



NEWS

CHARITY

COMMUNITY

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Winter
Carnival
cancelled

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for Freely
Fruity

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THE VOICE OF THE BOROUGH

Thursday, November 28, 2024 No. 498 90p

Wokingham's Arc has been installed at the library

THE MODEL of a new piece of public art for Wokingham has been installed inside Carnival Hub, which houses Places Leisure and the library.

The Arc has been designed by sculptor Nicola Anthony whose artworks are commissioned by museums, collections and celebrities globally.

A series of impressive steel arches with Wokingham residents' words etched into them, it is planned to be sited at the entrance to Carnival Hub, where project leaders Arts4Wokingham say it will change the landscape of Wokingham Borough.

A maquette of the sculpture has been placed at the library entrance, where visitors to the Hub will be able to learn more about it from information displayed on Places Leisure's rolling screens.

Tim Lloyd and Robin Cops and from Arts4Wokingham are especially grateful to the Wokingham leisure centre general manager Tony Penge for his ongoing support for the project.

Robin said: "Thanks to Places Leisure, everyone can now see what the real thing will look like."

"The reception is the perfect place for it, because the actual Arc will be visible from the cafe windows here."

"Some people have said they find it difficult to imagine what it will look like, so the model, made by Nicola Anthony, will give them a great idea of the finished product."

"And they can find out more information from the screens."

"I can't wait to see the Arc installed - but we still need to collect a substantial amount to make this a reality."

"Special thanks to Tony, for his help and enthusiasm - the Arc is going to be something we can all be proud of - a truly bespoke piece of art that reflects the town and its people."



Freely Fruity receives King's Award for voluntary services P10

COMMUNITY SPIRIT GIVES STORM A BEATING

By EMMA MERCHANT
emERCHANT@wokingham.today

WOKINGHAM residents and charities defied storm Bert and rallied round at the weekend, when the Lion's Wokingham Winter Carnival was cancelled.

Wade Day Centre's indoor Christmas

Fair was able to go ahead, and the day centre generously made room at their event for other charities whose carnival stalls were cancelled.

They were rewarded by a big rise in footfall as visitors in search of festive fun stepped inside out of the wind and rain.

Wade trustee Sallyanne Steatham,

manning the charity's homebaking stall: "It's been an absolutely marvellous event for us - footfall has been phenomenal and the cake stall has had record sales - we've doubled what we normally take - and we've next to nothing left."

■ Full story on page 7



RECORD YEAR FOR POPPY APPEAL p7



RESIDENTS SHOW SPIRIT p7



MP CLIVE JONES HELPS AT COWSHED p6

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Winter carnival cancelled at weekend and 'unlikely' to be rescheduled this year

THE 2024 Wokingham Winter Carnival was cancelled at the weekend

The annual event was due to take place on Sunday, but the threat of high winds forced Wokingham Lions, the organisers, to make what it described as a very difficult decision.

A spokesperson told Wokingham Today: "Safety is always our number one concern, and with the forecast showing wind gusts in excess of 50 mph, it just wouldn't be safe."

They added it is extremely unlikely the event will be rearranged this year, and they hope to return next year.

Wokingham Borough Council has confirmed it will no longer be providing free parking in the Rose Street, Easthampstead Road East and West, Cockpit Path, Denmark Street, Carnival multi-storey and Shute End car parks on Sunday.

It said the money for this will be used for other support for businesses.



Did you see Wokingham assault?



THAMES Valley Police is appealing for witnesses to an assault in Wokingham.

At around 1pm on Saturday, November 16, at Plough Lane bus stop on London Road, the victim, a woman in her thirties, was approached by the offender.

The offender then kicked the victim in her head, unprovoked.

The victim suffered a head injury and a cut to her mouth. She did not require hospital treatment.

A witness who was driving past alerted people in the area by sounding her car horn before rushing to the victim's aid.

The offender is described as a black man aged in his late twenties to early thirties. He was wearing dark tracksuit bottoms, a white top with black sleeves which had a black symbol. He also had his hood up and had a goatee-style beard.

Investigating officer PC Sophia Harrison, said: "I am appealing for any witnesses to this assault incident to please come forward."

"A woman has suffered injuries following an unprovoked assault on London Road."

"Anyone with information or footage relating to the incident should call 101 or make a report on our website, quoting reference number 43240555131."

"Alternatively, for anonymity, you can also call the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or via its website."



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Christine Holland: Wokingham ex-headteacher who rolled up her sleeves to get things done

By **EMMA MERCHANT**
emerchant@wokingham.today

CHRISTINE Holland, headteacher of a Wokingham girls' school in the 1970s and 80s, died this month and is fondly remembered by colleagues, ex-pupils, and friends.

In 1969 she was appointed headteacher at The Holt County Girls' Grammar School, where her vision and experience enabled her to manage the school's shift to comprehensive education.

Her friend Beryl Ogden said: "During her 20 years at The Holt she led the transition from a very good girls' grammar school to a very good comprehensive school - progress which has continued under successive heads.

"She was one of the first heads in Berkshire to enthusiastically take responsibility for all The Holt's finances, which allowed for much greater flexibility and independence, and was a huge benefit to the school.

"Her first concerns were her pupils and staff, but she also took a great interest in the buildings and the grounds.

"What she did not know about The Holt Building, previously the home of the Heelas family, was not worth knowing, and a frequent sight at school was the headmistress in her wellington boots standing at the edge of a hole discussing solutions to problems with the caretaker or visiting tradesmen."

Christine was well known for scrupulous fairness and objectivity, and there were frequent examples of her unobtrusively providing help to individual pupils and staff.

Christine's friend and colleague Linda Carroll also remembers her warmly.

She said: "I first met her in 1981 when she interviewed me for a teaching post.

"I will always have her to thank for appointing me and starting my long association with The Holt.

"She was a very hands-on headteacher, de-icing the car parks and shovelling snow in the winter and when working with her on the PTA we once found ourselves side by side, sleeves rolled up, scrubbing pans in the school kitchen.

"Her kind and caring nature made her easy to respect and to work for and with.

"She was equally supportive of staff and students, always trying hard to give our lives a work life balance."

After Christine left The Holt in 1989 she remained in Wokingham and immersed herself in the life of the town.

For years she was an advisor at Citizens Advice, joined the Community Health Committee, and was an active member of the local Historical Society.

She received The Mayors Award for services to Wokingham.

"As chair of The Holt Association I was able to keep in touch with her after she retired," continued Linda.

"She was very supportive of the association, and regularly attended the lunches, continuing to take an interest in past students, staff and everything Holt.

"I feel very fortunate to have worked with such a kind and considerate lady."

For the last two years of her life Christine Holland lived at Alexandra Grange, where she died peacefully in her sleep on November 7.

She is remembered with affection by The Holt School, her family, friends, neighbours, ex-colleagues and pupils.

■ For information, visit: holtschool.co.uk



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Wokingham MP Clive Jones helped wrap children's Christmas presents at The Cowshed. Pictures: Emma Merchant

Wokingham MP Clive Jones helps Santa at The Cowshed

By EMMA MERCHANT
emmerchant@wokingham.today

WOKINGHAM MP Clive Jones lent a helping hand at a borough charity recently.

At The Cowshed's Winnersh Triangle warehouse he joined a team of volunteers busily wrapping thousands of presents for children in the borough whose families are facing hardship.

"I love Christmas," he said. "Working in the toy industry, it has always been a big part of my life, and The Cowshed is a great charity to be supporting."

"They're helping so many people facing difficult circumstances at this time of year to get through a very

challenging period.

"Over the next few weeks thousands of brand new presents will be delivered so that children whose families are going through tough times can experience the same kind of Christmas as other more fortunate youngsters in the borough."

More than 2,500 sacks of toys are being filled with Christmas goodies for children.

Each child will receive a sack containing a main present, a couple of smaller presents, three stocking fillers, a book, some sweets and a selection box.

Surrounded by toys in the warehouse it is difficult to imagine that more are needed, but Cowshed

volunteer Vicky Newland explains that with so many youngsters to receive Christmas stockings, the charity eagerly requests more donations.

"We're particularly short of items for children in their teens, and for very young children," Vicky said.

"We're aiming to reach at least 2,500 children - maybe even 3,000."

"We're all right for wrapping thanks to our volunteers who love doing this job and sign up every year, and also thanks to teams of corporate volunteers who are giving up a day of work to help us."

"As a volunteer, I've seen the huge difference The Cowshed makes to families

in lots of different ways.

"It doesn't matter what the crisis is - we're there to help."

To donate to the charity's Christmas toy appeal, people can visit an Amazon wish list link on their website.

Or they can buy a present while out shopping, and drop it off at The Cowshed's Winnersh warehouse, or its Wokingham operations centre.

Stocking fillers and presents for boys and girls aged 10 years and upwards, and for young toddlers, are particularly welcomed.

While the charity gives children pre-loved toys during the year, at Christmas all donated toys must be new.

■ For more information, visit: thecowshed.org



Bracknell Foodbank celebrates advent calendar appeal success

By EMMA MERCHANT
emmerchant@wokingham.today

A BRACKNELL shopping centre is encouraged by the very positive response to an appeal that will brighten up Christmas for struggling families

The Lexicon is delighted to announce that 693 advent calendars have been donated to Bracknell Foodbank, an increase of 140% compared to last year.

Over the past six weeks the local community, retailers and restaurants within The Lexicon have been popping advent calendars into The Lexicon Giving Box in Princess Square.

In addition to the advent calendars The Lexicon has donated thirty family tickets to Bracknell

Foodbank for Santa's Grotto.

Sue Boor, head of marketing at The Lexicon, said: "I am thrilled that we can do a bit to brighten-up Christmas this year for so many local families."

"A huge thank you to everyone who donated - it will make a real difference to so many."

Liz Fourie, Bracknell Foodbank interim manager said: "We never ask for treats as donations as we need to focus on essential items to support local families."

"So, we're really looking forward to surprising hundreds of families this Christmas with an extra special treat."

■ For information, visit: thelexiconbracknell.com and bracknell.foodbank.org.uk



Bracknell Foodbank celebrates advent calendar appeal success. Picture: STEWART TURKINGTON, www.stphotos.co.uk

Wokingham community spirit gives storm Bert a beating

By **EMMA MERCHANT**
emerchant@wokingham.today

Continued from front page

"Everyone has been very jolly, and happy to come along, despite the weather."

Storm Bert didn't stop Santa visiting Wade either, for family selfie opportunities, and despite the crowds, there was room for Wokingham Horticultural Association's (WHA) stall.

"When the carnival was cancelled we approached Wade, and they were very kind and squeezed us in," said WHA members Liz and Phyl.

"We're super grateful and it's been a lovely event."

Wokingham pub The Duke's Head also welcomed charities whose carnival plans were changed.

When Claire and Ed Deegan, pub landlords, heard about the carnival cancellation, Claire made space for three charities to transfer their stalls to the pub.

She said: "My two teens have volunteered at Jac In The Box, so I have links with the charity, which is just opposite the pub."

"One of the group's youngsters comes in here to play darts regularly."

"He was so excited about the



People were 'very jolly' and happy to come along, despite bad weather. Picture: Emma Merchant

coming carnival - and when it was cancelled, I thought of him and how disappointed he'd be.

"So I decided to see whether the group would like to bring their stall inside the

pub instead."

Charity manager Sharon Bailey was delighted, and immediately accepted, so Claire invited two more charities: Gibson's Go Getters - a charity

that supports families affected by sudden childhood death; and Helen and Douglas House, to open up at The Duke's Head.

"I know that The Wokingham Lions have put in more than

1,000 hours of work into preparations for the carnival, and for them to cancel must have been awful, so we're pleased to have been able to help out a bit," Claire said.

Speaking for The Wokingham Lions Club, Debbie Slay said: "The cancellation of this year's winter carnival was a huge blow for all the organisers."

"Tim Hanton and his team were extremely disappointed to have to cancel the event, but high winds made it unsafe to put up the stage, operate the fairground, or allow stall holders to raise gazebos."

"We're tough in this borough and nobody minds getting a bit wet for the carnival, but the wind was another matter."

