



NOTICE OF MEETING
The 52nd Annual General Meeting of
MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
will be held on
MONDAY 28th March 2022 at 8 PM
at St.Johns Centre and also via Zoom
Chairman - Andrew Strawson

If you wish to attend the AGM in person or via Zoom
 please email secretary@merrowresidents.org in advance to reserve a place.
 Or call 07517 427 859 and leave us a message with your name and address.

Full Agenda enclosed separately

Subscription Renewal

If you haven't already paid your subscription for 2022 you will receive a renewal letter enclosed with this newsletter.

School Traffic Issues

For many years MRA has been involved in trying to alleviate some of the traffic and parking issues in the Horseshoe Lane/Boxgrove Lane area at the start and end of the school day caused by several schools being located within a short distance.

Most recently we have been party to detailed discussions with SCC, on the instigation of Cllr Steven Lee, on these traffic and parking problems. SCC have produced a draft report on possible improvements that has yet to go out to consultation. We understand that there is a plan to temporarily close the junction of Horseshoe Lane West exit onto Epsom Road on a trial basis while allowing traffic to turn into HLW from Epsom Road, leaving HLW as a two way street, and collect data on the traffic impact.

Fiona Davidson, Surrey County Councillor for South East Guildford (which does not include Merrow) has responsibilities for Children's Services, including safeguarding. She has let MRA know that she is working with Boxgrove School, the Police, SCC and GBC to alleviate the safety and traffic issues around Boxgrove School. To deter illegal and dangerous parking the Police will patrol the area and impose fines if necessary.

Boxgrove School's lollipop lady retired some time ago and it has been unable to recruit a new crossing patrol person. If anyone is interested in this role please contact office@boxgrove.surrey.sch.uk

MRA presents "A Route Map to Net Zero 2050" on Zoom

Not many people realise that around 40% of the direct CO2 emissions in Surrey come from heating our homes, and another 25% or so from transport. Clearly, action needs to be taken, but where do we start? ZERO Carbon Guildford (ZCG), the local charity provides a platform for understanding the Net Zero challenges, through sharing information, ideas and experience.

An online talk, recently presented to ZCG, will be given by Gordon Farquharson, MRA Committee member, Guildford Environmental Forum and ZCG member. He is a Chartered Environmental Building Services Engineer with a wealth of built environment experience.

This first talk in a series is intended for home owners and private landlords, and introduces us to the background and timing of the UK's Net Zero targets, our local Surrey CO2 context from the Surrey Climate Commission, and suggests a route map through the often confusing profusion of solutions and technologies out there. Later talks will explore improving legacy heating systems, solutions for different property types, and the benefits and challenges of different solutions.

To register for the online talk on Wednesday 16th March at 7:30 for a 7:45 pm start, finishing at 9 pm contact Gordon Farquharson on gj.farquharson@icloud.com or 07785 265 909.

Local Councillors' Advice Surgery

GBC Councillors Deborah Seabrook and Steven Lee, SCC Councillor George Potter and PCSO Damon Young are holding their next drop in surgery on Wednesday 23rd March at 5-6pm at Merrow Methodist church. Other surgeries later in the year will be advertised nearer the time on notice boards and in Merrow Pages. In the meantime, contact: deborah.seabrook@guildford.gov.uk or 07762 555 932.

Defibrillators in Merrow

Many congratulations to Beating Hearts Merrow who have installed their second defibrillator in Merrow, at the Village Hall. They are currently fundraising for their third and fourth defibrillators which will be located at Merrow Common and Bushy Hill.

Any members who wish to donate and help Beating Hearts complete these projects as soon as possible can do so via <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/beatingheartsmarrow>

Memories of Merrow

An evocative compilation of the historic memories of local residents' lives in Merrow was published in 2000. Copies of *Memories of Merrow* are still available from MRA, in return for a small donation to Beating Hearts Merrow. Contact secretary@merrowresidents.org if you would like a copy.

