



MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

your community voice since 1969

Dear Fellow Merrow Residents

Major developments in the town centre - in November the planning application for the development of **St Mary's Wharf** (the old Debenhams site) was approved by the Planning Committee by one vote, with members appearing to vote along party political lines. There are serious reservations about the height and density of the two new buildings and the impact they will have on the neighbouring Conservation Area and Grade II listed St Nicolas Church.

The equally contentious planning application for the development of **North Street** was refused by the Planning Committee in January, on the casting vote of the Chair. The grounds for refusal are comprehensive and once again the height of the buildings was an issue of major concern. In various recent consultations MRA and other organisations have stressed the need for a clear policy about building heights in the town centre. Similar concerns have been raised by Councillors in various meetings, but officers have taken the view that any constraints on building heights should be addressed on a case-by-case basis and can be considered with reference to more general borough development policies.

SCC's original plans for **re-configuring London Road** in Burham, to make it safer for cyclists, pedestrians and buses, would have resulted in lengthy partial road closures and diversions during construction. There was a huge turnout at the public meeting on 5th January and SCC have promised new plans and a full consultation this time. Our retired MP Anne Milton skillfully chaired the meeting to allow everyone to raise their concerns and to make suggestions. This project, which is funded by central government, would have a considerable impact on Merrow, both during the construction phase and possibly thereafter. We have been in touch with SCC, expressing the hope that any works undertaken would be coordinated with the proposed Sustainable Movement Corridor (envisaged in the Guildford Local Plan to link Weyside Urban Village, the University and Royal Surrey County Hospital with Burham and the proposed development at Gosden Hill Farm) in order to avoid any additional road closures and traffic congestion during construction.

Unfortunately Merrow has suffered recently from the **closure** of **McColls** in Epsom Road and the loss of the Post Office and newspaper delivery service. We understand that newspapers can be delivered

in Merrow by a national outlet, NewsTeam, based in Stoke-on-Trent and although it is early days the service appears to be working well.

The **pharmacy in Sainsbury's** in Burham is also going to close in April, bringing even more pressure on Merrow's two pharmacies.

The **Sports Direct gym** in Merrow closed suddenly in December but we have been told that Horizon Leisure, a not-for-profit organisation, will be reopening it in the summer. Horizon currently runs Havant and Waterlooville Leisure Centres and plan to hold a public meeting in Merrow on March 21st to introduce itself.

Those of you who attended our Autumn Meeting will remember Peter Smith's inspiring talk on the importance of insect pollinators and the huge problems we all face as a consequence of their decline. Peter has kindly offered to lend his expertise to help insect recovery in Guildford by creating a series of pollinator reserves. By working with the Guildford Environmental Forum and Guildford Zero, Merrow could be among the very first urban and suburban areas to help create mini pollinator reserves to provide pockets of insect friendly, pesticide free areas. We need more volunteers to take part in this exciting **Merrow Pollinator Reserves** initiative to make a significant difference. Anyone who has a piece of land - garden, school grounds or business premises - can sign up. It doesn't matter how much outdoor space you have, you could team up with your adjoining neighbours to create bigger mini-reserves - insects don't mind fences - and each garden or space will be a slightly different habitat. Please see the Environment page on our website to find out how you can be included, or email environment@merrowresidents.org.uk

MRA members will be getting a more detailed report on these issues in the run up to our AGM which we are holding on 17th April. If you are not yet a member but wish to understand more fully what is going on in Merrow, or find out what developments are planned in the wider Guildford area that could affect us, **joining the MRA** is very simple via our website merrowresidents.org.uk. Annual membership costs £6 per household or £4 per individual and new members are always welcome.

The MRA Committee

Contact us via email:
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