"It has to be a safe event, and we know it was the right - though very sad - decision to cancel."

"Everyone who's contacted us since has agreed, saying that it was a great shame, but that they totally understand."

■ **For information, search Facebook for: Jac in a Box, Gibson's Go Getters, Helen and Douglas House, Wade Day Centre, The Duke's Head, and visit: wokinghamlions.org.uk**

Generous donations sees record year for poppy appeal

GENEROUS residents across Wokingham borough have been thanked for their help in recording another record year for the Wokingham poppy appeal.

Appeal organiser David Dunham told Wokingham Today that this year's appeal has topped £83,300 - equal to a more than 5% increase on last year's totals.

David said: "I am very pleased, and I'd like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has donated to this year's appeal."

"It has surpassed my expectations."

"I also want to say a big thank you to our volunteer collectors, Barkham Hookers, Wokingham Borough Council, Wokingham Town Council, our supermarkets, shops, businesses and schools that hosted a collection point."

He also offered his thanks to Pret, who provided space in the Market Place for the pop-up appeal shop.

He revealed how schools had contributed more than £8,400 to this year's appeal, and noted how contactless donations accounted for more than 40% of this year's donations.

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Council to write to govt over housing numbers

By RUTH LUCAS

Local democracy reporter

WOKINGHAM borough council will appeal to the government over new housebuilding targets over fears it will 'change the character and nature of Wokingham forever'.

Wokingham must build 560 more homes every year under new housing targets set by the Labour government, taking the total from 748 to 1,308.

Conservative councillor Charles Margetts introduced a motion, calling for a cross-party campaign to reduce the targets which he branded 'not deliverable'.

Councillor Margetts said: "Since I was elected in 2016, the number one issue our residents have raised with me has been the level of new housebuilding expected in the borough.

"Wokingham's population increased by 15% from 2012 to 2022.

"Based on my experience, residents are not opposed to new housing but are firmly against new developments occurring without the necessary infrastructure growth."

The member for Finchampstead said greater development would be 'harmful' on the town, claiming 'no commitment to funding the necessary infrastructure to support it'.

He argued that targets should be set by local authorities rather than national government.

But Labour members of the council said they were 'disappointed' by colleagues' stances.

Councillor Marie-Louise Weighill said people in the borough were in 'constant and agonising worry' over housing.

She said: "I'm going to make the controversial suggestion that housing is good, actually - we should have more of it.

"We often hear about the threat of housing.

"Housing is presented very often as something that is imposed by an external force.

"But the character of the borough for many people is a constant and agonising worry."

Fellow labour member Alex Freeney pointed to the 1,337 people on the social housing register in Wokingham, branding the motion as 'completely tone deaf to the problems people in this borough are actually facing'.

He said with current waiting lists, it would take 38 years for the council to satisfy demand for affordable housing.

The Liberal Democrats, who lead the council, proposed an amendment to the plans saying they would 'lobby the government for changes to the planning system to give councils more control'.

The party also opposes the higher housebuilding targets and says more 'reasonable and realistic' ones are needed for all boroughs.

Conservative members accepted the Liberal Democrat amendment to write to the government appealing and asking for more control over planning.

'Critical' lack of Muslim burial plots

ONLY a handful of burial spaces for Muslims currently remain within Wokingham borough.

The spaces - at Mays Lane cemetery in Earley, and at Shinfield cemetery - were discussed at last week's full council meeting.

Religious belief dictates that burials for Muslims must be grave burials, and that they must commence immediately after death.

It is also customary for burial spaces to be separate from other faiths.

Cllr Stephen Conway, the leader of Wokingham Borough Council, said the authority recognises the 'critical issue' of providing more spaces within the borough, and that he "... can't say how quickly we will be able to do this".

He said potential options were increasing provision at the council-run Shinfield cemetery, or creating a new site.

He warned that alternatives would be in the neighbouring Reading borough, which would 'cost Wokingham residents more money'.

The issue was raised by Wokingham Borough councillors Basit Alvi and Majid Nagra, as well as by the MP for Earley and Woodley Yuan Yang.

Basit Alvi said he had been approached by 'multiple residents and community representatives' across the borough regarding the problem.

Majid Nagra told Wokingham Today that the lack of space means Wokingham residents will be forced to use Caversham Cemetery, and that means for people from outside the Reading Borough Council boundary will be required to pay triple the charges for the graves (currently £5,925 for an earth grave and £7,430 for a vault grave).



Last weekend he organised a meeting between Yuan Yang MP and local faith leaders.

During the meeting, Shakil Khan and Faisal Mushtaq from Aisha Mosque said they were concerned about having to travel out of the borough to Reading or Bracknell, where they would have to pay higher charges than in Wokingham.

Muslim residents account for almost one in ten residents of Ms Yang's constituency, according to the 2021 census.

Ms Yang said it is a 'deeply pressing and troubling issue' for the community, and that both 'short and long term' solutions were needed.

She wrote: "Dignity in death is

a fundamental human need for us all, regardless of religion or place of residence.

"I am mindful of the worry this problem adds for those residents who are already dealing with the stress of family illness or bereavement."

Last week's full council meeting said just two spaces remained.

A spokesperson for Wokingham Borough council told Wokingham Today: "Following a recent review of our cemeteries, we can offer 20 grave spaces for Muslim burials in the borough, which should last us for at least three years.

"We are continuing to work with our partners to identify further land to meet future needs."

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'Grave concerns' for adult services

By **ANDREW BATT**
abatt@wokingham.today

THE additional costs for adult care services in Wokingham as a result of the recently announced increases in employer national insurance contributions were revealed at last week's full council meeting.

Cllr Rebecca Margetts asked the executive member for adult services, health and wellbeing what will be the implications of the recent Labour budget, and the increases in national insurance contributions made by employers, for the adult care service at Wokingham borough council?

Cllr David Hare said that Wokingham, along with our care providers, are gravely concerned about the impact.

"Many of these providers have said that if these charges are implemented in April 2025, they will simply be unable to continue to exist.

"I believe it'll be about £3.5 million for the impact of national minimum wage and employers natural insurance contributions.

"We are not, at this stage, able to say how much of this will be covered in our settlement (from national government) in December,



Cllr Rebecca Margetts

but we are already concerned about this.

Cllr Margetts asked whether Cllr Hare would sign a nationwide petition against the planned increases.

She said: "By signing this on behalf of the council, you will help to force a debate in government."

Cllr Hare said he would look at the petition, and added: "We've lobbied our MPs, we've lobbied the chancellor, we've lobbied a lot of people already but I'm very happy to have a conversation."

Tributes paid to Cllr Paul Fishwick

By **ANDREW BATT**
abatt@wokingham.today

TEARFUL tributes were paid to Cllr Paul Fishwick at last week's full council meeting of Wokingham Borough Council.

Following a period of silence, leader of the council, Stephen Conway, said: "I'm sure everyone in this council chamber will want to join me in sending our heartfelt condolences to Paul's wife, family and friends.

"We've lost a colleague and a friend, but they have had taken from them a much loved husband, father, and grandfather.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this most difficult of times.

"Paul's life was one of unswerving and selfless public service.

"He worked as a highways officer in Surrey, and then in retirement he rededicated himself to the community as a parish and borough council for Winnersh.

"The current administration was formed in 2022, and Paul was a natural choice for an executive position to reflect his interests and commitments.

"The old highways brief was renamed active travel, transport and highways.

"Paul had the political courage to take tough decisions as an executive member, because he believed that doing the right thing for the long term interests of the people of the borough was more important than seeking short term popularity.

"He was respected across the council for his expert knowledge of the local highways network.



"At question time in the council chamber he provided impressively full and well informed answers, and was never in my recollection wrong footed.

"It his dealings with council officers, elected councillors and members of the public, Paul was unfailingly polite, courteous and helpful.

"All of us who were fortunate enough to work with him closely, appreciated both his humour and his cool head in a crisis.

"Paul's untimely departure from our lives has, naturally, left many of us feeling deeply bereft.

"The best way we can honour Paul is to carry on his good work, and be inspired by his sense of public service."

Cllr Pauline Jorgensen, leader of the Conservative group, echoed Stephen's thoughts.

She said: "I was very sorry to hear that Paul died, and I know this will be a terrible time for his family.

"On behalf of the Conservative group, I want to send our best wishes and condolences to his loved ones at this very difficult time.

"It's a very tragic loss for the council, the Liberal Democratic group, and for the wider community.

"I know Paul will be very much missed by all the councillors and officers he worked with.

"He was very diligent, polite, professional, but he also had a great sense of humour.

Labour group leader Rachel Burgess added: "We would also like to express our sincere condolences to Paul's family.

"In our group we had such great respect for Paul.

"He was held in high esteem by us all for his competence, his commitment to his role, his desire to make improvements for our residents, and for his generous, warm and genuine nature."

Other councillors from across the political spectrum also offered their condolences and shared their tributes.

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For bookings and inquiries, visit hello@greenmanhurst.co.uk or call us at 0118 934n2599.

Come and experience why we've been the heart of the community for centuries!

Wokingham Festival to put Super Early Bird weekend tickets on sale

SUPER Early Bird weekend tickets are on sale for Wokingham Festival 2025 from November 27.

The family-friendly festival which champions quality music and showcases local bands is back again this August Bank Holiday weekend.

There is a great selection of food, beer, and stalls to browse, plus entertainment for the younger ones. There are over 40 artists appearing across the weekend, with talent from across the borough and much further afield. As always, there is a great breadth of musical genres covered, with bands both old and new, the common factor being the high quality.

To reward regular supporters, a limited number of Super Early Bird weekend tickets are now on sale, and prices are held at the same as last year!

There are two stages which alternate, so there is music on offer throughout the day, and you won't have to miss anything. The line-up has not been announced, but as usual acts will cover a range of styles and Monday will have a Prog and Classic Rock theme, and names of the first acts will be released very soon.

There's more to Wokingham Festival than just the music



though. Children are welcome, and as always, we'll have a number of activities available to keep them amused, and of course there will be a range of food and drink stands in addition to the drinks tent.

The real ale bar will stock a wide selection of specialist craft beers, ciders and perries from local and national breweries, and there will also be a variety of cocktails and other drinks for adults and children.

Dean Nelson, Festival Organiser said: "It's been great to see the reputation of the Festival grow as we have upgraded the second stage to

accommodate full bands and promote exciting local original artists, along with the third, prog rock themed, day bringing in acts you would not expect to see in a field in Wokingham."

Super Early Bird Weekend Tickets for Wokingham Festival are now on sale, and may be purchased via the web site at www.wokinghamfestival.co.uk

■ For more information and to stay updated on Wokingham Festival, follow their social media at www.facebook.com/wokinghamfestival www.instagram.com/wokinghamfestival www.twitter.com/wokinghamfest



Wokingham charity Freely Fruity has received the King's Award for Voluntary Services. Picture: Freely Fruity

Freely Fruity receives King's Award for Voluntary Services

EQUIVALENT to an MBE, the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) is the highest award given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and recognises outstanding work by local volunteer groups to benefit their communities.

Six borough charities this year received this honour, including Wokingham-based Freely Fruity.

The organisation has been planting seeds of hope as well as fruit trees at locations around the borough since 2020, when it was formed during the pandemic by friends Ryan, James, and Matt.

The group aims to provide food to people and wildlife through planting fruit trees and bushes in local communities, with the added benefit of reducing carbon emissions and lowering the carbon footprint of shop bought fruit.

"It's amazing, and humbling, to have been given this award," said Matt Knight, one of the charity's three founders.

"It's a long process, and we've had to keep the news secret for a while, but it was well worth the wait.

"Now that the volunteers know, everyone's delighted, and already the team is

growing - we've had four new people join the team this week.

"Of course we don't do what we do for the awards, but the great thing is it will enable corporate investors to notice us better, and with more funding we can put extra energy into further community projects."

The charity's next piece of work will be to plant 34 fruit trees close to Shinfield Pavilion and Shinfield Meadows, helped by 11 youngsters from nearby Aldergrove School.