Merrow Life is published by Merrow Residents' Association for circulation to its members. Unless stated, the views expressed may not always represent the views of the Committee of the Association or those of individual members of the Committee. Any enquiries can be sent to secretary@merrowresidents.org or to 28 Trodds Lane Guildford GU1 2XR

MERROW LIFE

The Newsletter of the



Spring 2022

Issue No 51

MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

your community voice for over 50 years

www.merrowresidents.org

Don't forget

AGM

Monday
28th March
at 8 pm

Chairman's Report

We seem to be emerging slowly from many of the dangers and restrictions of the Covid pandemic, but continue to recognise the need to protect and take care of the most vulnerable. MRA hosted two 'socially distanced' online events in the Autumn, the first with Angela Richardson MP and the second with Cllr. John Rigg. The meetings were well attended and both speakers were generous with their time and their reflections, covering many issues affecting both Merrow and Guildford.

It is very clear that because so much Government (taxpayer) money has been spent over the past couple of years dealing with the pandemic that we are now in for a period of belt tightening and, if we want things done in Merrow, the local community will need to help out to drive this in many areas. We know that there is plenty of neighbourhood support to help out - based on the enthusiastic response to the Merrow Highways Community Volunteers (MHCV) and the Merrow Coronavirus Volunteers and the excellent work that they have both done over the past couple of years. Indeed, MHCV are short of projects in Merrow, and seeking pathways to clear of vegetation and places in need of a litter pick or tidy up. Other suggestions for community volunteering are always welcome.

We continue to be active on the many local and Guildford wide planning matters, as you will read about later, and we have been very pleased with the response to many of the representations that we have made - typically resulting in plans being modified or set aside where they are simply inappropriate.

We have responded to various public consultations including the Boundary Commission Review and the Surrey Hills Area of Natural Beauty (ANOB) Review which might lead to significant improvements to our area and Guildford more generally. On the Boundary Commission projections Merrow Ward would have a slightly shrinking population over the coming years relative to other wards, and for that reason proposed that the ward should be expanded. MRA took the view that the bound-

ary should be expanded to the west to include Boxgrove Gardens and Boxgrove Park which have many common and overlapping issues. This view has been supported by GBC's own submission and would also ensure that Merrow Ward would continue to enjoy the benefit of three ward borough councillors, as at present. The Surrey Hills ANOB Review is especially significant for Merrow, as we include much rolling countryside between the southern boundary of Guildford and the Surrey Hills. More on this can be found in the article on the right.

Looking forward to the AGM on 28th March, for the first time we will operate with a mixed format, enabling a return to a face to face meeting in St John's Centre for those who find this comfortable, combined with an online broadcast of the meeting to allow members the choice of listening from home. It will be wonderful to meet up again - and still allow those who want to watch and get involved from home to do so. As we think that it is wise to limit the number of members attending in the main hall we ask that you let us know in advance via secretary@merrowresidents.org or leave us a message on 07517 427 859 if you wish to attend in person. We will keep as many windows open as possible - so please come well clothed - and at the present time we will be asking that masks be worn unless you are speaking. Also email us to request the Zoom link to attend the AGM online.

After three years in post, I am keen to bring fresh blood into the MRA Committee and I have indicated to the Committee that I am willing to stand for one further year until the AGM in 2023 if that is the wish of the AGM. In the meantime we need to find a new Chairman, so if anyone would like to talk to me about joining the Committee with a view to becoming Chairman in the future I would very much like to hear from you on a confidential basis.

If you are interested in finding out more about any of our activities or you are considering joining our friendly committee, don't hesitate to email us at secretary@merrowresidents.org There is always an opportunity to be involved.

Andrew Strawson *Chairman*

Surrey Hills AONB Boundary Extension

A formal boundary review of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is now underway by Natural England which will consider the case for extending the existing AONB. The evaluation area that is most relevant to Merrow, designated as EA6, includes the Clandon Golf site and the woodland area east of it, Clandon Park and Hatchlands Park, and extends eastwards to the western edge of East Horsley.

Members were asked to contribute to the evidence gathering phase of the review process, submitting photos and comments on what makes a place special in terms of its natural beauty. By the deadline of 31st January more than 2,000 submissions were received from individuals and groups across Surrey, far exceeding expectations, with 400 received in the final 24 hours! The submission for EA6 made by MRA can be found on our website merrowresidents.org under the Environment tab.

