow quick maturing green manures when you can. The carpet cover stops heavy winter rain from leaching nutrients from the soil. Next spring, when I chop it up and dig it in, the soil gets a much needed nitrogen boost too.

Paul Thompson Chair



TOPPESFIELD VILLAGE HALL REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

It has been busy time at the hall from an improvements perspective, mainly thanks to the generosity of Braintree Council via grants received during the Covid period. Financially it has allowed us to tick off some longstanding 'wish list' and essential jobs.

Loft Improvements - storage space is always an issue and causes problems for a number of our community organisations. Therefore after having removed the hot water tank in our loft in the spring we had the opportunity to maximise the space in our large loft. We have invested in making the loft safely accessible by putting in, handrails, level flooring, good lighting, insulated void spaces, protective foam on the rafters, etc. This has enabled some of our group hirers to store items, for both long and shorter term on the understanding contents are logged and reviewed periodically and in vermin resistant containers. In theory Christmas decorating should be easier this year, assuming we can find the correct container.

Broadband – we have been very fortunate to receive an upgraded fast fibre broadband supply from County Broadband at no charge as part of their free provision to community organisations, so internet life will be much easier and quicker for any hall users and benefits our parish council clerk at the same time.

Power supply – No doubt many of you were inconvenienced by the traffic lights in Church Lane in July. Apologies for this but was due to a new main electrical cable needing to be installed into the hall. This followed from our request to UK power network to upgrade our supply, so we can future proof any further electrical demands, when they identified the existing cable as being non-compliant by today's standard, as was a 60 year old cable and showing its age! The works have also allowed us to install an outside meter so freeing up some space and taking meter readings will be simpler.

Roof – finally we were able to address one of our major concerns which was the corroding roof and rotting timber. This is now an unbelievable 25+ years old and so unsurprisingly beginning to deteriorate. Likewise the shop roof, which is a lot younger but was also beginning to show some wear and tear. The roof has been cleaned up, brushed down and resealed where needed. Spot repairs made on some areas and fingers crossed will see an end to the infuriating leaks and drips that randomly appear after rainfall. The guttering appears sound which was good news, and the improved roof should be good for another 20 years or so.

Maintaining the hall is much like our homes but on a bigger scale, always something that needs doing, and prioritising what and when is down to time, finances and hopefully sound judgement.

WASC July 2022 Update

On the morning of Sunday 3rd July there was an impromptu turnout of circa 70 people to form a small demonstration for Anglia TV. Alan Mckenzie, chairman of SWAP and The Fields Association, and Andrew Hull, chairman of WASC were both interviewed.

On Sunday 3rd July an Information Evening at held Wethersfield Village Hall by SWAP was very well attended by local people, including several District Councillors. By the end of the event visitors had a clear idea of the respective roles of SWAP and WASC and of the progress made by SWAP in raising the profile of the potential prison application as well as funds. Andrew Hull and John Pearce explained the origins and role of WASC with John focussing on progress with surveys and engagement of specialist consultants on traffic impact projections, heritage, landscape and ecology work. All attendees were very impressed with the professionalism of the event and particularly the investigative work being done to resist a planning application for the prisons.

Another 10,000 leaflets were printed and distributed by the Fields Association providing details of people to write to, to protest against the prison and to encourage donations.

Trees and Parks not Prisons and Roads banners have been erected on the greens in Finch-
ingfield, Wethersfield and Shalford.

SWAP have produced an excellent 20 minute video on the potential prisons with aerial photography showing the larger area and how the prisons would look, with local people speaking and illustrating some of the reasons why the project is totally inappropriate for the area. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsbUQ3AKBHQ>

Dr Richard Sidebottom and Frank Easton have produced a comprehensively researched 40 page report on Mega Prisons and their merits or otherwise to the economy in a rural community. This references a number of reports and recommendations to government that the optimum size for prisons was 400 – 600 inmates, and that there is little benefit to the local economy. Employment is a problem in terms of both attracting and retaining staff. Highpoint and Chelmsford both already have difficult recruiting sufficient personnel. Putting a prison between, and in the staff catchment for the two would compound the problem. The report will be distributed as widely as possible to relevant prison bodies and politicians.

On July 7th the Heritage and Landscape consultant commissioned by WASC visited Wethersfield Airbase. Evidently they were more impressed than they expected to be with the value of the buildings. They will come back in a couple of weeks to confirm proposals to protect the heritage value on the airfield.

On 23rd June Andrew Hull and Roger Duffin, Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively of WASC met up with District Councillor Tattersley to discuss the concerns of his 5 parish councils over having their views incorrectly represented in a series of emails from Cllr Tattersley stating the Parishes supported the prisons and favoured prisons over housing on the airbase. Despite having been written to twice on the matter Cllr Tattersley seemed unaware of WASCs concerns. However after lengthy discussion he confirmed that in principle he would be willing to contact the recipients of the emails to present the correct views of his 5 parishes. The meeting was followed up with an email for clarity, and having received no reply he was emailed again on 16th July this prompted a reply stating that he had done as asked but when asked for clarification, the followup email said that he had not contacted everybody but all were by now well aware of the local parishes and residents resistance to the prisons. It is not clear who if anyone, Cllr Tattersley did contact to correct the statements given last year that the local parish councils were all in favour of the megaprison.