"Then we've got a special tree to plant in the garden at The Cowshed's Wokingham offices, a reflective garden space to create in Llanishen near Cardiff (yes, we've gone national), and work to carry out in a community garden in Whitely South Community Centre," said Matt.

Ryan, James, Matt and their team of volunteers spend all their spare time growing, cultivating and harvesting fruit and vegetables for local communities to enjoy.

And they say they love every minute of it.

Now their efforts have been given a royal seal of approval, there will follow an official award presentation, and an invitation to the Royal Garden Party in the summer.

"I'd love the opportunity to have a word with the King," said Matt.

"I've followed his work for years, he has a very environment-focused approach to farming, and I think we'd have a lot in common.

"He's a great advocate for the UK."

The six borough KAVS winners are: Cianna's Smile, which provides support for young people, and their families, affected by Sickle Cell; Freely Fruity; Loose Ends Newbury, a welcoming drop-in centre that provides hot meals for the homeless and vulnerable; Newbury Riding for the Disabled Ltd, whose horses and helpers enrich the lives of disabled children; The Baby Bank which provides essential support to children and their parents experiencing hardship; and Soulscape, who help young people to deal with life's pressures and promote good mental health.

Freely Fruity is always on the lookout for more volunteers.

"Come and join us," said Matt, "there's always room."

■ For information, and to become a volunteer, email: info@freelyfruity.org or visit: freelyfruity.org

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New 30mph speed limits to be introduced

By **ANDREW BATT**
abatt@wokingham.today

WOKINGHAM Borough Council has published details of its plans to introduce new 30mph speed limits on roads across the borough.

The authority has published an order that, when approved, will see the limit implemented on Reading Road in Winnersh and Wokingham, London Road, Hollow Lane in Shinfield), the A327 Arborfield Road in Shinfield), Bearwood Road in Barkham, the A327 Reading Road in Finchampstead, New Mill Lane, in Finchampstead, and Park Lane in Finchampstead.

The order noted: "These proposed speed limit changes have resulted from recent speed limit reviews of classified roads in the area, and they have been proposed to help improve driver compliance of speeds in the affected roads.

"The proposed restrictions are therefore considered by the council to be necessary and expedient to avoid danger to persons or other traffic using these roads or prevent the likelihood of such danger arising, and to facilitate the passage of traffic.

"The proposed measures have been subject to consultations with local councillors representing the



area, and the Police."

Any representations or objections to the proposals with the grounds on which they are made must be made in writing to Traffic Management, Parking and Road Safety, Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1WN, quoting Various speed limits, Arborfield.

Objections and representations can also be submitted by email to TM.consultations@wokingham.gov.uk.

The deadline for the receipt of objections is 23.59 pm on December 6, 2024.

WBC fear housing targets will 'change character of Wokingham forever'

By **RUTH LUCAS**
Local democracy reporter

WOKINGHAM Borough Council will appeal to the government over new housebuilding targets over fears it will 'change the character and nature of Wokingham forever'.

Wokingham Borough Council must build some 560 more homes a year under new housing targets set by the Labour government, taking the total from 748 to 1,308.

Conservative councillor Charles Margetts introduced a motion at last night's full council meeting calling for a cross-party campaign to reduce the targets which he branded 'not deliverable'.

Speaking on Thursday, November 21, councillor Margetts said: "Since I was elected in 2016, the number one issue our residents have raised with me has been the level of new housebuilding expected in the borough.

"Wokingham's population increased by 15 per cent from 2012 to 2022. Based on my experience, residents are not opposed to new housing but are firmly against new developments occurring without the necessary infrastructure growth."

The member for Finchampstead said greater development would be 'harmful' on the town, claiming 'no commitment to funding the necessary infrastructure to support it'.

He argued that targets should be



set by local authorities rather than national government.

But Labour members of the council said they were 'disappointed' by colleagues' stances.

Councillor Marie-Louise Weighill said people in the borough were in 'constant and agonising worry' over housing.

The member for Norreys said: "I'm going to make the controversial suggestion that housing is good, actually - we should have more of it.

"We often hear about the threat of housing. Housing is presented very often as something that is imposed by an external force. But the character of the borough for many people is a constant and agonising worry."

Fellow labour member Alex Freeney pointed to the 1,337 people on the social housing register in Wokingham,

branding the motion as 'completely tone deaf to the problems people in this borough are actually facing'.

The member for Loddon said with current waiting lists, it would take 38 years for the council to satisfy demand for affordable housing.

The Liberal Democrats, who lead the council, proposed an amendment to the plans saying they would 'lobby the government for change to the planning system to give councils more control'.

The party, which controls the council, also opposes the higher housebuilding targets and says more 'reasonable and realistic' ones are needed for all boroughs.

Conservative members accepted the Liberal Democrat amendment to write to the government appealing and asking for more control over planning.



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'Gift tags are flying off the trees' says Giving Tree's Gill



Two reindeers, Mike and Keegan from Fidelius in Nottingham, and representatives from Simply Commerce, and Airlife, are among businesses supporting the Giving Tree this year with Deputy Borough Mayor Carol Jewell and Town Mayor Rob Comber. Picture: Emma Merchant

FOR MORE than 25 years Gill Mckernan has been helping to ensure that no child in the borough goes without a present to open on Christmas morning.

The Giving Tree scheme she organises each year enables shoppers and businesses to support disadvantaged youngsters by buying them a present.

Giving Trees around the borough carry the children's present requests on gift tags.

Shoppers take one, buy the gift, and return it with its tag, unwrapped, to the same tree.

These are then delivered to First Days Children's Charity for collection by participating charities that wrap and distribute them to the youngsters.

"Gift tags are already flying off the trees this year," said Gill.

"The campaign has really taken off - as soon as I top the tags up they're taken by very kind and generous people in the borough.

"There are going to be some very happy children on Christmas Day."

Organising the campaign is no small task, and last year Gill had to store all the gifts in her home, too.

"I could hardly move because of them," she said.

"I'm very grateful to First Days for looking after them this year."

Gill works with youngsters at Barnardo's High Close School, but takes on the Giving Tree voluntarily, putting in hours of her own time.

Her efforts were recognised in 2020 when she was nominated by Transform Housing, one of the charities benefiting from the appeal, leading to her receiving a Wokingham Town Council Civic Award.

Businesses supporting the Giving Tree this year include Fidelius in Nottingham.

Mike and Keegan from the mortgage company travelled down together for the Giving Tree launch earlier this month.

Mike said: "Last year I saw the campaign on LinkedIn and messaged Gill.

"We discovered Berkshire Women's Group had 20 kids in foster care who weren't going to get a Christmas present.

"And that's when we decided to get involved - it was amazing.

"I became a dad three years ago, and I think it's terrible for kids to go without, so if I can

make a small difference I will.

"There are 16 of us at work supporting the Giving Tree so far, and I'm hoping for more to get involved."

Businesses supporting The Giving Tree are:

Simply Commerce in Wokingham;

PriceWaterHouseCoopers, Reading

BDO, Reading Guardian Financial Services,

Reading Fidelius Mortgages,

Nottingham Airlife, Basingstoke

Artizian Catering Services, Hurst

Ariat, Oxfordshire.

Giving Trees can be found at:

Tesco Wokingham (tags for requests for gift cards only)

Tesco Warfield

Tesco Martins Heron

Wokingham Library

Newbury Building Society, Wokingham

Wokingham Borough Council Offices

Nirvana Spa, Winnersh

Sedero Lounge, Wokingham

Gill thanks all the Giving Tree hosts for working hard to collect the gifts people return, and PwC UK for printing out tags and posters without charge.



Home-Start Wokingham's Big Give campaign will help families in the borough this Christmas.

Picture: Andy Aitchison/HomeStartUK

Home-Start Wokingham's Big Give challenge

By **EMMA MERCHANT**
emmerchant@wokingham.today

A FAMILY support charity is taking part in the Big Give's Christmas Challenge this week, and hopes that borough residents will generously support their ambitious fundraising target.

From Tuesday, December 3, Home-Start Wokingham will be seeking donations from the public to support their work with Wokingham families.

If they reach their hoped-for target of £7,500, the figure will be doubled.

"In this way, we're aiming to raise a staggering £15,000 in just one week," said the group's fundraising manager, Amy Fennell.

"Donations are going to be generously matched by local

business, The Growth House, so if people donate £5, it will be doubled to £10, and their money will be able to support twice as many families."

Funds will give children a better start this Christmas by enabling Home-Start to provide compassionate home-visiting support to vulnerable and disadvantaged families with children under five years old, living in Wokingham Borough.

"The families we support are all struggling to cope due to a range of challenges including poverty, isolation, mental and physical health problems, disability and illness," said Amy.

"It costs just £30 to provide a family with a few hours of life changing support from one of our trained volunteers.

"Having a hand to hold or a

shoulder to cry on can make all the difference to parents, getting them through the toughest of times.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to double the difference we make.

"It's the first time we've taken part in a campaign like this and to hit our target is a massive challenge.

"We hope everyone will give generously to enable us to carry on the work we all feel so passionately about."

Home-Start Wokingham's Big Give challenge will take place from noon on Tuesday, December 3 until Tuesday, December 10.

■ To donate online and for more information, people should visit: donate.biggive.org,



New Shinfield primary school will only open if there is demand

By **RUTH LUCAS**
Local democracy reporter

A NEW primary school will only open in Shinfield if there is demand for school places in coming years, Wokingham Borough Council has said.

Plans unveiled in October showed land at Church Lane and Hyde End Road in Spencer's Wood could be built on to provide a one-form entry primary school.

It would be able to take on up to 210 pupils, with sports facilities, a hall and play areas and wider community uses to be considered.

The proposal comes as Shinfield faces an 'emerging shortfall in provision for all age groups', with a likely shortage of places to come to light by 2025.

This was partly due to high levels of housebuilding in the area, last month's executive report said.

But the scheme for the new primary school would only move forward 'once there is a need for it', the executive member for children's services Prue Bray said.

Councillor Rohit Ahlawat asked at the full council meeting last night (November 21) for clarification on this, and when residents can expect the school to open.



Councillor Bray confirmed it would be 'delivered within five years', but that this was 'subject to the materialisation of additional pupil demand in the area'.

Across the Wokingham Borough, there is a decline in demand for primary school places and a simultaneous 'bulge' in secondary-school aged children.

The greatest rise in demand has been for year 7 places,

which is partly due to migration into the borough.

But a decline in birth rates in recent years means that there are less children filling primary schools.

Councillor Bray explained at the full council meeting: "It is therefore critical that we balance the ambition to provide sufficient local places with the need to ensure that additional surplus places are not introduced in an education

system where schools are already struggling to fulfil their roles with associated financial pressures."

She said the council would be 'informed by actual demand' and evidence.

Concerns were also raised by Councillor Charles Margetts over the emerging shortfall of secondary school capacity.

The executive member for children's services assured colleagues that more provision

was being secured for higher age groups, including the sixth-form extension of Bohunt school in Arborfield.

This project has faced delays - with construction costs pushing the original opening of September 2023 back three years.

It will have capacity for 300 sixth form students, many of whom currently travel outside the borough for their post-16 education.

Find vegan products at a market

A MONTHLY market stall offers a wide range of animal-free products.

Wokingham's Sparkle Vegan market sells foods, cakes, natural skincare, eco-friendly products and gifts.

It takes place in Market Place, around the Wokingham Old Town Hall, on the second Sunday of each month.

The next event is on Sunday, December 8, when stalls are open from 11am until 3pm.

■ **For more information, visit the Sparkle Vegan website, at: sparkleveganevents.com**

Puzzle it out

JOIN a group for people who like quiet activities in Wokingham

A BOROUGH library is the place for relaxing, solving puzzles, and completing jigsaws.

Wokingham's Puzzles Club is run by CLASP Wokingham, for people who prefer smaller, quieter, friendly gatherings.

The group meets at Wokingham Library twice a month on Fridays, from 12.30pm until 1.30pm.

All are welcome to drop in.

