

Public access affecting Golf Courses

Both our local golf courses Guildford Golf Club and Clandon Golf reported that, especially through the lockdowns, they suffered from vandalism to fairways, course furniture and equipment, and from damage caused by cyclists on greens, picnickers in bunkers and similar unacceptable behaviour. We encourage everyone to respect the open areas of land that are maintained by these local businesses, which provide us with such valuable recreational opportunities.

The grass field close to the Sports Direct Gym and Merrow tennis club and adjacent to the public footpath beside Clandon Golf forms part of the Onslow Estate and is leased to Clandon Golf. A notice has recently been erected that states that the field is private property. We are advised by Clandon Golf that this action is necessary to meet the terms of their lease and to deter anyone who wishes to use the land without consent. ❖

Bus Shelters

SCC have notified us that they are going to replace the existing Epsom Road bus shelters at the Merrow Church and Levysdene bus stops (for buses towards Guildford) with hardwood, similar to the existing ones.

A new narrow wooden shelter will be erected at the Merrow Church bus stop on the shopping parade side of Epsom Road (for buses towards Burpham & Clandon).

The bus shelters being replaced in Merrow Park are at Fitzjohn Close (on Hareward Road at the stop for buses towards Burpham) and at Greenhill Gardens (on Kingfisher Drive, at the stop for buses towards Merrow & Guildford)

New bus shelters will be erected at Fitzjohn Close (on Hareward Road, at the stop for buses towards Guildford) and Merrow Lane (on Merrow Lane, at the northbound stop for buses towards Burpham). These four will be made of aluminium with polycarbonate glazing.


The aim is to provide a more welcoming environment to wait in - with seating, lighting and better weather protection and also enable RTP1 displays to be installed, which will hopefully encourage those that do not currently use buses to consider doing so. They are due to be installed from October to December. ❖

Subscriptions

If you haven't paid your annual subscription for 2021 you will have received a reminder letter with this newsletter.

Preferably pay by bank transfer Sort Code ~~09 00 74~~ A/c ~~01511511~~ with your surname, initials and postcode as the reference to identify you on our bank statement or by enclosing a cheque to 'Merrow Residents' Association' **MRA Treasurer, ~~020 89 99 99 99, Guildford GU1 4 0XR~~**

To receive emails from MRA of events/local issues contact secretary@merrowresidents.org and include your full name and address.



Merrow Residents' Association
Autumn Meetings

THURSDAY 21st OCTOBER
"Question Time with Angela Richardson MP"

Angela was elected as MP for Guildford in 2019 and the evening is an opportunity to ask questions and to hear her ideas for Merrow and for Guildford.

MONDAY 22nd NOVEMBER
"Question Time with Cllr John Rigg."

John is GBC Lead Cllr for Regeneration and has portfolio responsibilities for Major Projects, Infrastructure and the Town Centre Master Plan.

Both events will be held on Zoom at 7.45pm for 8pm.
Contact secretary@merrowresidents.org to register for the meeting link or for help to use Zoom.

Anyone who lives or works in Merrow is welcome to become a member of MRA via the link on our website merrowresidents.org.uk and then attend the evenings.

North Guildford Food Bank - Update

Merrow Food Bank operates under the umbrella of the *North Guildford Food Bank*. Thanks to local residents for all your generous help and to all those who have offered to transport the goods too. Your donations, left in the porch of St John's Church (Wednesdays and Sundays 11am – 5pm) have been gratefully received.

The list of weekly requirements is usually displayed in Sainsbury's Burpham and is available on the MRA, St. John's Church and North Guildford Food Bank websites. If no list is

available, it does not mean that they do not need anything, quite the opposite. Your donations of non-perishable foods, such as tinned soup, meat, fish, puddings and fruit, tea bags, coffee, washing up liquid etc. are always needed and will be for the foreseeable future. Please do keep supporting our local community.

Donations of money can also be made, if preferred. Details on the North Guildford Food Bank website.

