



# MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

*your community voice*

## Dear Fellow Merrow Residents

### MRA's Response to Coronavirus

When the seriousness of the Covid-19 epidemic became apparent and lockdown was introduced, the national response was to provide rapid and direct support to those already registered as "vulnerable". However this qualifying bar was set very high and those who are, for example, simply elderly and infirm, were unable to arrange online deliveries so that they could self-isolate, and were entirely dependent on relatives or neighbours for this help.

Merrow Residents' Association acted quickly to provide support to local residents struggling with the Coronavirus consequences - obtaining food supplies, prescriptions, social contact, etc. Whilst initially we could contact directly only MRA members, the intent has always been to include all Merrow residents within this initiative, and ensure that as many as possible are aware that help is available from our volunteers.

There is now a Coronavirus help page on our website and we have set up a dedicated support email address:

**coronavirussupport@merrowresidents.org** and telephone number **07928 809458** for those wishing to contact us to ask for help or to volunteer. Early on we emailed all members for whom we hold an email address, and encouraged them to setup a street-based WhatsApp group for neighbours to communicate and offer/receive help very locally. For members without email we posted cards giving our support details.

We are registered with other support authorities - Surrey County Council, Guildford Borough Council and a variety of other established organisations - so that as many requests for help as possible can be referred through to us. We liaise with St John's Church to present a united offer of support and we maintain close contacts with Burpham Community Association to share experiences and ideas.

By early May we were supporting around 25 people who had asked for help and we are delighted that we have a volunteer list of around 40, which means that we are able to respond quickly when assistance is requested. We are very grateful to those of you who have come forward to offer your time and effort so generously.

The importance of local associations such as MRA has become very clear during the coronavirus epidemic and we ask everyone in Merrow who is not already a member to consider the benefits of joining now; details can be found on our website [www.merrowresidents.org](http://www.merrowresidents.org).

### AGM online on 1<sup>st</sup> June

MRA's AGM in March was postponed for obvious reasons but we would still like it to go ahead. Trying to adapt to the current situation, we hope to replace the face to face meeting with an online Zoom meeting on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June. By the time you read this, we will have contacted all members on our email list with details and also advertised the AGM on our notice boards. Any members who have not given us an email address are encouraged to do so as soon as possible by emailing [secretary@merrowresidents.org](mailto:secretary@merrowresidents.org) and including your name and address. This allows rapid communication and saves on postage costs. Our privacy policy is on our website and we send out emails very sparingly.

### A few words on the Local Plan

Much has been said about Guildford's Local Plan over the last 3 years and you would be excused if you thought that the Plan had been finally settled. Not so! GBC have only negotiated the first stage and this particular train is back on track, since all the legal challenges have now been extinguished. We are now in the midst of stage 2, even though this is slower than one might expect due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

A number of so-called Supplementary Planning Documents have now appeared, on which MRA has commented. These papers are dense, complex and also very lengthy, but are still extremely important as they set the framework in more detail for the development of the major strategic sites including Gosden Hill Farm. This site extends from Merrow Lane beyond the railway bridge up to the A3. The majority of the site is in the Parish of West Clandon.

Our concerns are concentrated on Gosden Hill Farm in view of the impact that this major housing development will have, not just on Merrow, but also on traffic in Burpham and West Clandon. We shall continue to argue that the development must include new infrastructure to ensure that additional London bound traffic from the site is not routed through the outskirts of Merrow. This will be a tough battle as developers and planning authorities tend to work on the basis that "what is being proposed won't be nearly as bad as the objectors suggest"! One finds that these

flimsy assertions are supported by consultants employed by the developer who play down the reality of the situation. One example is the traffic congestion that is commonplace at the roundabout near the Aldi supermarket in Burpham, which was foreseen by this Association but downplayed by the planning authorities.

We may be in lock-down as we write this, but the planning system is certainly not in lock-down, and we need to keep in step with the planners to ensure that consultation and transparency are not circumvented in the rush to meet the timelines in the Local Plan.

We wish everyone a safe journey through lock-down and beyond.

*The MRA Committee*

Contact us via email:  
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