■ **For details, visit: claspwokingham.org call: 0118 228 1801/07780 749 453 or email: admin@claspwokingham**



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Letters

From the chamber

Cllr Rachel Burgess



Debunking the myths – being honest about our Council’s finances

IN the face of mounting financial pressures and increasing demand for services, many local authorities are grappling with a harsh reality: their budgets are stretched to breaking point. Wokingham Borough is in no way immune to these pressures - the Council, along with other local authorities across the country, continues to face unprecedented challenges in setting a balanced budget for 2025/26.

There are extreme pressures on statutory services (that the Council is legally obliged to provide) and demand for social care, including a rising need for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision. While the high levels of inflation seen under the previous government have stabilised, those higher prices are now baked into the Council’s finances; furthermore, inflation continues to cause a financial challenge in some specific areas such as construction and utilities.

In these times of heightened financial strain our residents expect and require all councillors to work together to ensure Wokingham Borough Council remains financially resilient. It is disappointing that, rather than providing constructive contributions to the process of ensuring this outcome, the Conservatives persist in downplaying the financial situation insisting that it’s really not as bad as it seems. (It is.)

The Conservatives repeated claim that the Council’s “Core Spending Power” (the total amount of funding available to the Council) is higher than last year, and is higher than other Berkshire local authorities (except Slough), is correct. It is higher because Council tax take has gone up (as have inflationary costs). Yet the Conservatives use this to suggest that it is “misleading” of the Liberal Democrats to claim the Council is under financial stress.

For Wokingham, in recent years Core Spending Power has largely comprised a relatively small revenue support grant combined with Council tax

receipts. The latter is relatively large in Wokingham Borough as a proportion, and the former vanishingly small, reflective of the relative wealth of our area.

When in power, every chance the Conservatives had they would remind us all that Wokingham Borough Council receives less core revenue support from central government, per head of population, than any other English council with its range of responsibilities. This was raised time and time again by the Conservatives when in control of the Council. Interestingly, now they are no longer in power, this is no longer relevant.

In reality the overall Core Spending Power relative to other Berkshire Councils has not changed since the Conservatives were in office. If you take the Conservatives’ last two years in power, for example, the Core Spending Power was also higher than all Berkshire authorities except Slough.

Presenting selective financial information to suit your political case is not what our residents expect or deserve.

The Core Spending Power data reveals that Council Tax constitutes a significantly larger portion of our Council’s income compared to the revenue support grant. When comparing all Councils across the country that provide adult social care, like Wokingham, it becomes clear that Wokingham’s Core Spending Power is neither the lowest nor the highest, but rather falls somewhere in the middle.

The Conservatives’ assertion that “it is misleading for the Liberal Democrats to claim there is no funding” is largely irrelevant when considering the broader context: all Councils have faced significant financial challenges since the Coalition government first started eviscerating the funding for local government. Funding in 2010. The Local Government Association has stated that in 2025-26, local Councils in England will face a £2.3bn budget gap. All over the country, services are being reduced and demand is being ‘managed’. The relentless cutbacks from Conservative government over the last 14 years has meant that the spectre of ‘bankruptcy’ falls over Councils across the land. Such a bankruptcy would mean that ALL non statutory services would be ended and the Council would be forced to sell assets (paid for by generations of residents of Wokingham) to pay off debts. This would be an utter disaster for the Borough.

The Conservatives stance that it is not all that

We love to hear from you! Send us your views on issues to email: news@rdg.today. We reserve the right to edit letters
Views expressed in this section are not necessarily those of the paper

bad really is also disrespectful of Council officers. This is in a context where workforce cuts are being implemented at Wokingham Borough Council to help save £28 million over the next three years. In addition, the Conservatives are well aware that inordinate amounts of work have been undertaken by officers over the years to arrive at balanced budgets for the Council. Over the last six years as a councillor I have been in awe of the dedication and perseverance of officers, who have persisted through a period where the borough Council budget has been cut by a whopping 50%. A prolonged period of year on year savings has meant extremely tough decisions have been made, some of which have been contentious. The Conservatives know that these decisions are inevitable given the financial situation – and yet they pretend otherwise, to serve political objectives.

It is the job of opposition councillors to oppose. But rather than offer constructive scrutiny, the Conservatives refuse to acknowledge the structural disaster their own government created and offer no useful solutions. A contentious proposal discussed at a recent Scrutiny Committee meeting was the introduction of car parking charges in areas where they are not currently implemented. Officers specifically requested that if councillors objected to the proposals, they offer alternative sources of revenue to bridge the gap. The Conservative representatives proffered nothing, yet immediately following the conclusion of the meeting made a public statement criticising the proposals. Short term political gain over constructive engagement – this is an approach that reduces trust in all elected representatives

The new Labour government has promised to reset the relationship between local and central government. In the recent budget the Chancellor promised an extra £1.3bn for Councils, £600m of which is dedicated to social care. Multi-year settlements and more transparent funding base will be a start in order to achieve greater financial resilience. Times remain incredibly challenging for Wokingham Borough, and for all local authorities, and it’s crucial that, for the sake of our Council and our residents, all councillors put aside short-term political gain in favour of constructive, meaningful engagement that will truly make a difference.

Cllr Rachel Burgess is leader of the Labour Group and Chair of Wokingham Borough Council’s Audit Committee

From the leader

Cllr Stephen Conway



Working with others is the future for councils

REGULAR readers of Wokingham Today will be familiar with the financial challenges faced by your borough council, which receives the lowest level of core revenue funding from central government of the 151 English councils responsible for adult social care and children’s services.

While other councils have become insolvent, Wokingham Borough Council has managed to keep its head above water. Our survival can be attributed to a variety of difficult decisions we have taken on savings and income generation.

A less conspicuous ingredient is partnership. While other councils have turned in on themselves in response to financial pressure, we have looked outwards and embraced the

opportunities that working with others can offer.

Partnership working involves the pooling of expertise, experience, data, and resources – human, material, and financial.

To make our limited resources stretch further, in other words, we work alongside others to deliver for the people the council is here to serve.

Three examples will, I hope, help to illustrate the benefits that partnerships can bring.

First, the Hardship Alliance, a body comprising the borough council and local voluntary and charitable sector organizations. All the partners are seeking the same objective – to help those most in need.

By working together, we have been able to do much more than any of us could have done on our own. The tangible results for our residents are clear – more support for more people.

That outcome has been achieved by mobilizing more information, more

expertise, and more resources than the council could possibly have mustered on its own.

My second example is the strategic partnership we have established with the University of Reading. It enables us to benefit from the world-class research and expertise of a leading higher education institution, and for the university greatly to increase its chances of external funding by demonstrating impact beyond the world of academia.

Both partners, in short, are winners. For the council, the great advantage is help with our local climate emergency response, our emerging Town Centre Strategy, and our education, employment and skills ambitions.

My final example is the creation of the Berkshire Prosperity Board. This new body has emerged after discussions and negotiations between the six Berkshire unitary councils.

Despite our political differences, we have been able to work together and reach agreement on the way forward. The Berkshire Prosperity Board

is a formal partnership that will be able to bid for substantial government funding for major infrastructure projects – the kind of funding we could not hope to acquire on our own.

I feel proud that Wokingham has been a key player in the creation of the board, which will benefit all six Berkshire unitary councils at a time when we need all the financial support we can get.

We have a new government philosophically committed to public services, but it doesn’t have a magic wand to conjure up lots of extra money for local government.

Other areas of the public sector – the NHS, defence – are surely going to take priority. That means councils must adapt to survive. Partnership working is an important part of that adaptation.

We can achieve far more together than we can on our own.

Stephen Conway is the leader of Wokingham Borough Council

From the opposition

Cllr Pauline Jorgensen



On your side on housing

LAST week Conservative councillors successfully brought forward a motion committing the Council to campaign against the Government’s enormous increase in housing numbers.

Before the election Labour promised a wholesale shake up of planning, including relaxing of rules protecting the Green Belt and an increase in house building targets. Keir Starmer had previously said: “We choose the builders, not the blockers.” In Wokingham Borough, this has meant Labour almost doubling our housing targets.

A few years ago, the previous Conservative administration successfully campaigned to halve the Borough’s housing target. As a result of our campaign, and others, the rules were changed to meet local demand and build more houses in big conurbations where there is greater need, more brownfield land available and where the gap between prices and incomes is higher.

Our motion requires the current Liberal Democrat administration to campaign against the Labour Government’s reversal of our good work, namely to nearly double the Borough’s housing targets to an undeliverable level while reducing targets for London where house prices are highest, and other major cities.

My colleague Cllr Charles Margetts and other Conservative councillors spoke with passion about the need to protect our countryside and to build sustainable numbers of homes with the proper infrastructure to support them.

Wokingham Borough’s character, with its green spaces, and small towns and villages, is one of the reasons people choose to live here.

There is consensus among political parties that there is the need for some amount of new housing. Conservatives want to see a sustainable number of homes in suitable locations that meet residents’ needs. Instead, Labour’s housing targets, and threats to take away local decision-making on planning, would see our Borough at the mercy of developers who are uninterested in ensuring we have the right homes in the right numbers, in the right places.

We were pleased that Liberal Democrat councillors joined us and supported our motion. Labour councillors’ response to the motion, however, was extremely disappointing. One said of housing that “we should have more of it”. Another councillor, who previously criticised calls to reinstate Winter Fuel Payments for pensioners, dismissed people who are concerned about housing because they already own a home, adding “these houses are going to be built”. Unsurprisingly, Labour refused to support our motion – once again choosing to back the Labour Government over Wokingham Borough residents.

Labour also argued that building more houses will make the Borough more affordable. However, new houses have been built across the Borough for years and during that time we have only seen house prices and rents increase.

What cannot be ignored is the more immediate threat of development facing the Borough, unleashed on us by the Liberal Democrat administration. Last month, we witnessed Liberal Democrat councillors tear up repeated promises to protect parts of our Borough such as Hall Farm by pushing through their local plan with support from the Labour Group Leader.

Before being elected a Liberal Democrat councillor for Wokingham Without started a petition against 830 new houses. In September, he voted to build 1,100 there.

Another Liberal Democrat councillor in the same area wrote in a leaflet in 2022 “opposing... plans for major development in the countryside around Wokingham Without and Finchampstead”. Yet in September he voted to build those areas.

Wokingham’s current MP and the former Liberal Democrat Leader of the Council, Clive Jones, had campaigned against development at Hall Farm before his election but it is his party who have voted to build 3,900 houses there.

In pictures: Wokingham Community Awards 2024



WOKINGHAM COMMUNITY AWARDS

in association with
WOKINGHAM.TODAY, Wokingham Borough Council
and Wokingham Community Vision Group

Category Winners

Kevin McGill, Ashridge Park FC
Community Sports Coach of the Year,
Sponsored by Maison Estate Agency



Sue Jackson
Hero of the Year,
Sponsored by Places Leisure



Jennifer Spratley
Environmental Champion of the Year,
Sponsored by Blandy & Blandy



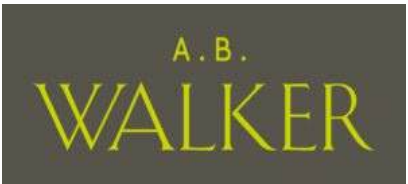
Helen Wilson
Sportsperson of the Year,
Sponsored by Designs for Living



52 Lives
Charity Fundraiser of the Year,
Sponsored by David Cliff



Fun with Mum
Community Volunteer of the Year,
Sponsored by AB Walker



Jack Hobbs, Gemclean,
Community Business of the Year,
Sponsored by Clifton Ingram



Liz McDaniel, Link Active Minds
Project and Engage
Community Project of the Year,
Sponsored by Siren Craft Brew



Michael De Ocampo,
Community Carer of the Year,
Sponsored by Alexandra Grange





Enjoy Christmas lunch every day at Squire's Wokingham

FOR A pre-Christmas get together with friends and family, Squire's Wokingham is a great lunchtime choice.

After a relaxed festive catch-up complete with crackers to pull, diners who haven't quite finished their Christmas shopping can follow their meal with a browse of the store's decorations and gifts.

Squire's festive menu begins on Monday, November 25, with traditional Christmas lunch, and vegan, vegetarian and gluten free on request options that offer a continental twist.