Guildford Residents Association (GRA) also submitted a very comprehensive evidence form, covering evaluation areas EA2 through EA6. GRA's submission also exhorts Natural England to consider additional areas outside the published evaluation areas. This document is available on GRA's website guildfordresidents.co.uk

The next stages for the Surrey Hills AONB Boundary Review are as follows:

- Evaluation of Natural Beauty**
 This stage will begin after the initial engagement activities have been completed so that all the relevant information provided is taken into account. It involves a combination of desk based work and detailed field survey and follows published guidelines to provide judgements in a transparent and consistent way.
- Desirability Assessment**
 Just because an area is assessed as meeting the natural beauty criterion, it does not mean that it will necessarily be designated. Natural England must also deem it to be desirable to designate.

Continued on Page 2/...

Surrey Hills AONB Boundary Extension *(Concluded from Page 1)*

3. *Identifying a Suitable Boundary*

If Natural England decides that an area has sufficient natural beauty and that it is desirable to designate, the last step prior to statutory consultation is to identify a possible suitable detailed boundary.

4. *Statutory consultation on the Final Recommendations*

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act requires that Natural England undertakes a statutory Local Authority consultation prior to reaching a final decision but in practice Natural England will open this consultation to anyone with an interest in the project.

AONB's are designated and protected through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) and their purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the areas they cover. All AONBs must prepare and

Local Buses

MRA has regular meetings with Deborah Seabrook, one of the GBC Councillors for Merrow Ward. She is aware of concerns about the changes and deterioration in our bus services. We asked her for the current position and she responded as follows:-

"I was not consulted about the changes, but I have been making representations on your behalf since I became aware of them. In January, Fiona Davidson (Surrey County Councillor for Guildford SE) and I met with Stagecoach, which provides service No. 1 along the Epsom Road to Bushy Hill and No. 6 around Burpham and Merrow Park.

We were encouraged that Stagecoach seem genuinely keen to improve, expand and invest in the services they provide to Guildford. Their goal is to create an attractive, reliable service and grow their passenger numbers and to get people to leave their cars at home. They were well aware of the unreliability of the service and were working hard to address it. They had hoped to recruit ex-Arriva drivers, but they ended up with far fewer than they expected. They were also hit by omicron infections and isolating. Stagecoach has a large number of drivers in training, which takes four months. They are also looking to recruit former drivers who may have drifted away during the pandemic. They are therefore optimistic that reliability and frequency should be improving by May.

Cllr George Potter and I subsequently met with SCC's bus team and have followed up several points. Arriva withdrew services for commercial reasons. While Stagecoach have replaced some of them, they have not replaced with identical services because they did not feel they were commercially viable. Transport is extremely high on SCC's agenda and list of priorities, but they are not able to provide transport links to/from everywhere when the commercial market withdraws. They look as far as possible to provide communities with the necessary links to essential services but cannot replicate the non-commercial ventures Arriva have withdrawn from. SCC also explained the top priority was to maintain bus services for schools. It sounds obvious but hadn't occurred to me!

SCC consider that the doctor's surgery in Kingfisher Drive is an acceptable walk from Bushy Hill Drive area for the fit and able-bodied. For those residents who are unable to

publish a Management Plan, which is reviewed every five years. These Plans are adopted by the partner local authorities and their policies carry statutory force.

The CROW Act also places additional responsibilities on local authorities and the planning system. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) determines that AONBs and their Management Plans must be a material consideration in the planning system and all public bodies down to parish council level must consider the nationally protected status given to AONBs in any land use related decisions. In practice this means that planning permission for major development within an AONB is generally refused and where it is allowed, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which does not override the importance to conserve and enhance the scenic beauty of the area.

Stephen Rudd our Environment Officer will present a short talk on this subject at our AGM on the 28th March, giving you the opportunity of posing any questions you may have. ❖

walk this distance or live further away, the Community Transport sector can assist with doctors' appointments and shopping trips. The contacts are: GBC Community Transport guildford.gov.uk/communitytransport (01483 458052) and Care for Guildford careforguildford.org.uk/ (01483 566635)

While there is an opportunity to look at diverting subsidised service No.18 via Kingfisher Drive, this would mean taking the bus out of Sainsburys as both could not be served with the one bus which operates service 18. They have asked Safeguard to look at the loadings to Sainsburys but feel withdrawing the supermarket route wouldn't be the correct course of action, especially as the service has only been operating for 8 weeks (at the time of writing).

