

MERROW LIFE

The Newsletter of the



MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

your community voice for over 40 years

Autumn 2011

Issue No 30

www.merrowresidents.org.uk

**DON'T
FORGET**

**Autumn
Meeting**

**Monday
24th October at
St John's Centre
8 pm**

Chairman's Notes

- The new Executive Committee is settling down well and is facing an ever increasing workload.

- We welcome our new Community Safety Warden Andy Coumbe, and Neighbourhood Specialist Officer PC Alice Bennett. Unfortunately there have been significant staff movements within the Police Force affecting Merrow and I now hope that we can have a period of consolidation.

- I hope members of the MRA have appreciated the emails that have been sent out by our Webmaster – who is an expert in all things relating to IT. If you have any comments on these emails please do let us know.

- Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find detailed comments about planning matters. None of this makes pretty reading and your committee remain concerned, in particular, about the development of Merrow Heights and the Depot.

- There has been some resurfacing of roads in Merrow following the prioritisation of our problem areas by Councillor Graham Ellwood and Surrey County Council. The County Council is also making efforts to keep our drains clear and fill our potholes in the hope that we have a trouble free winter.

- We are disappointed with some of our hanging baskets. We have taken this up with GBC's Parks and Countryside Department since the quality of our baskets seems to be lower than those in neighbouring authorities. Whilst their response was that mildew had affected the petunia plants, the overall result was felt not to be as attractive as in past years.

- Parking in and around Merrow is an issue of major concern and we have a meeting planned with Councillor Ellwood to try and find some permanent solution to this problem that is particularly severe during term time.

- As Merrow residents will be aware Clandon Golf is now fully open and although I am not a golfer, I am hearing very complimentary remarks about the new nine holes.

- Your Committee is expecting to take responsibility for purchasing a vehicle activated speed sign for use in Trodds Lane. The funding has been provided from Councillor Ellwood's personal allocation and the necessary training should take place in the autumn of the Trodds Lane people who have willingly come forward to give of their valuable time.

- We are considering the provision of grit bins in Merrow Woods, again financed through Councillor Ellwood, but this is raising all sorts of difficulties since the bins have to be on private property and in the long term the MRA would be required to provide the grit.

- I very much hope that you will be able to attend the autumn meeting which will take place on Monday 24th October 2011 at 8pm. Our speaker will be Chris Mansfield who has responsibility for economic development in the Borough and will talk about how we make full use of the very many assets that we own in the Borough. This should be of interest to everyone living in Guildford.

- I hope to see you in October.

Keith Meldrum

Patrick Robson

Patrick Robson (on the left) retired at the AGM after many years serving on the Committee as Chairman, Vice Chairman and our planning specialist. Keith Meldrum presented him with a painting of St John's Church in grateful thanks for the many hours he, and his wife Jean, had spent on our behalf. We wish them a long and happy retirement..



Policing Matters

If you see anything suspicious, contact Surrey Police on their new number 101 for non-emergency calls, if possible with descriptions of offenders and their vehicles.

Suspicious phone calls

Residents are being warned against suspicious telephone callers who pretend to be a crime prevention advisor, an ex police officer or to be working in partnership with Surrey Police.

Elderly residents are being targeted and offered a home visit for help with crime prevention and installation of security alarms. If you receive a suspicious call please tell the caller you wish to check their identity with Surrey Police and phone 101 - a legitimate police officer will be happy that you do this. You should not give out any personal information or details about when you will be home.

Metal thefts

There has been a significant increase in metal thefts throughout Guildford, with lead being stripped from roofs, windows, porches, and underground cables. Other metal items, including iron drain covers, have also been stolen from roads and driveways.

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PLANNING REVIEW

CLANDON PARK GOLF COURSE

The first phase (holes 1 to 9) was opened in May 2010 and the second phase (holes 10 to 18) was opened in June 2011. We understand that no progress has been made with a permanent Club House nor with the Putting and the Chipping Greens. We have heard comments from a number of golfers who have enjoyed playing on the course and are extremely complimentary of the lay-out.