For starters people can choose from:

Roasted parsnip and thyme soup with sourdough bread and croutons

A classic prawn cocktail with lettuce, celery and cherry tomatoes and malted bloomer bread

And two different flavours of arancini, or crisp breadcrumb-coated risotto rice.

The spicy sausage and mozzarella arancini has a delicious crunchy outside, and a pleasantly sticky inside.

Served with a rich tomato sauce and Italian style hard cheese, it's tasty without being too spicy.

The mushroom and truffle arancini offers the same crispy exterior, but its gooey centre has subtle notes of truffle and honey.

Served with truffle mayonnaise and Italian style hard cheese it was a favourite with tasters.

Main courses are:

Smoked haddock Florentine fishcake with crushed and roasted herby new potatoes, crisp green beans, and a hollandaise sauce.

Cauliflower cheese tart, served with roast potatoes, seasonal vegetables, and gravy.

Vegan Lincolnshire sausage, also served with roast potatoes, vegetables and gravy.

Traditional Christmas roast, with turkey or maple glazed gammon ham and all the trimmings; roast potatoes, pigs in

blankets, seasonal vegetables and gravy.

The turkey is generously cut and tender, and an unstinting portion of everything on the plate meant we definitely didn't leave feeling hungry.

The vegetables are nicely cooked too; not overdone and still slightly crisp, while the roast potatoes are crispy and tasty.

And for parsnip lovers, there's a real treat - these are honey glazed; sweet, slightly sticky, and delicious.

The meal can be rounded off with one of three desserts:

Chocolate and vanilla torte with raspberry sorbet

Rum and raisin custard tart with caramelised biscuit

crumb and vanilla bean ice-cream

Classic Christmas pudding with brandy sauce or vanilla bean ice-cream.

Both the classic Christmas pudding and rum and raisin tart brought the relaxed meal to a pleasant sweet, but not too sweet, conclusion.

Squire's restaurant is cheerful, light and spacious, with comfortably-spaced tables.

There's a gentle buzz of conversation and the staff are friendly and helpful, making it a pleasant location to meet up for a seasonal lunch followed by a wander through the store's winter wonderland of gift ideas inside, and its lush garden plants outside.

The Christmas menu is available seven days a week through to Monday, December 23, with booking start times from noon until 2.20pm.

This is a change from last year, when festive lunch was not available at weekends.

Christmas lunch costs £22.99 for two courses, or £24.99 for three, with children's portions costing £17.99 for three courses, or £19.99 for three.

■ To book, visit: booking.squirescafebars.co.uk

■ For information log onto: squiresgardencentres.co.uk



Verity is on a mission to solve national infertility

By **EMMA MERCHANT**
emmerchant@wokingham.today

“INFERTILITY is hard to understand unless you've gone through it yourself,” says Verity.

Wokingham based Verity Paz is on a mission to help people trying for a baby, not just locally, but across the nation.

Having experienced several miscarriages herself before eventually going on to have two children, Verity is passionate about wanting to help others who are trying, and not managing, to conceive.

“There was no support when I was going through this,” she says.

“Infertility is a bit of a taboo subject, and because of that can really impact people's relationships.

“They may not feel able to meet up with a best friend with children, or they may avoid going to a baby shower.”

Verity says her Verity Paz Clinic, in Wokingham, is a place where people can come to cry, to be heard, and to explore different ways to try to improve their chances of conceiving.

“Getting medical help for infertility is a real post-code lottery,” she says.

“In Berkshire people can access just one round of IVF treatment - if they are under 35, and their partner doesn't already have a child, while in Surrey they can be offered three rounds of IVF.”

Information about how to treat infertility can be difficult to find, she says.

“GPs refer people to a consultant, who may find no medical reason to explain their inability to conceive.

“If a problem is discovered, couples may be offered IVF, but only once they've had three miscarriages.

“And if they have a BMI of over 30, the NHS won't offer a woman fertility treatment in any case - so what do people do then?”

Verity says her clinic offers clients a holistic approach to fertility.

“We want to balance the whole person,” she says.

“So if they arrive wanting to get pregnant, and they also have migraines, we will look at both of these.”

Clients at her Easthampstead Road clinic are offered a range of treatments, including reflexology, which Verity says stimulates nerve endings in the feet and can help to balance the body.

She also offers advice on diet, stress management, and practical life-style changes.

“Making a baby takes two,” she says, “so we work with men as well as women.

“Infertility in men is the problem in 40% of cases where couples are trying and failing to have a baby.

“Even when a man's sperm count is good, there may be a quality issue, but because the count is normal men tend to be left out of the equation.”

She says that there are lots of things that can help to improve people's chances of getting pregnant.

“At the clinic we help people focus



Wokingham woman Verity Paz wants to help

on making really good cells - eggs and sperms.

“We can support them with reflexology, fertility reflexology, fertility coaching face-to-face and online, hypnotherapy, acupuncture, maternity reflexology and fertility massage.”

Practical life-style changes can help too.

“For example, sitting for three hours on a heated car seat can negatively affect men's sperm count,” she says.

“We had someone recently with a sperm count of seven million, which isn't high enough to get pregnant.

“After our coaching sessions, six weeks later they had a sperm count of 25 million, and eight weeks later the

mission to fertility crisis



up couples trying to conceive, both locally, and across the nation. Picture: Verity Paz

couple were pregnant.”

Verity explains that mental blocks and stress can also affect someone’s ability to conceive.

“A woman may have experienced a traumatic birth, worry about being a good enough parent, or have anxiety about putting on weight,” she says.

“Hypnotherapy can help them feel less fearful.”

Verity says she has already helped around 1,000 couples to conceive.

To reach more people, she has developed a newsletter that people can sign up to.

“There’s a huge need for information,” she says, “so I’m on a mission to help people understand what’s available, and to give them some control over their fertility.”

Verity’s online sessions are accessible to people all around the country, and she would like to increase fertility rates across the nation.

She hopes, by widening her reach, to help more couples conceive not only in Wokingham, but around the UK.

To encourage people to sign up to her newsletter, she is offering them a free short video when they join, called: ‘The One Thing that every couple needs to know when trying for a baby.’

This can be found on her website, as a pop-up link that appears when people first arrive at the site.

■ **For information, or to join the Verity Paz newsletter, visit: veritypaz.com**

Wokingham Author will entertain children with free Christmas Storytime



Wokingham author Tina MacNaughton will read from her book, Christmas Socks, for children, at Wokingham Library. Picture: Tina MacNaughton

By EMMA MERCHANT
emERCHANT@wokingham.today

A BOROUGH author will read from her new children’s Christmas book in Wokingham.

Tina MacNaughton will host a free children’s story time event, as she reads from her latest publication, Christmas Socks.

“It’s an endearing traditional rhyming story about making do and mending,” said Tina.

“Joyful and funny, it tells the magical adventure of a patched up sock that gets transformed into a Christmas stocking.

“And a cheeky little mouse has an adventure throughout the story, running around and popping up in surprising places.”

Tina says rhymes can help young children to read, to listen and to focus.

A practising acupuncturist, she began writing during the pandemic.

“This is my first children’s book, but my third Christmas publication,” she said.

“The first, A Covid Christmas Fairy, was written for my adult patients during lockdown, and led to me publishing a book of poems and a novel.”

Producing Christmas Socks has been very much a family affair.

“My graphic designer and artist son Michael created all the

illustrations for the book,” she said.

“He was away travelling at the time, so we discussed his drawings and ideas over the internet.

“It was a wonderful way to keep in touch, and the resulting illustrations are lovely.”

As well as from her book, Tina will read Christmas stories and poems of other classic authors, and at the end of the half hour event, there will be an opportunity to buy a personally signed copy of Christmas Socks.

“I wanted to give something back to the community, so this event is free,” she said.

“And people can buy the book if they wish.

“It’s a limited edition, and I will be selling copies at borough fairs in the run up to Christmas, but people can contact me to buy one too.

The event, which must be pre-booked, will take place at Wokingham Library, on Monday, December 2, at 3.45pm.

Tina’s book, Christmas Socks, costs £5, available with cash only on the day.

To order a copy people can email: write.rhymes@outlook.com or call: 07810 024055.

Free delivery or collection is available for local residents.

■ **For information, and to book, visit: wokingham.gov.uk/libraries, or call: 0118 978 1368.**

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- ✓ En-route visit to a place of interest

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Garden centre to close

New store coming to town



A national garden centre chain has revealed it is set to close one of its local outlets with the loss of a number of jobs.

Dobbies Garden Centre has earmarked its Shinfield site for closure before the end of this year.

It is also seeking a rent reduction to enable its Hare Hatch location near Twyford to continue to operate.

Wokingham Today has approached the company for comment.

By **ANDREW BATT**
abatt@wokingham.today

PLANS have been submitted that will see Wokingham become home to a new retailer.

Grape Tree, a health food retailer, has submitted plans to install signage at 1-2 Bush Walk in the heart of the town centre.

The unit was most recently the short-term home for the Wokingham poppy appeal. It was formerly The Bush Hotel.

Previously it had been leased by Pret a Manger, although their plans to open never came to fruition. Wokingham Today understands this was due to the fact that the property is listed, and plans to install a kitchen and make other alterations were not approved.

The new plans do not involve any internal or external alterations to the property.

Documents submitted with the application said: "Grape Tree will be taking on a new 10-year lease, and plans to open a shop to add to the 132 plus shops trading nationwide."

"It wants to replicate its



corporate identity within the bounds of the conservation standards."

Grape Tree, headquartered in the West Midlands, currently has locations in Berkshire in Reading, Maidenhead, and Windsor.

It has been approached for comment about its intended opening date, and recruitment plans.

Wargrave Local History Society focuses on Hall Place in Burchetts Green

A BOROUGH history group took a trip through time when they listened to a talk given by Simon Polley and Janet Robertson, about Hall Place, at Burchetts Green.

Members of Wargrave Local History Society learned about the hall's medieval origins through to its modern usage as an educational institution.

First recorded in 1234 as La Halle, the property has passed through numerous hands, each leaving their unique mark.

The first owner was John de Hurley, but the estate has since changed hands multiple times, including a period of ownership by Hurley Priory until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536.

The most significant transformation came in the late 17th century when Jacob Bancks, a Swedish-born Royal Navy veteran, bought the property and planted distinctive lime tree avenues.

The current house was built by William East, a London barrister, who demolished the original structure and constructed a three-story Georgian-style mansion.

The property remained in the East family for generations, with each successive owner contributing to its legacy.

The estate saw remarkable individuals like Gilbert Augustus East, who not only managed the 3,000 acre property but also established an engineering company, producing steam launches.

He was known for his community generosity, supporting local churches and schools, yet tragedy seemed to follow the family.

One owner, Gilbert, drowned near the Isle of Wight in 1866, and another, Robert East, died suddenly in 1932, with local legend attributing his death to a supposed curse from Tutankhamun's tomb.

During World War II, the government requisitioned the property, and in 1949 it transformed into the Berkshire Institute of Agriculture, later becoming Berkshire College of Agriculture.

Today, the college hosts around 1,600 students, and offers diverse educational courses, with only 5% of these focused on agricultural studies.

Wargrave Local History Society meets regularly to discuss local history.

■ For information, visit: wargravehistory.org.uk

Extended hours plan for Wokingham pub

MEMBERS of Wokingham Borough Council's licensing sub committee will be asked to approve an extension of hours for a Wokingham pub.

They will consider and determine an application from Spirit Pub Company (Services) Limited for a variation to a premises licence at Ye Olde Leathern Bottel, 221 Barkham Road in Wokingham.

The options available are to grant the application in full, grant subject to conditions, or reject the application.

The applicant has applied to amend the authorised timings for the sale of alcohol and opening of the premises.

It wants permission to supply alcohol (on- and



off-sales) from 9am until midnight from Monday until Sunday.

Currently it has permission to sell from 11am until midnight from Monday until Saturday, and from midday until midnight on Sunday.

It also wants permission to sell alcohol overnight on New Year's Eve until the start of permitted hours on New Year's day.

During consultation, no objections were raised by Thames Valley Police, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Public Health, the Planning Authority, Local Safeguarding Children Board, and Home Office Immigration Enforcement.