Wanted! Drivers to deliver Food Bank parcels late Thursday afternoons from Bushy Hill Community Centre around Merrow. If you can help, they'd love to hear from you: volunteers@ngfoodbank.co.uk or contact Jane Farquharson on 01753 620017. ❖

MRA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2021-2022

Chairman	Andrew Strawson
Vice-Chairman	<i>Vacant</i>
Treasurer	Dave Smith
Environment Officer	Stephen Rudd
Membership Secretary	Claire Rymell
Secretary	Henriette Whitehead-van Prooije
Webmaster	Dave Smith
Publicity Officer	<i>Vacant</i>
Committee Members	Keith Meldrum, Gordon Farquharson, Denise Hilton, Chris Holliday, Lorna Seymour and John Pitkin

For more information on MRA's activities see merrowresidents.org.uk



MERROW LIFE

The Newsletter of the

MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

your community voice for over 50 years

Autumn 2021

Issue No 50

www.merrowresidents.org.uk

Don't forget

Autumn Events

21st October and 22nd November

Chairman's Report

Another summer has passed, the evenings are beginning to draw in again and autumn mists and falling leaves are a reminder of winter on its way.

Your committee has remained busy, with much happening in and around Merrow involving both local planning applications and Guildford strategic site developments. The possible erection of a new 5G phone mast in a very residential location in Boxgrove was refused by GBC following a highly active local campaign. 5G is a continuing and contentious issue, with arguments passionately felt on both sides, but there are very restricted grounds for specific objection and we expect many more similar applications across Merrow and Guildford.

We have maintained our focus on neighbourliness and community activities. Merrow Highways Community Volunteers have continued with tidying and removing rubbish across the neighbourhood whenever lockdown regulations have allowed. We have continued our work on Merrow Downs, engaging with GBC and GGC (Guildford Golf Club) to improve the environmental management of the Downs. MRA were well represented in a working group in May that completely cleared Browning's Down of the pernicious and invasive Perfoliate Alexanders.

After recent MRA talks on local nature (featuring Merrow Downs last October and the Thames Basin Heathlands in February), we are moving our attention towards local affairs for our end of year meetings, holding conversations with Angela Richardson, our local MP,

on Thursday 21st October and then with John Rigg, the GBC Councillor responsible for regeneration, major projects and infrastructure on Monday 22nd November. Both meetings will be held on Zoom. We had hoped to reintroduce some face-to-face element to these meetings, with a combined online and live format - but that has not yet been possible. We will aim to do this for the AGM on 28th March 2022.

Thanks as ever are due to the unstinting efforts of your committee in leading and supporting the wide and varied work of the MRA. If you are interested in helping out with any of the activities covered in this newsletter don't hesitate to email us at secretary@merrowresidents.org. There are always opportunities to be involved and help is always welcome!

Andrew Strawson *Chairman* ❖

Environment Report - Climate change and Net Zero Carbon

In July 2019 GBC declared a *Climate Emergency* with a commitment that the Council achieve Net Zero Carbon status by 2030. GBC reports its progress periodically, the most recent being a summary under the leadership of Cllr. Jan Harwood (see www.guildford.gov.uk/article/24636/Our-progress-in-tackling-climate-change).

MRA leans on its membership with Guildford Environmental Forum (GEF) (www.guildfordenvironment.org.uk), which also provides individual membership to all MRA members, and to links to a newer charity called Zero Carbon Guildford (ZCG) (www.zerocarbondenver.org/). GEF is a voluntary organisation with over 250 members and receives some support from GBC.

GEF states "Everybody is welcome – we provide a place to meet other people with similar concerns, and a determination to do something about them. Our members work alongside local councils and community groups, and we provide a forum for new ideas, think tanks, and a chance to learn more about global and national environmental issues.

GEF Members receive a quarterly newsletter and priority bookings at all our local events." ZCG is really only just starting up and intends to open a 'Climate Emergency Centre' in a vacant shop in town to create a space for community collaboration.

ZCG says "This space will focus on building resilience and adaptation, to help Guildford cope with the accelerating challenges posed by ecological destruction and the climate crisis." At the moment we're not proposing specific MRA activities but will have a display presence there.

The author has attended various meetings of GEF, notable ones being about large-scale solar energy and active transport for older people around Guildford. If you're interested, we suggest you keep an eye on their extensive programme of activities. MRA will provide links to ones we feel most relevant. There are also lots of other great opportunities to network and learn near to home. At the beginning of September, **Fully Charged** (<https://fullycharged.show/>) held a green tech event at Farnborough International and there are lots of initiatives at the University.

