

Aspley Heath Parish Council

Spring 2026 Newsletter

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Issue 11

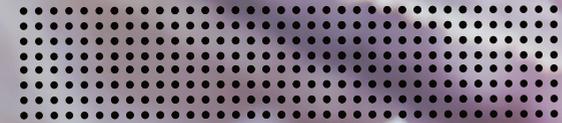


Who's on Aspley Heath Parish Council?

There are nine of us and we're volunteers

Chairman: Sally Smith	Woods, Footpaths, Finance signatory, Noticeboard
Vice Chairman: Gill Clough	Newsletter, Planning,
Adrian Sandys-Wood	Friends of St Michael's Church, Woods & Sandpit, Tree applications, Finance signatory
Gill Harris	Planning, Finance signatory
Lynn Jones	Woods and Noticeboard
Jasmine Messent	Community Engagement
Anthony McKay	Planning
Sheena McQuillan	Planning
Julia Wilson	Community Engagement

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Cover photo by local resident Siobahn Soraghan of Daneswood

Editorial

Welcome to issue 11 of the Aspley Heath newsletter. It has been two years since the last Newsletter. This delay has been due to effort taken up in getting the Aspley Heath Neighbourhood Plan across the line. This plan has now been adopted by CBC and will be used in determining planning applications on the Heath, see page 11.

We have had two new Parish Councillors join us since the last newsletter, and they are both involved in a new role within the Parish Council of Community Engagement. They have been travelling the parish, knocking on doors to find out what concerns residents and bringing these issues to the Parish Council so that we can do our best to address them. We have incorporated some of this input in the BOAT update, the section on Anti-Social behaviour and the feelings about the rejection of residents' 20mph petition by CBC on pages 7 and 8.

CBC are holding a governance review of all the parishes in Bedfordshire. Outcome will be boundary change and/or change in numbers of Parish Councillors. The proposal for Aspley Heath is to reduce our numbers from 9 to 7. As we see it, this will just give us fewer PCllr volunteers (unpaid) to do the work. It has been suggested that we can set up working groups of residents who will take on some of the load and we are looking into organising this.

Bishops Walk

A small group of your local Parish Councillors spend time and effort clearing Bishop's Walk of leaves. The footpath is steep and the Aspley Heath leaf fall makes it very slippery. CBC are not able to clear it as regularly as we need, so your Parish Council get out and do it for the community.

Photos needed, maybe some more text.





The issues that came up most regularly on the doorstep were:

Anti-social behaviour

BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic)

20mph speed limit campaign



Many residents complain of anti-social behaviour. Aspley Heath is a beautiful rural Parish with extensive woodlands and a lovely setting. This attracts many visitors, not all of whom are considerate of the needs of others, or of local residents. The Parish Council are proactively working with the Police to address these concerns.

Would you be interested in putting your name to a letter sent directly to the Green Lane Association, (GLASS) signed by residents, rather than in an official Parish Council capacity in the hope of appealing to the Association's better nature? If you're interested, please email juliawilson@aspleyheath.org.uk.

BOAT Update

The BOAT has been a longstanding project for the Parish Council, resulting, we thought last year, in success – the temporary closure of the BOAT at the top of Church Road. We had two aims:

1. Stop the increasing damage to trees' roots caused by 4x4 drivers driving their cars there recreationally.
2. Prevent the increasing incidence of fly-tipping halfway down the BOAT.

Unfortunately, the Green Lane Association (<https://www.glass-uk.org/>) (GLASS) mounted an expensive legal challenge to the council, which was initially rejected, but then upheld by the courts. As a result, the barriers have had to be removed and Central Bedfordshire Council has had to pay their legal fees costing around £100,000.

We are disappointed that this organisation, whose website presents an image of being environmentally friendly, should have spent so much money to prevent the preservation of a byway that has been visibly degrading due to their member's actions for several years. Moreover, their destructive actions contravene their Code of Conduct which states that members should not drive on fragile surfaces if they might be damaged by the pressure and weight of their vehicles.



20mph limit & Passing Places



In 2024 we submitted a petition for 20mph in Aspley Heath. This petition was discussed at a Traffic Management Meeting in 2025 at which the Parish Council spoke for 3 minutes in support

of the petition. We were told that a traffic speed survey on Church Lane was required although no explanation of the implications of the findings of this survey was offered.

When our petition was dismissed by the council a few months later, we started knocking on doors to ask residents how they felt about this decision. Here's what we were told:

Residents routinely have to step into the road when walking up and down Church Road, because the footpath is too narrow to accommodate two people. Parked cars and tight bends increase the danger of doing this. People who have difficulty walking, or who have small children, described this as being particularly challenging

One resident comes out of their house in a mobility scooter, right onto the road. Other residents spoke at length about how dangerous it is for them to exit their drives due to poor visibility through parked cars, even with cars travelling at 30mph.