One representation was made by a person with concerns over noise and public nuisance arising from the proposed extension of hours for the sale of alcohol, and the opening of the premises throughout New Years Eve until commencement of permitted hours on New Year's Day.



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Crosfields crossing likely

By **ANDREW BATT**
abatt@wokingham.today

A pedestrian crossing looks set to be introduced on a busy road outside a Shinfield school.

At last week's full council meeting, Cllr Caroline Smith asked for an update on the progress of the crossing outside Crosfields school.

She said: "A few of my Hillside residents use the various footpaths to access the Shinfield Road to get

to Crosfield school.

She noted how a recent accident involving a cyclist and a bus had become part of the evidence base for the request.

In response, Cllr Stephen Conway said the council's safety team had surveyed the location, and supported the installation of a crossing.

He said a feasibility report would be shared shortly.



Hearing into Twyford homes begins

By **RUTH LUCAS**
Local democracy reporter

PLANS to build hundreds of homes on farmland between Twyford and Charvil could still be built despite refusal from the local authority.

Proposals to build 230 homes at Riverways Farm between Twyford and Charvil were rejected by Wokingham Borough Council earlier this year.

Developers David Wilson Homes have since appealed the decision at a hearing which began this week.

An independent government inspectorate could overturn the decision following proceedings.

In June, Wokingham Borough councillors argued that the development would effectively create a new settlement cut off from Twyford, making daily travel difficult for potential residents.

Councillor Wayne Smith said it had taken him 30 minutes to walk from the site to Twyford train station.

Developers argued that it was an 'ideal location' for commuters using the train station.

Planning consultant David Murray-Cox said: "Even before the Elizabeth Line opened, Twyford was a sustainable place. But that is now reinforced with more frequent services available to a more diverse range of destinations."

Plans had proven unpopular with neighbours, with concerns raised on the impact the project would have on sewage, flooding and local schools.

Charvil resident Pat Sutcliffe said the site 'isn't fit for purpose'.

Like many plans discussed in the Wokingham Borough, residents argued



that local amenities could not cope with existing demand - let alone more added with new residents.

Outline approval requests did not include the number of affordable homes to be provided, but planning officers asked that 92 homes be affordable, equating to 40% of the total in the scheme. This would be 14 four-bed, 18-three bed and 28 three-bed houses, along with 14 two-bed and 18 one-bed flats.

David Wilson Homes argued the project would provide a large variety of housing to suit a range of needs. It would also improve walking and cycle connectivity to Twyford and enhance biodiversity.

The company also offered to provide a new rugby ground for Rams RFC, which is currently based off the Old Bath Road outside Sonning.

One main road entrance and exit would be built onto the New Bath Road for residents.

Leader of Wokingham Borough Council and ward member for Twyford, Ruscombe and Hurst, Cllr Stephen Conway, was expected to speak at the hearing.

Other ward members, Martin Alder and Martijn Andrea, were also preparing for the hearing, councillor Conway said.

The government inspectorate has not yet announced when a decision will be made.

Reader Travel

A scenic day trip by steam to festive Cardiff

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- **First £225 per person** – includes morning tea or coffee with a breakfast roll and a muffin and an afternoon service of tea or coffee with a savoury of the day followed by a scone with butter and jam.
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RaW Sounds
Today



Andrew Merritt

EACH week we like to champion the music scene with ten songs in our playlist that all have a connection to the RaW (Reading and Wokingham) area and, sometimes, beyond. This week we have three new additions - all from musicians based in the local area. As always, we have a wide variety of musical styles, but we think they're all worth a listen and we hope you find something new to enjoy as well as maybe getting out to experience the thrill of live music.

1. Rila's Edge – Pimlico Road –

Rila's Edge have had a great year, with a string of successful gigs, including one weekend with four separate appearances one of which was headlining on the main stage at Wokingham Festival!

They're back with a new single, Pimlico Road, and they have two shows this weekend - headlining at The Grace in London tomorrow, 29th November, and supporting Luna Blue in Bristol on Saturday 30th. Pimlico is a lovely slice of indie rock about how being with the right person can transform your experience of a place into something magical.

We look forward to seeing them going on to even greater success in the New Year! <https://www.facebook.com/rilasedge>

2. A Better Life, Holly Taymar – Under The Setting Sun –

This is the first single from the latest album, The Light, from A Better Life, who we've featured a couple of times before.

Phil Daniels is the producer based in Berkshire who works with a collective of musicians to produce music which promotes a feeling of calm and tranquility.

Chris Hillman, the regular curator of this playlist, who is recovering from a recent heart attack, said that this album really did make him feel relaxed; we're glad to hear that and wish him well with his continuing recovery.

The vocals on this track are by Holly Taymar who also featured on a previous track we selected by A Better Life, and they add to the uplifting and calming mood of the song. <https://www.facebook.com/abetterlifemusic>

3. Danny Lampo – Fear No Man (FNM) –

Danny Lampo is a Ghanaian born in Italy, and now living in Reading, which suggests his music is influenced by an unusual combination of factors.

We've featured a couple of his tracks in the past, and here is his latest single, just released, another prime example of his Afrobeat style.

If you're intrigued, you can catch the Lampo Experience performing live at The Butler in Chatham Street on Saturday 7th December. <https://www.dannylampo.com/>

4. Ez Dickens, Tanti – Take a Breath –

This is Ez Dicken's latest single, recorded in Spain with DJ and producer Tanti, and it's a mellow reggae hip-hop number suggesting that we should take a moment to look around, step back from the rat race and appreciate the good things in life.

It's a little slice of Summer to brighten your day as the evenings close in! <https://www.facebook.com/ezdickensmusic>

5. Eric Street Band – You're Living A Lie –

This track from the album The Word on the Street showcases the guitar of Gordon Vaughn and harmonica of Dave Raphael, alongside Dennis



Rila's Edge headlining Wokingham Festival Picture: Andrew Merritt

Siggery's distinctive vocal rasp. <https://www.ericstreetband.com/>

6. Mammoth Toe – MaybePG –

Mammoth Toe are a three-piece from Bristol who played at The Purple Turtle recently, and we were impressed by their instrumental progressive post-rock stylings. This track is the single taken from their recently released album, Ok, Well Done. <https://linktr.ee/mammothtoe>

7. Steve Hackett – Circo Inferno –

The latest single from Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett, who put on a great show at The Hexagon recently. <https://www.hackettsongs.com/>

8. San Demas – Stay Forever –

Another great track from their EP, Love Sick, and the band played last weekend as part of Reading Rising at the Face Bar. <https://linktr.ee/sandemas>

9. Jess Tuthill – One True Love -

Reading-based Jess Tuthill has been writing and performing for 20 years, and this track is a single taken from her recently-released, and very impressive, debut album, A Beautiful Disaster. <https://jesstuthill.co.uk/>

10. The Veras – Davey Walking Round With the Sole Off His Shoe –

This is the The Veras latest single, with an intriguing title, from their Get It While You Can album. You should also catch them in their Small Fakers guise. <https://www.facebook.com/theverasmusic1>

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SUMAS DEALT DEFEAT, BERKS COUN



Wokingham Town FC Pictures: Andrew Batt



By **ANDY PRESTON**
apreston@wokingham.today

Combined Counties Premier North

WOKINGHAM TOWN are left looking over their shoulders following a 10th defeat in 17 matches.
Firas Chniba was on the scoresheet for the Sumas, but they lost 3-1 at British Airways which leaves them in 17th and just three points above the relegation zone.

BERKS COUNTY are also sitting precariously above the drop zone after they lost 3-1 at home to Ardley United.
The Swords are on 17 points from 18 games which leaves them in 18th.
READING CITY suffered a narrow away defeat to Broadfields United who took the points with a 3-2 win.

Combined Counties Division One

EVERSLEY & CALIFORNIA

picked up a point away to Langley, while **YATELEY UNITED** lost 2-0 at table topping Windsor & Eton.
Thames Valley Premier League
WARGRAVE remain in second despite their home loss to Tadley Calleva Reserves who closed the gap with a 4-2 success.
BURGHFIELD sit in midtable after they lost 3-0 at home to Maidenhead Town.

READING CITY U23s are one place off the bottom and lost 3-0 at home to Henley Town.
Cup
FICHAMPSTEAD were knocked out with a 3-1 loss to Holyport Reserves, while **BINFIELED DEVELOPMENT** exited against AFC Winkfield.

Bracknell & District Sunday League

Division One: Ashridge Park 6-0 BAS FC,

Berks County 5-2 BH Dons
Division Two: 3M 3-1 Silver Birch, Berks County Reserves 4-2 Bracknell Wanderers

Reading & District Sunday League

Premier: Tilehurst YM 2-1 AFC Eagles
Division One: Richfield Rovers 4-2 Englefield Eagles
Division Two: RE United 0-1 Burghfield A
Division Three: Arbor Athletic 5-5 116 Exiles Reserves
Division Four: Tilehurst Trojans 1-4 Barton Rovers A



Berks County Sunday's Pictures: Andrew Batt



SPORT
TODAY

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NTY RESERVES PICK UP VICTORY



SPORT
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RUGBY UNION

RAMS FINALLY SEE WINN



Rams RFC were beaten for the first time all season Pictures: Tim Pitfield

By **RICHARD ASHTON**
sport@wokingham.today

DIRECTOR of Rugby Seb Reynolds admitted Rams' failure to convert vital moments meant Rotherham Titans were deserved winners as they snapped a 10-match National One winning start to the campaign with a 21-14 success at Clifton Lane.

A sublime Solodrau Radianirova opener converted by Fraser Honey put the visitors ahead in filthy

conditions, but despite losing Curran Maguire to the sin-bin following repeated infringements inside their own 22, Titans got on the board via a Lloyd Hayes penalty after their opponents had burned a two-on-one overlap with a chance to make it 14-0.

Another Hayes kick cut the gap to one at the break, and the outside centre then converted after Rob Povey sliced through early in the second half.

Rams rallied, though, and regained the lead as James

McRae rode a maul over, Honey with the extras.

Hayes landed a third penalty for 16-14, however, and a mistake in the backfield then allowed Rotherham a scrum from which Austin Shortall was sent over on the left.

The visitors continued to fight, but found their rivals in resolute form and a fabulous defensive effort from Titans secured the win.

A pensive Reynolds confessed post-match: "It was a good game of rugby, wet and

windy and credit to everyone at Rotherham for getting it on.

"Wet-weather games swing on pivotal moments and we had a couple of chances in the first half, then didn't win the key stages in the second - when you fail to take your opportunities you don't deserve to win any game.

"When we look back on review there might be points we see as critical moments, but in these conditions you're going to get errors.

"We got back into the lead

and then we had multiple negative outcomes which led us to being on our line and they take their chance."

He continued: "In the second half, tactically we were maybe a bit off where we needed to be, but we take it on the chin.

"You get days like this where it doesn't go your way, and you just have to put your chest out and get on with it - the only thing we should be doing is saying congratulations to Rotherham for executing a good game plan and getting

the win.

"We credit them because they stuck in the game against the wind in the first half - we probably didn't get a big enough lead which meant we put ourselves under pressure - and they thoroughly deserved victory.

"Their defence was outstanding - we were parked on their line on multiple occasions and while in wet conditions it's perhaps easier to stop one-on-one runners, they had to do it, and they did



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ING RUN SNAPPED

Division 1 leaders extend lead at the top

DIVISION 1 leaders Kingfisher B extended their lead with a comfortable 10-0 away win at Tilehurst RBL A who only had two players including a reserve. All the other four matches ended in a 7-3 scoreline including Kingfisher A hosting Sonning Common & Peppard A.

None of the Kingfisher Trio of Martin Adams, Hari Gehlot and Ross Saxby could touch Dan Moses but managed to win the remainder of the ties against Ed Lush and Gary Morgan to leapfrog them into second place.

In the mid-table clash Sonning Sports A overcame Kingfisher C, their dream team of Robert Hansell and Dave Croucher showing up to win their ties with ease, while Shashwat Somani remained unbeaten as Kingfisher E beat visitors Tidmarsh A by the same 7-3 score. Finally it was Kingfisher D's Mike Childs who saw his unbeaten performance against Sonning Common and Peppard B lift them out of the relegation zone.

