



ARBORFIELD GARRISON STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT LOCATION (SDL)

Work on the site is progressing and we are expecting Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) decisions on applications for Parcels H, I and J (Redrow Homes) and U2 (Crest Nicholson) in the coming weeks. Crest Nicholson is also developing proposals for Parcel Q.

The interactive maps at the following link give a helpful overview of how the development is moving forward. www.wokingham.gov.uk/major-developments/arborfield-progress-map/

Arborfield Cross Relief Road

There will be Public Exhibitions on proposals for the Relief Road at Henry Street Garden Centre, Swallowfield Road, Arborfield RG2 9JY on Tuesday 13 June (11am - 5.30pm), Wednesday 14 June (2pm - 8.30pm) and Saturday 17 June (9am - 1pm). A planning application is expected to be submitted in late June / early July.

You can also find details by searching for 'Arborfield Relief Road' at www.wokingham.gov.uk

Council news

Following the recent By-Election we are pleased to welcome Becky Eytte to the Parish Council. We would like to thank all of the candidates for their interest in the Council.

Local events and information

- **California W.I.** - Monday 19 June 2017 at 7.45pm at the California Hall. The talk this month is a "Shopping basket full of nostalgia". Visitors are very welcome.
- **First aid and defibrillator training** - 21 June 2017 from 7pm - 9.30pm
A free session run by Heartstart Swallowfield at Arborfield Village Hall. If you would like to attend please complete a booking form: <https://ccberks.wufoo.eu/forms/z1ehn9m005ollb3/>
- **Open Garden** - Sunday 25 June 2017 from 12 noon to 5pm
The Gardens of Lower Cottage, White Horse Lane RG40 4LZ will be open in aid of Thames Valley Air Ambulance and Sue Ryder - Duchess of Kent Hospice. The event will include a hog roast, afternoon tea, classic motorcycles and book and plant stalls.
- **Barbeque and summer salads** - learn to create different marinades for meat and fish and to make delicious and colourful salads. Wednesday 21 and 28 June 2017 from 10am to 12noon at the Community House, Billing Avenue RG40 4JE. Contact Catriona MacMillan on 07785314603 or email Catriona.macmillan@wokingham.gov.uk
- **Pretty Patio Pots** - learn how to plant a container ready for the summer. A 2 hour session from 10 am to 12 noon on Thursday 29 June 2017 at the Community House, 17 Billing Avenue RG40 4JE. Contact Sandra Lockyer on 01344 766640 or email Sandra.lockyer@bracknell.ac.uk
- **Nesting** - a performance by the Watermill Theatre on Monday 17 July at the Memorial Hall. Doors open 7pm for a 7.30pm start. Purchase tickets from Park View Motors Village Shop.
- **Finchampstead Library** has a range of events for adults, including book group, bridge and table games, crochet group and other activities. There are also free Rhymetime sessions for children on Fridays. Visit www.wokingham.gov.uk/libraries or call 0118 9088176.
The Library is now open from 2pm - 5pm on Monday and Tuesday, 9.30am - 5pm on Wednesday, 2pm -7pm on Thursday, 9.30am-12.30pm and 2pm-5pm on Friday and 9.30am - 12.30pm on Saturday.



The following article has been provided by the National Trust.

Behind the scenes at Simon's Wood

A mixture of broadleaf woodland, pine forest and open heathland, Simon's Wood is a popular natural beauty spot in Finchampstead, Berkshire. It's looked after by a small team of National Trust Rangers based at Runnymede, along with a large and dedicated group of volunteers. If you're local, you may have noticed the changes taking place within the woodlands recently, as we work to improve the quality of the woodland for wildlife and visitors alike.

Our aim at Simon's Wood is to promote a habitat of mixed native woodland, with a mosaic of variably-aged tree species and ground flora that can support a high level of animal diversity. At the moment the woodland is dominated by an invasive plant species called *Rhododendron ponticum*. This distinctive, purple-flowered shrub makes it very difficult for new trees or plants to establish or grow - and that's why we're progressively removing it.

The ponticum problem

R. ponticum, a native of southern Europe and Southwest Asia, was introduced as an ornamental garden plant to the UK in the mid-1700s. Because it's able to rapidly reproduce and produce seeds, it has spread through many parts of the British countryside and become extremely dominant. A large body of research shows that *R. ponticum* has little to no benefit for British biodiversity, and in fact has many adverse effects. While on the surface it may seem like the rhododendron provides good cover for wildlife to hide in, in reality very little wildlife will be making use of it. It has been shown to reduce the numbers of arthworms, birds and plants, and to hinder the regenerative capacity of a site, leading to a reduction in the biodiversity of the area.

Root benefits

While the main reasons for removing rhododendron from Simon's Wood are to improve conditions for native wildlife and enhance biodiversity, there are also several other benefits.

- In 2015, a professional survey of all the iconic Wellingtonia trees along the Simon's Wood area of Wellingtonia Avenue found that pedestrian footfall along the path next to these trees was causing serious compaction to their root zone, damaging their health. By removing nearby rhododendron, we've been able to relocate this footpath through the woods, relieving the pressure to the Wellingtonia trees and helping them stay healthy for years to come.
- Clearing large areas of rhododendron has also improved the condition of some of the wet and muddy paths, as more light has been able to reach the woodland floor, drying it out more quickly. Importantly for visitors, the car park is now also much more open and visible, deterring antisocial behaviour and creating a safer environment for everyone.

There is still much rhododendron to clear, but the progress made so far has been encouraging, and it will be exciting to see how the woodlands develop and the biodiversity changes without the dominance of the rhododendron.

The Parish Council has developed a 4 mile circular walk starting from Simon's Wood - this is available to download from our website or from the Parish Office - see below.

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

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