



MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

your community voice for over 40 years

Report following the AGM on 27 March 2017

Dear Fellow Merrow Residents

As we all welcome spring to Merrow in all its glory, it is time for another of our regular Merrow Residents' Association updates.

We held our **Annual General Meeting** on Monday 27th March 2017, at the St John's Centre Merrow. It was such a pleasure to see another full house, with just over 140 in attendance. Following are some brief notes from the meeting.

We quickly ran through the official parts of the agenda, including the re-election of the Committee and Annual, Planning and Financial Reports. We have some vacancies on the Committee, so if any of you are interested in helping out, please just email chairman@merrowresidents.org or speak to one of the Committee for more information.

With the official part of the meeting complete, we then went on to the subject of **Newlands Corner**. Although it is not technically in our area, many members use Newlands Corner and are concerned with potential developments. John Oliver, who is an independent campaigner, provided the meeting with an update.

The Planning Inspectorate has granted permission for parking meters to be put at Newlands Corner and John queried the quality of the decision, calling it "abysmal" for procedural and content reasons. SCC still intend to put up 5 – 10 play structures; the final number has still not been confirmed. The cost would be high and would mean clearance of patches of habitat of hazel dormouse and roman snails, both of which are protected. Newlands has 6 species of bats, some quite rare. The play structures need planning permission and Surrey County Council (SCC) need to apply

to itself for permission! Cllr Ellwood said the idea of a building is a myth, with John Oliver commenting that there is an email in public circulation where it states that SCC still intend to erect a new building once the play structures are bedded in. John asked everyone to keep fighting to keep Newlands natural.

Cllr Goodman stated that dates for installation of the parking meters had not yet been set. He said that a visitor centre would not go in the front of the escarpment, however, he did not deny that a new centre could be built. It was said that the toilets would be refurbished in the summer. The question was put to Cllr Goodman that when SCC is so short of money why do they still want to spend money that they don't need to spend. The work would cost £400K and would need to be borrowed and paid back over some years. On being asked what the level of anticipated income from the parking charges would be, Cllr Goodman refused to answer, saying it was commercially sensitive.

There was concern from the room regarding displacement parking in Merrow and elsewhere and also comments that there is no room to increase visitor numbers. Newlands Corner is well visited by young and old alike, with many groups such as the rambles, schools and other outdoor groups visiting regularly. There was a very high level of discontent in the room regarding the SCC plans/intentions and Cllr Goodman was interrupted many times when he spoke.

At the end of the meeting a Resolution was unanimously passed stating that MRA should do everything possible to dissuade Surrey County Council from spending money on a play trail and any developments of the Newlands Corner area. The Councillors present were released from the need to vote.

Annual Report

Draft Guildford Local Plan

The revised plan is coming out in June this year but will only cover the parts that have changed since the last draft plan in 2016. Clandon Golf is currently not in the plan; Gosden Hill, a new station at Merrow, Blackwell Farm, Normandy, Flexford and land at Garlick's Arch were all previously included as potential housing sites. The Redwood site is included - planning permission for this has now been granted. Gosden Hill – 2000 houses, 2 schools, a new Park & Ride and access to the A3 only on one side. This is a major concern to the Burpham community, due to the convoluted access, London bound, to the A3. MRA are unsure if the planning target will be reduced in the new plan. We have worked closely with the Guildford Residents' Association (GRA) and have contributed to the cost of an independent report on the housing need figure. This works out at far less than 693, at 510. MRA will review the new Local Plan when it comes out. We will keep members informed.

Once finalised the Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State in the Department for Communities and Local Government and then examined in public. That will be our opportunity to put arguments and comments to the inspector. The Plan should be adopted in December 2018 although that might be a tad optimistic.

Environmental Update given by Kate Dumbleton, Environment officer.

There has been a recent failed application near Kingfisher Drive and Park Lane for a new mobile phone mast. Kate gave some background to the history of mobile phone masts in Merrow. MRA, however, recognises the need to expand the network but will work with residents to try and ensure minimum environmental and visual impact.

Merrow Residents' History Group

Ian Anderson updated the meeting on the newly formed history group. Three meetings have been held so far. They are held on the 1st Wednesday of every other month at St John's Centre. The members are gathering together information from the area and plan a website in the future. Anyone can come along, just listen or bring items along that relate to the history of Merrow. For example old postcards, house details, pictures etc. Everyone is welcome.

Finally, thank you again to Clandon Park Garden Centre for planting our three planters outside the Horse and Groom, free of charge. You might like to pay them a visit them and have a look round.

Please do take a look at our website and if you are not yet a member, please do join. Apart from our informative twice yearly meetings, you will receive regular copies of our Merrow Life newsletter, plus email updates concerning Merrow and the surrounding area.

We welcome your feedback and hearing what is important to you, so please do email me on publicity@merrowresidents.org.uk

The MRA Committee hope you all have a lovely summer and see you again in August!

Sarah

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