In Division 2, in a Kingfisher derby the G and H teams fought out a 5-5 draw in a match where a number of sets went to five. Ajay Yesi recorded a good maximum for the H team while promotion contenders Kingfisher I suffered a surprising 8-2 defeat to Tidmarsh B with Barry Carter getting a very good maximum for Tidmarsh.

Despite yet another maximum from Kate Maksimenko weakened early season leaders Tilehurst RBL B went down 6-4 at OLOP A. Tilehurst reserve John Walker went two games up against the difficult to play Darek Kaminski but could not quite manage to pull off a shock win. Promotion favourites SC&P C suffered a surprising 6-4 defeat at Tidmarsh C despite a hard fought maximum from SC&P skipper Nigel Maltby.

It was a thrilling week in Division 3. On Monday, leaders OLOP C edged out Sonning Common & Peppard D with a 6-4 victory. Daniel Dzieciol and Simon Brookes each secured two wins for OLOP C, while Jeremy Willis and Anthony Reeve provided the points for the commoners. Tilehurst Methodists A hosted Sonning Common & Peppard E the same evening in another close match, with the visitors emerging victorious 6-4. Oliver Bonser's two wins, along with contributions from Graeme Streets and Mike Casserley, sealed the win, while Michael Williams fought hard with two victories for Tilehurst.

On Tuesday, Tidmarsh D claimed a convincing 7-3 victory over Kingfisher J with only two players. Ray Webb's treble and Dave Edwards' strong performance were key especially when they were one player short, while Steven Woolnough and Cihan Celik managed to earn points for Kingfisher J. In another exciting match, OLOP D defeated Pangbourne WMC 6-4. Patrick McIntosh, James Smith, and Louise Forster all contributed two wins each, impressively holding off Pangbourne's trio of Leroy Wilson, John Simmonds, and Clive Taylor. The week concluded with Tilehurst Methodists B securing a narrow 6-4 win against Sonning Sports C. Nigel Rowland's two wins, supported by Patrick O'Sullivan and Andrew Stone, made the difference despite James Miller's impressive treble for Sonning Sports C.

Finally to Division 4 where there were only three matches played. Maximums for Emrah Bulut and Walter Aldridge sealed Kingfisher K's 6 - 4 win over Sonning Sports D.

More maximums, this time for Richard Sabberton-Coe and Shas Veeramani for Springfield C 7 - 3 resulted in a home win.



it well.”
Following a week off, Rams host new table-toppers Richmond under the Friday Night Lights on December 6 (7.45pm) - both sides on 49 points after 11 games but the Londoners ahead having not lost a game this term.



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Berks County Women Pictures: Andrew Batt

FOOTBALL

BERKS COUNTY PICK UP POINT, CAVERSHAM AFC TOP

By **ANDY PRESTON**
apreston@wokingham.

Southern Region Women's Division One North

ASCOT UNITED RESERVES closed the gap on first place with a thumping win over **CAVERSHAM UNITED**.

A brace from Sarah Jones and goals from Louise Pullen, Keren Banduka, Keziah Banduka, Stephanie Ferreira and Tiffany Skinner helped the Yellas to a 7-0 triumph.

Thames Valley Women's Division One

ASHRIDGE PARK lost out to top of the table Larkspur Rovers 4-1.

The result leaves Ashridge in 5th place on 14 points

from eight games.

Thames Valley Women's Division Two

CAVERSHAM AFC sit top of the table after they made it six wins from nine with a 3-1 away win against East Oxford thanks to a Pia Davis hat-trick.

S4K LADIES are in sixth following their goalless draw at home to Kingsclere.

Thames Valley Women's Division 3S

BERKS COUNTY are in third after they picked up a point against second placed Taplow United.

The points were shared following a six goal game which saw strikes from Olivia Aluko, Mya Denny and Kiah Owen for Berks.



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LEAGUE ONE

Knibbs double earns away win

By ANDY PRESTON
apreston@wokingham.today

READING FC picked up a rare win on the road as a Harvey Knibbs double saw off Peterborough United.

Ruben Selles named a strong starting XI following the international break as the Royals looked to correct their dismal away record.

The Royals got off to the best possible start when Knibbs latched on to a rebound after Sam Smith's strike was stopped by Nicholas Bilokapic and finished from close range to put the visitors in front.

There were half chances for both sides before Knibbs doubled the advantage in the 23rd minute.

Charlie Savage unlocked the Posh defence with an excellent through ball and Knibbs applied the finish by rounding the keeper and finding the far corner.

Reading could have had the game almost dead and buried when Smith was fed by Jeriel Dorsett but had his strike parried away.

Peterborough had chances to get back into the game, but were thwarted at the end of the half thanks to a superb double stop from Joel Pereira to keep it at 2-0.

Reading's afternoon came inches away from getting even better just after the restart when Savage rattled the crossbar with a half volley.

Centre-back Amadou Mbengue had to be replaced with half an hour to go as he was forced off with an injury and substituted for Abraham Kanu.

The hosts' clearest opportunity of the half came when the ball was cut back in the six-yard box for Kwame Poku but he fired wide of the target much to Reading's relief.

The home side grabbed a goal back deep into stoppage time to set up a nervy finish when Emmanuel Fernandez scored in the 96th minute.

However, Reading were able to shut them out further to cling onto the three points.

Reading are back on the road on Tuesday against Barnsley.

Peterborough: Bilokapic, Dornelly, Wallin, Fernandez, Sparkes, Collins, De Havilland, Poku, Randall, Mothersille, Jones

Subs: Blackmore, Conn-Clarke, Curtis, Hayes, Nevett, O'Brien-Brady, Odoh

Reading: Pereira, Dorsett, Mbengue, Bindon, Craig, Savage, Wing, Elliott, Knibbs, Campbell, Smith

Subs: Ahmed, Akande, Button, Camara, Garcia, Kanu, Wareham

Ruben Selles praises 'strengths' as Royals win on the road

READING FC manager Ruben Selles reflected after the Royals picked up an away win on Saturday at Peterborough United.

A brace from Harvey Knibbs earned Reading three points which puts them just outside of the play-off places.

"One of our biggest strengths is against the wall when we can press and go high," said Selles.

"Sometimes they break our pressure and get situations five against six or six against six, that can happen in our game.

"Sometimes we win the ball high and have chances to score goals. We press to score goals. Exeter was another good example of that.

"We have been evolving in a really good direction in possession so when we play against teams that are more direct we are able to have the ball and break the pressure.

"We like it when we can play this kind of game because you can get beat, but you enjoy the game. You have opportunities and it's a quick game.

"We need to get points when the games are coming like that and also make even better games when it's a different kind of game."



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PUBLIC NOTICES

**ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
(VARIOUS ROADS, SPENCERS WOOD & WOKINGHAM)
(TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF DRIVING) ORDER 2024**

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that on the 21st November 2024 Wokingham Borough Council as Traffic Authority made an Order under Section 14 (1) (a) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 the effect of which is to prohibit any vehicle from proceeding along:
1. White House Lane, Spencers Wood between its junctions with Beech Hill Road and Yew Tree Lane.
The alternative route for all vehicles shall be via Yew Tree Lane and Beech Hill Road, or by this route in reverse.
2. Goatley Way, Wokingham between its junctions with A329 Peach Street and Luckley Path.
The alternative route for all vehicles shall be via A329 Peach Street, A329 Market Place, A329 Broad Street, A329 Rectory Road, A329 Wiltshire Road, A329 Peach Street, Easthampstead Road, Denton Road and Luckley Path.
3. A329 Rectory Road, Wokingham between its junctions with A321 Glebelands Road and Wiltshire Road.
The alternative route for all vehicles shall be via A321 Glebelands Road, A321 Milton Road, A321 Twyford Road, Bell Foundary Lane, Warren House Road, Diamond Jubilee Way, Oak Avenue and A329 London Road.
4. Wiltshire Road, Wokingham between its junctions with A329 Rectory Road and Wiltshire Drive.
The alternative route for all vehicles (Northbound) shall be via A321 Glebelands Road, A321 Milton Road, A321 Twyford Road, Bell Foundary Lane, Warren House Road, Diamond Jubilee Way, Oak Avenue and A329 London Road.
The alternative route for all vehicles (Southbound) shall be via Warren House Road, Diamond Jubilee Way, Oak Avenue and A329 London Road.
5. A329 Wiltshire Road, Wokingham between its junctions with Wiltshire Road and Norreys Avenue.
The alternative route for all vehicles shall be via A321 Glebelands Road, A321 Milton Road, A321 Twyford Road, Bell Foundary Lane, Warren House Road, Diamond Jubilee Way, Oak Avenue and A329 London Road.
Works requiring this restriction will take place when the appropriate permits are in place.
The reason for these prohibitions is to allow Wokingham Borough Council contractors to install new signage, road markings and undertake associated works in safety.
Access for residents and businesses within the boundaries of these restrictions will be maintained at all times.
The restriction imposed by the Order shall only apply during those periods when traffic signs complying with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 are lawfully displayed.
The restrictions contained in the Order shall come into operation on the 2nd December 2024 and shall continue in force for a period not exceeding 18 months or until the works have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

Dated: 28th November 2024
Chris Easton
Assistant Director – Highways and Transport
Civic Offices
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1WL

**ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
(SAWPIT ROAD AND SAWPIT LANE, HURST)
(TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF DRIVING) ORDER 2024**

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that on the 21st November 2024 Wokingham Borough Council as Traffic Authority made an Order under Section 14 (1) (a) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 the effect of which is to prohibit any vehicle from proceeding along:
1. Sawpit Road, Hurst between its junctions with Barber Close and Sawpit Lane.
The alternative route for all vehicles affected by this restriction shall be via B3030 Lodge Road, Church Hill, School Road and Sawpit Lane or by this route in reverse.
2. Sawpit Lane, Hurst between its junctions with Sawpit Road and Martineau Lane.
The alternative route for all vehicles affected by this restriction shall be via Sawpit Road, B3030 Lodge Road, Church Hill and School Road or by this route in reverse.
Works requiring this restriction will take place between 2nd and 5th December 2024.
The reason for these prohibitions is to allow CityFibre contractors to undertake fibreoptic installation and associated works in safety.
Access for residents and businesses within the boundaries of these restrictions will be maintained at all times.
The restriction imposed by the Order shall only apply during those periods when traffic signs complying with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 are lawfully displayed.
The restrictions contained in the Order shall come into operation on the 2nd December 2024 and shall continue in force for a period not exceeding 18 months or until the works have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

Dated: 28th November 2024
Chris Easton
Assistant Director – Highways and Transport
Civic Offices
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1WL

**ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
(VARIOUS ROADS, WOKINGHAM)
(TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF DRIVING) ORDER 2024**