SHOPS & FLATS AT “MERROW HEIGHTS” EPSOM ROAD

The fit out of the Indian style restaurant in units 1 and 2 continues very slowly, mainly because of the challenges with the new kitchen ventilation system. It is worth reviewing a little of the history of this development.

When Merrow Heights was designed the planning application prospectus and drawings clearly showed that the developer did not intend the building to be used for commercial catering activities. There is no infrastructure in the building, such as service shafts or plant space for the ventilation systems required. Furthermore, the “back of house” space is designed as an elegant entrance to classy apartments. There is no provision for kitchen access or waste handling separated from the apartment entrance.

GBC proposed that the planning application be rejected on the grounds of density, excessive massing and proximity to the listed cottage next door amongst other reasons. MRA recommended that the application be rejected. Sadly, GBC planning messed up their timing and the application went to appeal on a procedural technicality. For some reason we cannot fathom, the inspector allowed the appeal and specifically identified that 50% of the retail space could be

used as a restaurant. The appeal decision was delivered in September 2005.

Leases were sold to residents of Merrow Heights, and most purchased in the belief that the building would not house a commercial catering establishment. To their horror, they found that more than 50% of the ground floor retail space was later sold for the purpose of fit out and operation as an Indian restaurant. No planning permission was required for this. A licence application for music and alcohol sales was approved in June.

Now we move to the current phase of the saga. The fit out of the premises does not require further planning permission, unless there are external changes to the building. However, certain technical aspects of the installation of systems require approval by the GBC Environmental Health department, and there will need to be building control approvals for any structural alterations. These two aspects of the fit out don’t require GBC to consult locally. We have also learned that the problems with the ventilation system are likely to require an external brick clad chimney on the west end of the building. This we believe will require planning permission.

Now we need to consider the kitchen extract system itself. This may seem a simple thing, but those who have battled with the Merrow Dynasty in the past will know how critical are odour abatement, ventilation noise control and vermin control. MRA will be pressing for sight of information about the technical proposals, and will press GBC to ensure any necessary planning consultations are undertaken, and that the proposals meets the recommendations of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and DEFRA.

Simultaneously, out of the remaining 50% of the shop space specified by the Inspector not to be used for anything but retail, a unit of 35% was the subject of a recent application by Dominos Pizza for change of use to a take away business. Following an enormous number of residents’ objections and MRA representation, the application was refused but an appeal has now been lodged. An application for external and internal illuminated signage by the pizza company has also been refused. We will be vigilant about the progress in this case.

HUNTERS MOON – 3 THE PADDOCK

An application has been made to construct a garage opposite Hunter’s Moon and between 2 The Paddock and 220 Epsom Road. MRA objected to this application.

The application has gone to appeal on the basis of a failure of the Council to determine the planning application within the required period. However the application was considered by the Planning Committee in August and the Committee would have refused the application had they been able to do so.

MRA has written to the Inspector to underline our concerns about this application since it does not fit in with the requirements of Local Planning Policy.

BOXGROVE GARDENS – EPSOM ROAD (OLD DEFRA SITE)

Construction on the remainder on the site is well advanced and further planning applications have been submitted at intervals throughout the year to amend the original consent. MRA commented upon these applications as and when appropriate in conjunction with other Residents’ Associations.

ITALIA CONTI

Italia Conti proposed a change of use from an existing

store room at 221 Epsom Road to an additional studio, retrospectively. The application was refused but went to appeal. The Inspector ruled in favour of the application so Italia Conti got their way irrespective of the parking problems associated with this studio during term time.

23 MERROW CHASE

An earlier application for a major roof conversion plus a small single storey front extension was withdrawn but subsequently re-submitted with minor amendments. The MRA objected to this application that went to the Planning Committee and was approved.