SCC have a Bus Service Improvement Plan, with the objective of improving the services and so encouraging people out of their cars. They have made a bid for £120m over 3 years to the Dept of Transport and are awaiting a decision. As soon as they do, they will start prioritising and detailed planning. Of course, this funding is for the whole of Surrey, not just Guildford. Any funding will ultimately provide better bus priority in Surrey and better ticketing options for residents (with tap on tap off technology) but they will be unable to provide transport links that aren't going to be a sustainable option. They are required to provide value for money services within the parameters of the Local Bus Services Budget, which is fully utilised. They will continue to work with Safeguard and Stagecoach, together with the Community Transport sector to encourage and expand the journey opportunities available to Surrey residents and encourage new commercial transport links where demand and opportunities exist.

Finally, the 300 Park & Ride bus. Originally it was proposed to suspend this service at the same time as the 100 service from Spectrum. GBC officers argued the case and the service was retained, albeit on a reduced basis. However, the bus now stops near the Horse & Groom pub, on both sides of the Epsom Road. The adult return fare is £1.90, including up to 2 accompanying children. Older person's bus-pass, £1.10 day return. This reduced fare is subsidised by Stagecoach. Disabled person's bus-pass, travel free after 9.30am. Season tickets and other fares also available."

Full details and timetables of all local buses are at surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/buses-and-other-transport/bus-timetables/guildford-godalming-and-haslemere ❖

Planning Report - Developments in Guildford

The Weyside Urban Village

MRA considered and commented on the planning application for the Weyside Urban Village (WUV) that covers the GBC Slyfield site which has now been given limited planning approval subject to conditions and will lead on to many subsidiary applications; one of these covers the relocation of the sewage works. Only recently we heard that Government approval had been given to the re-location of the allotments - an issue that had been under discussion for some time and had caused the development to stall.

This large and extremely costly development covers the relocation of the current sewage works, the construction of up to 1,550 homes and a local community centre, new site for a new council depot and the construction of a road that will link the WUV with the University and the Royal Surrey County Hospital and run to the new proposed housing site at Gosden Hill Farm through Burpham. We have been involved with two very useful meetings with the companies involved with various aspects of the WUV planning application and we were able to explore concerns relating to highways

Planning Report - Merrow

As you will read below, several of the planning applications in Merrow that we reported on in autumn 2021 are still undetermined. The delays in dealing with the applications are due to unusually high GBC Planning staff turnover and the difficulty in recruitment during the pandemic, coinciding with unprecedented numbers of applications. These delays have driven some applicants to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol on the grounds of GBC's failure to determine within a reasonable timescale. Our local councillors are well aware of the problems and we continue to engage with them and ensure they are aware of the frustration for many residents - applicants, supporters and objectors alike.

Tretower House, Merrow Street

A fresh planning application for six new houses at Tretower in Merrow Street was submitted just before Christmas. The local developer, Aspen Homes, had been in discussion with GBC Planning Department and agreed to reduce the size of the houses and submit a new application. MRA submitted comments on the new application and we have had fruitful dialogue with the developer on several aspects of the proposal. It is interesting to note that the activist group Extinction Rebellion have submitted comments as well: they raise some thought-provoking ideas which are worth reading (21/P/02643).

20 Merrow Croft

The development of a new house in the garden of an existing property was not determined by the Planning Department within the target time and consequently the applicant has submitted an appeal for the decision to be made by The Planning Inspectorate. Comments and letters about the application, originally submitted to GBC by interested parties, and all other documents have been forwarded to the Inspectorate for determination. MRA objected on the cramped and out of character proposed 3 bed house in the small cul-de-sac.

Merrow Croft Lodge, 175 Epsom Road

The refurbishment and increased size of the 2 bedroom Victorian Lodge plus an additional new build 3 bed house

access, proximity of the road and the houses to the River Wey, 'greening' of the site and contamination of the land.