What has MRA done recently in the carbon-reduction arena?

Thus far most of our focus has been planning related. We submitted a detailed response to the GBC Local Plan SPD (supplementary planning document) related to energy and sustainability, and more recently passed comment on the *Tretower* planning application where there seems to be little preparation for 2030.

A little earlier we supported Prof. Kumar (Surrey University Global Centre for Clean Air Research, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences) in the preparation of his paper concerning air pollution around and in St. Thomas of Canterbury school. He has also published very interesting recent work around masks and COVID. If anyone is interested, I'll send you links.

Also contact me if you would like to share your experiences with using electric vehicles, solar panels, heat pumps with fellow residents.

Gordon Farquharson ❖

PLANNING REPORT - MERROW

The MRA Executive Committee has been engaging with a number of contentious local planning applications recently:

TRETOWER HOUSE, MERROW STREET

The proposal for six new houses at Tretower House in Merrow Street attracted many expressions of concern ranging from the ecological impact (it is a site of special importance to a range of amphibians as well as small mammals) to the potential impact on water drainage and increased vehicle movements near Merrow Infant School. We did not object to the application but raised a number of concerns reflecting local residents' worries. Our Environment Officer included an extensive, expert description of the ecological implications and a list of recommendations. Fortunately, the developer has been very prepared to engage with residents and address their concerns so we remain optimistic of positive outcomes with the development application.

5G PHONE MAST

There was a very vigorous reaction to the proposal to erect an eighteen metre 5G communications mast near the corner of Boxgrove Lane/Merrow Copse, with 121 objections registered on the GBC planning website. This was not a normal

PLANNING REPORT - GUILDFORD

There is a great deal that could be said about the various proposals for development in Guildford outside our ward as Merrow residents will be aware from all the reports in the local press and on social media, so this report will concentrate on the larger sites.

GARLICK'S ARCH SITE - SEND

Planning permission has been granted for the first stage of the development of the Garlick's Arch site in Send Marsh adjacent to the A3 on the A247. This is both an outline planning consent for part of the site and detailed consent for the remainder. In total it is envisaged that more than 500 new homes will be built there. Some major changes to the plans were made following detailed discussions with Guildford Borough Council (GBC) and the planning department brought a large well informed team to the meeting to allay the concerns of members of the committee and the public.

It is noteworthy that no statutory organisation such as Surrey County Council objected to the proposals whilst the local Parish Councils raised a long list of serious concerns. We are concerned if this is the way that significant planning applications will be dealt with by GBC in the future, weakening the influence of smaller interested organisations.

DEBENHAM'S SITE

The MRA has commented on the developer's consultation on the development of the old Debenham's site, now called St Mary's Wharf, in Guildford. We consulted with our members about this consultation and we are grateful for their responses. Some aspects of the development are really exciting - especially opening up the river, the provision of more open spaces and the provision of restaurants opening onto the river. The MRA has expressed concern about the height of the two buildings which is a very contentious issue. On the one hand the developer needs to make a good profit from the homes to be built and will argue that more storeys are necessary to make the scheme financially viable, whilst many organisations are concerned that views within and across the town may be adversely affected. I am

planning application because local councils have limited powers to reject such a proposal, which is classed as 'permissible development' under central government regulations. The MRA submitted a strong objection, largely on the grounds of poor consultation, the choice of an insensitive location and the lack of any published plan for 5G rollout in the area. The objections were sufficiently powerful that GBC were able to refuse the *Prior Approval* request but we now await the next proposal as the introduction of 5G telecommunications is not going to stop here (and let's remember that it is for the benefit of the public - there was strong resistance to the erection of 3G and 4G infrastructure years ago and yet most of us now benefit from the advantages that mobile communications bring). Our Chairman is raising the lack of 5G rollout visibility with Angela Richardson, our Guildford MP.

MERROW CROFT LODGE, 175 EPSOM ROAD

The proposal to extend Merrow Croft Lodge (175 Epsom Rd) and build an additional three bedroom house in the garden has attracted local concern. The Lodge is a 'locally listed' building which, although not protected in the same way as a listed building under the National Heritage List for England, means that applications for alteration are reviewed

sure that this argument will continue through the next stages of the development of this site.