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that Wokingham Borough Council as Traffic Authority proposes to make an Order under Section 14 (1) (a) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 the effect of which is to prohibit any vehicle from proceeding along:
1. Easthampstead Road, Wokingham between its junctions with Waterloo Road and Old Wokingham Road.
The alternative route for all northbound vehicles affected by this restriction shall be via Old Wokingham Road, Waterloo Road, William Heelas Way, A329 London Road, and A329 Peach Street.
The alternative route for all southbound vehicles affected by this restriction shall be via A329 Peach Street, A329 Broad Street, A329 Rectory Road, A329 Wiltshire Road, A329 London Road, William Heelas Way, Waterloo Road, and Old Wokingham Road.
2. Heathlands Road, Wokingham between its junctions with Easthampstead Road and B3430 Nine Mile Ride.
The alternative route for all vehicles affected by this restriction shall be via B3430 Nine Mile Ride, Old Wokingham Road and Easthampstead Road, or by this route in reverse.
3. Molly Millars Lane, Wokingham between its junctions with A321 Finchampstead Road and B3349 Barkham Road.
The alternative route for all cars and light vehicles (eastbound) affected by this restriction shall be via B3349 Barkham Road, Station Approach, A329 Reading Road, A321 Station Road, A321 Wellington Road and A321 Finchampstead Road.
The alternative route for all cars and light vehicles (westbound) affected by this restriction shall be via A321 Finchampstead Road, A321 Wellington, Station Approach, A329 Reading Road, A321 Station Road and B3349 Barkham Road.
The alternative route for all HGVs affected by this restriction shall be via B3349 Barkham Road, B3349 Langley Common Road, A327 Eversley Road, Nine Mile Ride Extension, Nine Mile Ride, B3016 Finchampstead Road and A321 Finchampstead Road, or by this route in reverse.
4. A321 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham between its junctions with Eastheath Avenue and A321 Wellington Road.
The alternative route for all vehicles (northbound) affected by this restriction shall be via B3016 Finchampstead Road, Nine Mile Ride, Nine Mile Ride Extension, A327 Eversley Road, B3349 Langley Common Road, B3349 Barkham Road, Station Approach, A329 Reading Road, A321 Station Road and A321 Wellington Road.
The alternative route for all vehicles (southbound) affected by this restriction shall be via A321 Wellington Road, Station Approach, A329 Reading Road, A321 Station Road, B3349 Barkham Road, B3349 Langley Common Road, A327 Eversley Road, Nine Mile Ride Extension, Nine Mile Ride and B3016 Finchampstead Road.
Works requiring this restriction will take place when the appropriate permits are in place.
The reason for these prohibitions is to allow Wokingham Borough Council contractors to undertake works relating to the construction of the South Wokingham Distributor Road in safety.
Access for residents and businesses within the boundaries of these restrictions will be maintained at all times.
The restriction imposed by the Order shall only apply during those periods when traffic signs complying with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 are lawfully displayed.
The restrictions contained in the Order shall come into operation on the 16th December 2024 and shall continue in force for a period not exceeding 18 months or until the works have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

Dated: 28th November 2024
Chris Easton
Assistant Director – Highways and Transport
Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WH

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PUBLIC NOTICES

**ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
(EASTHAMPSTEAD ROAD AND
HEATHLANDS ROAD, WOKINGHAM)
(TEMPORARY 30MPH SPEED LIMIT)
ORDER 2024**

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that Wokingham Borough Council as Traffic Authority proposes to make an Order under Section 14 (1) (a) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 the effect of which is to prohibit any vehicle exceeding 30 mph along:

1. Easthampstead Road, Wokingham between its junctions with Waterloo Road and Old Wokingham Road.
2. Heathlands Road, Wokingham between its junctions with Easthampstead Road and Honey Hill.

Works requiring this restriction will take place when the appropriate permits are in place.

The reason for these prohibitions is to allow Wokingham Borough Council contractors to undertake works relating to the construction of the South Wokingham Distributor Road in safety.

The restriction imposed by the Order shall only apply during those periods when traffic signs complying with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 are lawfully displayed.

The restrictions contained in the Order shall come into operation on the 16th December 2024 and shall continue in force for a period not exceeding 18 months or until the works have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

Dated: 28th November 2024

Chris Easton
Assistant Director – Highways and Transport
Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WH

**WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING
(DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT)
PROCEDURE (ENGLAND) ORDER 2015
NOTICE UNDER ARTICLE 13 OF
APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION**

Proposed development at: Land North of Reading Road, Arborfield

Take notice that application is being made by:
Dandara Southern Ltd and Elstree Land Ltd, C/O Woolf Bond Planning, The Mitfords, Basingstoke Road, Three Mile Cross, Reading, RG7 1AT

For planning permission to:
Outline planning application for the erection of up to 111 dwellings, with associated works, parking, landscaping and publicly accessible open space, with access from Reading Road

Local Planning Authority to whom the application is being submitted: Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1BN

Any owner of the land or tenant who wishes to make representations about this application, should write to the council within 21 days of the date of this notice. Signatory: Woolf Bond Planning (on behalf of applicant)

Dated: 28th November 2024

Statement of owners' rights: The grant of planning permission does not affect owners' rights to retain or dispose of their property, unless there is some provision to the contrary in an agreement or lease.

Statement of agricultural tenants' rights: The grant of planning permission for non-agricultural development may affect agricultural tenants' security of tenure. 'Owner' means a person having a freehold interest or a leasehold interest the unexpired term of which is not less than seven years.

'Tenant' means a tenant of an agricultural holding any part of which is comprised in the land.

**WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL (PARK
AND RIDE PARKING PLACES)
(CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT) ORDER 2024**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Wokingham Borough Council (hereinafter referred to as the "Council") in exercise of its powers in relation to off-street parking places under Sections 1, 2, 4, 32, 33, 35, 37,38, 39 46 and 124 and Part III and IV of Schedule 9 to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) ("the 1984 Act" as hereinafter defined), The Traffic Management Act 2004 ("TMA 2004" as hereinafter defined") and of all other enabling powers; in accordance with Section 39(3) of the 1984 Act and after consultation with the Chief Officer of Police in accordance with Paragraph 20, Part III of Schedule 9 to the 1984 Act proposes to make the above named order:-

The effect of the Order will be to designate Thames Valley Park & Ride (Maiden Erleigh and Whitegates), Winnersh Park & Ride (Winnersh) and Coppid Beech Park & Ride (Wescott) as formal Park and Ride parking places within the borough. The order also seeks to incorporate the parking restrictions at the three parking places into one Traffic Regulation Order for ease of enforcement. The use of these parking places for park and ride will help reduce traffic congestion in town center locations, improve journey times and air quality in and around town center locations, thereby supporting the Councils objective of promoting sustainable travel.

Documents giving more detailed particulars of the proposals may be inspected during office hours Monday to Friday at the Wokingham Borough Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1WN from 28th November 2024. Alternatively, they can be viewed on the Council's website at Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) (wokingham.gov.uk)

Any representations or objections to the proposals with the grounds on which they are made must be made in writing to Traffic Management, Parking and Road Safety, Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1WN, quoting ref. Park & Ride. Objections and representations can also be submitted by email to TM.consultations@wokingham.gov.uk. The deadline for the receipt of objections is 23.59 pm on 23rd December 2024.

Dated: 28th November 2024

Chris Easton
Assistant Director – Highways and Transport
Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WH

**ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
(DUFFIELD ROAD, WOODLEY)
(TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF DRIVING) ORDER 2024**

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that Wokingham Borough Council as Traffic Authority proposes to make an Order under Section 14 (1) (a) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 the effect of which is to prohibit any vehicle from proceeding along:

Duffield Road, Woodley between its junctions with Pound Lane and Highcliffe Close.

The alternative route for all vehicles affected by this restriction shall be via Pound Lane, Butts Hill Road, Glendevon Road and Church Road or by this route in reverse.

Works requiring this restriction will take place between 16th and 19th December 2024.

The reason for these prohibitions is to allow Thames Water contractors to undertake a new customer connection in safety.

Access for residents and businesses within the boundaries of these restrictions will be maintained at all times.

The restriction imposed by the Order shall only apply during those periods when traffic signs complying with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 are lawfully displayed.

The restrictions contained in the Order shall come into operation on the 16th December 2024 and shall continue in force for a period not exceeding 18 months or until the works have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

Dated: 28th November 2024

Chris Easton
Assistant Director – Highways and Transport
Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WH

**WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATION**

**The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
AND/OR Planning (listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

The following application(s) have been submmited and are advertised for the reasons below:

Application	Address	Reasons for Advert	Description
242725	1-2, Bush Walk, Wokingham	Works to a listed building	Application for Listed Building Consent to include: refitting of existing shopfittings and floor coverings, repair of existing walls, erection of stud wall at rear of the shop to provide storage, repair and repainting of timber shopfront, installation of new non- illuminated sign to the front fascia, covering of side windows with vinyl product displays, alterations to existing internal lighting.

The application is available to view online at wokingham.gov.uk →Planning → Search planning applications and typing in the application number above. **Comments on the application can be made** online from this web page.

Any comments must arrive on or before the 19th December 2024. Any comments made are not confidential and can be seen by anyone as they form part of the public record. The comments, unless offensive, discriminatory and/or racist, will appear on the Council's website within 24 hours and **include the submitted name and address.** Due to the high volume of comments received we do not provide individual responses.

Dated 28th November 2024

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WIN FOR SWORDS SUNDAY



TOWN BEATEN AWAY



BERKS COUNTY IN ACTION



RAMS FINALLY DEFEATED



ROYALS IMPROVE AWAY FORM

SMITH BRACE EARNS POINT

'WE WERE BY FAR THE SUPERIOR TEAM': POSH BOSS REACTS TO DEFEAT

PETERBOROUGH United manager Darren Fergusson believes his side were 'far superior' despite losing to Reading FC on Saturday.

The Royals were able to collect just their second league victory on the road this campaign which puts them just outside the play-off positions after Harvey Knibbs' double saw off the Posh.

"I thought we were very good," said Peterborough manager Fergusson.

"They're decent and we've been absolutely by far the superior team, but the game is won by how many goals you score and they're 2-0 up by half-time. I don't know how, but they are.

"I was still confident at halftime, I thought we just needed the next goal. They're not used to winning away from home.

"If we had gotten it five minutes earlier, I think we'd have gotten something.

"Even when we scored I thought we'd get something.

"We're just too inconsistent and that's over a third of the season. It simply has to change and if it doesn't then we'll just end up around the middle of the league."

Reading picked up another point on the road on Tuesday night with a draw at Barnsley.





THE CANOPY

YOGA AND PILATES STUDIO

CANOPYYOGA.CO.UK



BRAND NEW to East Park Gym! The Canopy offers a place of peace and tranquillity for all your Yoga and Pilates needs. Nestled in the serene surroundings of Easthampstead Park Hotel and East Park Gym, The Canopy invites you to step into a space designed for rejuvenation and relaxation. With a variety of classes that cater to all levels, this dedicated studio brings a breath of fresh air to your fitness journey, helping you find balance, flexibility, and strength.

The Canopy has been crafted to be more than just a studio; it's an experience that welcomes both seasoned practitioners and newcomers to discover the transformative power of movement. Here, you'll find classes that range from traditional yoga and pilates to specialised sessions like total core, where each class is designed to support your fitness goals and personal well-being. The studio environment embraces a warm, calming aesthetic that makes it easy to forget the rush of daily life and focus on you.



Yoga enthusiasts can enjoy gentle flow sessions focusing on mindfulness and breathing or more intense practices to build core strength and stability.

Our Pilates classes target flexibility, strength, and posture, helping participants tone muscles and enhance balance under the guidance of experienced instructors.

For those craving a dynamic challenge, total core classes provide a rigorous workout to strengthen the core, benefiting everything from posture to daily movements. Every class at The Canopy is crafted to leave participants feeling energised, revitalised, and ready to embrace each day.

With a supportive, community-focused atmosphere, our instructors offer personalised guidance, making The Canopy a welcoming place to connect, grow, and find joy in movement.

Looking to add more balance and mindfulness to your yoga practice? The Canopy at East Park Gym is your space to deepen that journey. Step into a studio, where every session is an opportunity to refresh and reconnect. Here, you can explore yoga and Pilates in a setting dedicated to your well-being—a sanctuary of movement, peace, and personal growth.



Discover the perfect space for your yoga and Pilates practice at The Canopy—where every class offers the chance to nurture your mind, body, and spirit.

Check out our class timetable and learn more about memberships on our website!

Find Your Flow | Strengthen Your Core | Embrace Your Calm

The King Suite

EASTHAMPSTEAD PARK HOTEL

The King Suite at Easthampstead Park is a truly versatile space, tailored to accommodate a diverse range of events.

With a maximum capacity of 540 delegates, it's ideal for hosting corporate gatherings of all kinds—from large conferences and award evenings to product launches that demand a grand stage. The space offers a dynamic setting, adaptable to your vision, whether it's for formal presentations or networking sessions.



With its spacious layout, the King Suite also shines as a perfect venue for weddings and large-scale celebrations, providing a grand backdrop that can be styled to fit your theme. Guests will enjoy the sophisticated ambiance that blends historic elegance with modern functionality, ensuring an unforgettable experience for everyone.

The King Suite empowers you to make every event your own, offering flexibility and a sophisticated setting that leaves a lasting impression on guests and delegates alike.