St Mary's Wharf

MRA also commented on the proposals for St Mary's Wharf which is the proposed development to replace the old Debenhams's building, where there are serious concerns about the height of the two buildings, their bulk and the impact on the neighbouring historic buildings in the Conservation Area and whether an opportunity has been missed to really open up the river to the public.

Discussion on this application is extremely active and involves all the major organisations and associations in Guildford and other bodies such as Historic England that share these concerns. It is clear that discussions on the future of this site will run and run.

GBC's Development Management Policies

MRA have also commented on the draft management policies that are the second part of the Guildford Local Plan

has still not been determined by the Planning Department. MRA objected to the application, on highway safety and inadequate parking. We are concerned about the length of time it is taking for a decision to be made.

Firfield, 17 Grove Road

A recent application to infill the garden of Firfield Lodge, a wing of the Victorian building, with a single story 3 bed house, has attracted many objections. MRA provided advice to a concerned member living adjacent to Firfield Lodge. The issues about overdevelopment, parking, vehicle movements and loss of amenities together with the removal of trees and boundary hedging are concerning.

41 Down Road

The developer of this site provided one less parking space than the approved plans showed and submitted a retrospective application to regularise the non-conformance. This application generated a large number of objections and the GBC Planning Committee rejected the application in March last year. The applicant has gone to appeal, referencing a parking survey report which they claim supports their case, but which had not been made available for review. GBC served an Enforcement Notice at the property in January requiring compliance with the original planning application but this will be overridden if the appeal is successful. A complex and long-running case that has generated much concern for local residents long plagued by parking problems. We are commenting on the parking review report which we believe is misleading.

Merrow Lawn Tennis Club

A proposal by Merrow Lawn Tennis Club to revive a long unused court, installing an all-weather surface and lighting masts for use during evenings was rejected by the GBC Planning Committee in January. It is understood that the Merrow Lawn Tennis Club will appeal the decision.

Urnfield

At the December Planning Committee meeting councillors overrode the planning officer's recommendation for approval of a major upgrade of the sports ground at Urnfield and rejected the application. Urnfield lies at the end of

and set out the policies that must be met for the development of the borough over the next 15 years.

Our response can be read on our website. The detail is immensely important since it covers every imaginable matter from housing extensions to first homes; from protecting important habitats to air and water quality; from the impact of light to parking standards. We commented on the earlier version in 2020 and have responded this time with concerns about housing density and height (where there is no policy at all!) and parking standards. It was rewarding to note that some of our comments and suggestions on the earlier drafts have been heeded.

After GBC have considered all the comments that have been submitted they will then finalise the policies and submit them to a Planning Inspector for review, as happened with the first part of the Local Plan.

MRA will have the opportunity to put our views to the Inspector if we still have concerns about individual elements of the policies. So this is work in progress and a continuation of a long and laborious process leading to the finalisation of the Guildford Local Plan - a journey that started in 2013. ❖

Downside Road, adjacent to Merrow Downs, and MRA was one of very many objectors to the plans which included eight, 18 metre tall floodlight columns. While we are very supportive of improved sports facilities for local schools, the impact of the development on a protected Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty would have been dramatic. We do not yet know if the applicants, Guildford County School and Tormead School will appeal the decision.

Electricity Sub-station on Merrow Common Road

We have been extremely involved with some of our members over the installation of a replacement electricity sub-station on Merrow Common Road. This work is now going ahead but caused real concerns to neighbours about its position, access and visibility.

Extensive discussions and meetings took place with UKPN, the electricity supplier, and involved our MP and Cllr Deborah Seabrook. The work was complicated by the fact that the installation was covered by Government 'Permitted Rights' provisions where no planning application was required. After some very lengthy negotiations UKPN came forward with a series of compromises that satisfactorily addressed the majority of our concerns. ❖

Merrow War Memorial

Sadly the high winds in February have seriously damaged the top of the Merrow War Memorial in the St John's Churchyard. The cross and top elements are in pieces on the ground and it appears that the internal ironwork supporting the structure has corroded away.

It is too early to know how the repairs will be organised. ❖

Potholes

Members are becoming increasingly concerned about potholes and how they can report them to SCC. The reporting page for various highways issues is:

surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roadworks-and-maintenance/report-a-highway-problem ❖