WEYSIDE URBAN VILLAGE

The MRA were involved with a comprehensive meeting on the 10th September with representatives of the team that has brought forward plans for the development of Weyside Urban Village to discuss the concerns raised by both the MRA and the Guildford Residents' Association. The outline planning application is due to be considered at a special meeting of the Planning Committee on 20th October.

A tremendous amount of preparatory work has gone into this application to ensure that all statutory bodies who have to be consulted such as Surrey County Council as the local highways authority and the Environment Agency are content. At the same time Councillors have been routinely briefed on progress. This is a quite massive development and includes a capital budget of £360m from GBC for the infrastructure phase of the development.

Our meeting covered concerns such as separation from the river, green spaces, building heights, appearance and positioning, the *Sustainable Movement Corridor* and risk assessments for traffic, environmental contamination and flooding. A further meeting is planned for November. One of the more worrying features is that there is no detailed GBC plan for the Sustainable Movement Corridor which is planned to link the Weyside Urban Village with the university and hospital and the town centre but also Burpham and Gosden Hill Farm, and may even stretch into Merrow. We shall continue to express our concern that no such plans have yet been drawn up. Discussion on the development of the Slyfield site commenced over nineteen years ago and does, at long last, appear to be making some real progress but there is a great deal of work yet to do as we are only at the outline planning application stage.

LOCAL PLAN

Members may have seen the recent Press Release from GBC who have agreed to prioritise five transport schemes, from their Local Plan infrastructure schedule, to help meet current housing targets in the adopted Local Plan. They go

to ensure that the more historically sensitive aspects of the structure are not needlessly lost or detracted by the surroundings. The main concerns, which MRA raised, are on the access to and from the Epsom Road on a bend, inadequate parking provision and cramped over-development of the site.

20 MERROW CROFT

Similar concerns about over-development have been raised by many neighbours to 20 Merrow Croft, where there is a proposal to build a three bedroom house in the garden. MRA has supported the objections on the grounds of over-development, parking and the adverse impact on the character of the street scene.

MERROW LAWN TENNIS CLUB

A proposal by Merrow Lawn Tennis Club to revive a long unused grass court, installing an all-weather surface and lighting masts for use during evenings, caused concern among neighbours. The area of land concerned is in the Green Belt and is currently unused. MRA supported objections on behalf of local members regarding development in the Green Belt, light pollution and noise intrusion.

Chris Holliday ❖

on to say that if SCC and Highways England agree, they can ask central government for funding for the schemes. One of the schemes is the construction of a new Guildford (East) railway station in Merrow. Don't hold your breath as this suggestion has been on the table for years!

PRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR JOHN RIGG

I do hope that as many of you as possible will join us for the presentation on the 22nd November from Councillor John Rigg who is the lead councillor for GBC on the town centre regeneration and hear what he has to say as to what the town may look like in a few years' time. I know John to be an open, forthright and knowledgeable speaker and I am looking forward to his talk and for the opportunity for members to ask him their own questions.

Keith Meldrum ❖

Merrow Notice Boards

There is currently room on the local notice boards if you want to publicise any non-profit making, community minded endeavours. MRA has access to its own and SCC's notice boards in the following four locations –

- Epsom Road outside the Debra shop
- At the junction of Merrow Street/Epsom Road
- Kingfisher Drive at the bottom of Merrow Street
- Merrow Common.

We can also display notices at *Peacock's Delicatessen* and on the Boxgrove Association's board, both at the Boxgrove shops.

Please deliver or post six copies of your A4 or A5 posters to:

Lorna Seymour at 11 Trodd Lane, GU1 2YT. ❖

Beating Hearts Merrow - Update

Thanks to the amazing generosity of local people, businesses and organisations, Beating Hearts Merrow (BHM) has now raised the funds to install a second defibrillator. This one will be situated at Merrow Village Hall and will be in place any day now. Consultations and fundraising are now underway for a third defibrillator, possibly at Bushy Hill Community Centre.