We recently attended a meeting with Cllr Baker and an officer from Highways to review the congestion problems

on Church Rd. The officer was, sadly, unprepared to discuss the 20mph initiative, as the purpose of the meeting was to focus solely on the issue of creating passing places at pinch points to relieve congestion.

The CBC proposed passing places are now under consultation via the CBC website so please respond. Comments are needed by email by 12th February 26 to:

highways.consultation@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Reference TRO-075. Details of the consultation can be found at:

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/publicstatutorynotices

One of the reasons cited for refusing the 20mph were provisions in a new Road Traffic Safety Act. The key issue seems to be enforcement, with the council lacking funds to pay for this. However we suggested that this could be achieved through a SpeedWatch initiative, and that given the strength of feeling in the parish about the current speeds, a significant number of residents would be prepared to undertake the necessary training and carry out regular checks.

We have not given up and are chasing CBC about offering SpeedWatch to enforce a 20mph. Please let the Clerk know if you would be happy to have training in the use of SpeedWatch equipment so that we can demonstrate community support for enforcing the 20mph.

Would you like to join the conversation on any of these current issues? Please e-mail:

juliawilson@aspleyheath.org.uk

CCTV On the Heath



Neighbourhood Plan

After nearly 5 years hard work from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering group, made up of volunteers from the community and from the Parish Council, the Aspley Heath Neighbourhood Plan passed referendum in October 2025. Having an adopted plan means that Central Bedfordshire Council will refer to the provisions in the NP when determining planning applications. We hope that this will help protect the Aspley Heath that we all love from unsympathetic developments and ensure that it retains its lovely rural aspect. Many thanks to all who contributed and helped.



Free Time

Well, we're an interesting group of people, with many different interests. So far, we know that we're into the following:

ART AND CREATIVITY

ENGINEERING

SCIENCE

HISTORY

COMPUTING AND TECHNOLOGY

GARDENING

Would you like to meet more neighbours who share your interests or have had similar experiences? Simply e-mail Julia Wilson and, with your agreement, we'll set up some relevant WhatsApp groups.

If I were writing about myself, for example, I'd say:

LOVE FITNESS – WEIGHTS, CARDIO, STRETCHING, BALANCE, WALKING IN LOVELY LANDSCAPES.

LEARNING LANGUAGES – FRENCH (FLUENT) GERMAN (STUDYING AT OU).

TRAVEL – CURRENTLY ONLY TO GERMANY, TRYING TO BECOME FLUENT!

COOKING AND EATING OUT – THE MORE EXOTIC, THE BETTER.

POLITICS AND HISTORY – CURRENTLY LOOKING AT SIMILARITIES WITH GERMANY.

COFFEE AND GOOD COMPANY!



Want to get involved?

Please e-mail: juliawilson@aspleyheath.org.uk

Bike Jump Update

In 2025 the Woburn Estates took over management of Aspley Heath and Woods, including the Bike jumps and the bike trails. The Bike jumps closed in December 25 for some essential logging works to take place, and this time is being used to develop the Woburn Bike jumps into a world class facility.

Plans to further develop the Bike Jump area to attract more visitors has raised concerns with Aspley Heath residents. Major issues are **parking** and **facilities**. The local roads are already overwhelmed with parked cars on weekends and bike event days and, with such numbers of bikers driving in from far afield, toilets are essential. Both bikers and residents agree on this.



This week, whilst walking in the woods, I ran into Jimbo who is a lifelong biker who has been involved with the Woburn Bike Jumps since the beginning. He is currently doing work for the Bedford Estates but once the jumps are ready to reopen, he will be managing the Bike Park.

I asked Jimbo about his plans and hopes for the bike area and, with the proviso that nothing is set in stone, Jimbo explained what they are aiming for in the improved Bike Jump area.

Toilets: The jump area is in a forest with no plumbing, so they are looking into composting toilets and various environmentally friendly solutions. These will be located within the bike jump area which will be fenced in and locked so that it can only be accessed when it is open and there is somebody there to ensure safety.

Parking: The bikers are aiming to use the old Steatly works across the road from the jumps. There are constraints - this is working woodland and the logging vehicles need to be able to carry out their work, but provided there is agreement from the landowner and the Council, progress should be possible on this thorny issue.



Contact the Parish Council
Denise Batchelor
clerk@aspleyheath.org.uk