The Government Petition is now at >10K signatures and a Government response has been received.

Government responded:

“The Government is undertaking the largest prison build programme in more than a century, one of the sites being considered is Wethersfield Air Base, a planning The proposed prisons, if built, would be the greenest prisons built so far and follow a new design that helps aid rehabilitation of offenders, helping make our communities safer. The new prisons would also create over 1,200 permanent jobs in the local area once the prisons were operational and hundreds of local jobs during construction.

The MoJ ran a pre-planning public consultation to seek feedback from the local community on these proposals in the Braintree District. The consultation ran from 27 September until 8 November with face to face consultation sessions on the 14 and 15 October. Residents were able to have their say by submitting comments online, over the phone or by post. We appreciate the feedback received and had around 1,800 responses.

The MoJ are currently deciding whether to proceed to submitting a planning application for new prisons on the Wethersfield site and taking time to consider the information received from the public consultation, stakeholder engagement and the results of ecological surveys on the site.

The MoJ are committed to adhering to the Environment Act and have followed due process by engaging ecologists to conduct relevant surveys and provide the necessary advice on mitigation action required to offset the impact of the proposed development. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, reptile survey, and dormouse survey were conducted in 2020. A Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), great crested newt surveys, invasive non-native species survey, and an updated Phase 1 habitat survey were conducted in 2021. A Wintering Bird Survey was conducted in winter 2021/2022. A bat Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) has been conducted in 2022, and the following surveys are ongoing: bat activity surveys, bat roost surveys of buildings, invertebrate surveys, and a botanical survey.

The findings of these surveys have guided, and would continue to guide, the formulation of an appropriate mitigation response to the impacts of the proposed development. An ecology chapter would form part of the Environmental Statement for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) if a planning application is submitted.

To mitigate the ecological impact of building on this site, prison landscaping would use native planting and seed mixes as far as possible.

The loss of any trees, scrub, and buildings would be mitigated/compensated. Brown hares use the site, and appropriate mitigation/compensation would be provided. Great crested newt impacts are limited to habitats on land (no ponds would be lost), and we propose following the District Level Licensing route with Natural England, to offset any impacts.

The invertebrate surveys target a wide range of rare and notable species, including priority species. We are confident that the needs of any priority species can be accommodated within the habitat provisions envisaged.

The MOJ is committed to Environment Act and to the protection of wildlife. The MoJ currently operates a number of prisons in Sites of Special Scientific interest (SSSI's) and on sites with protected species of birds and other wildlife. Any proposals put forward for Planning Permission would have a commitment to protect the wildlife on the site and to mitigate the impact of the proposed development.

Ministry of Justice “

The four parish councils who have part of the prison within their parish boundaries are hoping to work together on a potential combined Neighbourhood plan. The details need to be put to each parish council for approval. This would involve Finchingfield, Wethersfield, Toppesfield and Sible Hedingham. This will take a lot of time and volunteer support from residents is needed, but in the longer term should help protect the airfield from inappropriate development. Any potential volunteers in the four parishes mentioned, please contact your PC Clerk, who will provide your details to the project leaders.

Alternative uses are being considered for the site working with other organisations. Discretion prevents any detail being provided for the moment, but there are serious options being explored for use that would be much more in keeping with the area. This is important because we all recognise that when the authorities recognise that a prison is totally inappropriate for this site, there will still be a requirement for it to be utilised in some way.

WASC and SWAP continue to work towards identifying alternative uses for the airfield, this will be necessary whether the prison goes ahead or not. At this stage it would be premature to say more than that but it is believed there are genuine viable alternative options. We have to get MOD, Essex CC and Braintree DC on side with these.



STAMBOURNE CHAPEL

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Minister: Adrian Burr, 07983 656166

Secretary: Jill Holmes, 07883423528

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Who are we?

Stambourne Chapel Care was formed in February 2021 as a response to the pandemic. Jill Holmes leads the project and she has over 30 years experience of working for the NHS.

Her background is in Learning Disability Nursing and Mental Health Services. She has experience of working with statutory, private and voluntary organisations.



We have some outstanding requests for gardening so if you would like to volunteer please do get in touch. We have also received new referrals including befriending and taking a lady to do her shopping

NEW OUTINGS GROUP

Some of our service users have said that they would like to go out to theatre, cinema, lunch or other activities. We are open at Stambourne Chapel for coffee on 15th September 10-12 for anyone who would like to come and chat about what activities they would like. I will provide details of a few choices, but we are open to suggestions. We will then arrange transport and organise the outing for all those who would like to go.

FUND RAISING

We do not charge for our services but rely on grants and donations and will have fundraising events throughout the year. If you would like to make a donation or set up regular giving or if you have an idea for fundraising, please speak to Jill. Through August we have received over £200 in donations – thank you all - as well as our quarterly grant of £1250 from the Congregational Federation, which continues until November 2023. We have been awarded £500 from Tesco community grants, so thank you to all who voted for us with their blue tokens, and we have applied for other grants to cover our costs.

CONTACTS

The contact for Stambourne Chapel Care is Jill Holmes

Stambourne Chapel Care Project Leader , 07883 423528, holmesjill30@gmail.com



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