However, defibrillators will only save lives if people have the confidence to use them. So BHM is reaching out to local communities to offer training with a training defibrillator, under the guidance of accredited trainers. This

Nature on Merrow Downs at the end of Summer

If you walk onto the downs on a warm day at the end of summer, before cutting, you will hear the buzzing of insects and see the species rich chalk grassland that is clinging on here into autumn.

Still flowering are Harebell, Small Scabious, Common Restharrow, Tufted Vetch, Rough Hawkbit, Red Clover, Yarrow, Meadow Vetchling, Common Bird's-foot Trefoil, Wild Marjoram and Common Knapweed, which provide a late nectar source for butterflies such as Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Common Blue. Rosebay Willowherb provides a nectar source for Holly Blues that will be laying on the Ivy flower buds in the hedgerows. Small Coppers will nectar on the Common Ragwort along with Meadow Browns and the last of the Gatekeepers.

In the old prisoner of war 'parade ground' a few Autumn Gentian and Common Eyebright are flowering along with late Kidney Vetch, Small Scabious and Harebells; those that have survived the people walking dogs, running, playing football, and illegally having barbecues and leaving bottles and other rubbish here.

You may see a Kestrel mobbed by a Crow as it hovers over this area seeking a small mammal such as a Field Vole. Earlier in the summer, Skylarks were here and this grassland had the frothy heads of Dropwort, many Common Spotted and Pyramidal Orchids and, this year, three Bee Orchids. Now Yellow Rattle seeds are rattling in their seed pods and next year's plants will suppress the grass and allow this rich chalk flora to flourish. Red Bartsia, still flowering, does a similar job as a parasite on grasses. This is Brownings Down, the part of Merrow Downs west of the golf course.

Pockets of this rich chalk grassland still exist on the golf course and are unique habitats in their own way. The

Guildford in Bloom

Guildford in Bloom celebrated its 40th anniversary this year. After last year's gap due to the Covid pandemic, *Clandon Park Garden Centre* once again provided Merrow with a colourful display for the tubs outside the Horse and Groom, winning another Bronze award in the *Guildford in Bloom* competition.

MRA very much appreciate Lee and Nicola's commitment

approach was highly successful when tested at the recent Burpham WellFest event. People of all ages, including children had a hands-on experience of learning cardiac massage and using a defibrillator.

Judith Hunt of Trodds Lane, who set up BHM after having a cardiac arrest and being successfully resuscitated said *"there are around 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests a year and early CPR and defibrillation can double the chances of surviving. If the BHM initiative saves a single life, all the fundraising and training will be worth it."*

To find out more about training and becoming involved with Beating Hearts Merrow, please email savealife@beatingheartsmarrow.uk ❖

'chalk pit' is one of these areas with 14 plants on the Surrey Rare Plant Register including Frog Orchid, Juniper, Round-headed Rampion, Autumn Gentian, Bastard Toadflax, Common Rock-rose and Carline Thistle, all vulnerable to those who are unaware they are there. Here is an isolated colony of Chalk Hill Blue butterflies and a few females are still laying on the leaves of Horseshoe Vetch. During the lockdowns there was increased usage of Merrow Downs and people were seen



The 'chalk pit' on Merrow Downs

cycling and scrambling on the slopes of the 'chalk pit' eroding them. Now a few golfers, hitting into the 'chalk pit' instead of over it, do not realise that there are rare plants and butterflies here as they look for their golf balls.

On the 'wildflower slope', which leads down to Walnut Tree Bottom, Common Spotted Orchids had a very good flowering, as did the Kidney Vetch, larval host plant of the Small Blue. In early September you can still see Meadow Browns nectaring from Small Scabious and the rarer Devil's-bit Scabious.

There is so much potential on Merrow Downs for wildlife and people to co-exist but they need to share this rare habitat and learn how to conserve it for future generations.

Gillian and Ken Elsom ❖

in resuming the seasonal planting, which always gives residents of Merrow much pleasure. Celebrating 40 years was reflected in their choice of red planting colours.

Thanks also go to Kate Dumbleton and the watering team of Peter Alvarez, Laura Anderson, Caroline Kissin, Magdalena Littrup-Fil, Jean Robson, Henriette Whitehead-van Prooije and Jan Wilkinson for volunteering for the watering rota to keep the tubs looking their best.

An impressive community effort. ❖