GREENCROFT

The application made in October 2010 on behalf of St Thomas of Canterbury School was withdrawn and a fresh application has now been submitted for the construction of 6 dwellings and access road in the playing field adjacent to Greencroft. Following discussions with MRA, Greencroft Residents Association (GRA) has inspected the papers related to the withdrawn application. This clearly identified that GBC Planning Department were concerned about density, massing, parking and access matters. The revised application includes some minor design changes, but totally fails to address the density, massing, etc. This lack of change is probably because the DfES permission to sell the land is predicated upon yielding a defined sum of money to the school. Both the GRA and the MRA have lodged very detailed objections for a variety of reasons, not least because of the density and bulk of the 6 dwellings proposed and that they would not be in keeping with the houses in Greencroft. A very large number of supporting letters have been submitted by parents of pupils at the school who appear to be persuaded by the release of funds which would follow the sale of the land, which would lead to improved sporting facilities at the school.

This application will go to the Planning Committee and the outcome is very difficult to call.

THORNCHACE SCHOOL, GROVE ROAD

A well considered application was made for the development of this old school site with 7 houses and 4 apartments. The proposal was supported by a number of local residents and also by the MRA. The application went to the Planning Committee for discussion in August and was approved. This is a very good example of the progress that can be made where a developer enters into detailed discussions with local organisations and residents to find an acceptable and reasonable proposal and is prepared to make some changes to their original proposals.

ST PIUS CHURCH HALL

Jeffries Hall in Laustan Close has been rebuilt and an application for a full licence has been sought with opening hours between 8am-11pm Monday to Sunday, and provision for some late night events. MRA and residents suggested that the opening hours should be restricted, particularly at weekends, and all raised concerns about noise late at night and difficulties with parking.

The application was considered by the Licensing Committee in August and the Church was criticised for failing to have meaningful consultation with local residents who live extremely close to the church hall. It was approved but with hours restricted to 8am-10.30pm with no late night events. A series of conditions were laid down including noise abatement, parking in St Peter’s School car park, late evening supervision and provision of a list of emergency contact numbers.

It does appear that the representation from the MRA both in writing and in person assisted local residents in putting over a strong case to the Licensing Committee.

Traffic in Horseshoe Lane East and West

There have been some limited developments since our last report in the Spring. MRA met with St Thomas’ in July for an update.

The new morning drop-off procedures seem to be working well, but the afternoon collection can be challenging, particularly on wet days when gridlock sometimes occurs. There is little that can be done other than encouraging parents/guardians to drive better, and park carefully and in compliance with Road Traffic Acts. SCC has no money for road scheme improvements or new controlled road crossings. St Thomas’ intend to remind parents of their responsibilities, and would welcome feedback from residents who can identify offenders.

St Thomas’ and Boxgrove have done some work to map where their pupils come from. Unsurprisingly, St Thomas’ catchment is very wide, and the car is the only possibility for many. We now have the spectre of St Peter’s losing their Surrey CC faith school buses in September 2012. This means 600 pupils will have to find a different way to get to school. This could be challenging for us all. MRA will be tracking these development closely

Speed Sign

MRA Committee are seriously considering the “purchase” of a portable Vehicle Activated Sign.

As part of the government’s initiative, an approved group such as MRA will be allowed a grant to cover the costs and then own the equipment. (It has been found that the equipment is better maintained and suffers less damage.)

Activation of the sign will be triggered by a vehicle travelling in excess of the speed limit and will display “30” in bright LED lights. We already have ten volunteers, who will receive training on its use and on health and safety (approved ladder, recharging the batteries regularly, day glow vests, etc). It is recommended that the sign is moved every six weeks so we will need to think carefully about suitable locations – suggestions welcome!

Gas Cabinet by Clandon Gates

MRA and Mr Diaper, the head gardener of Clandon Park, met with a representative of Scottish Gas Networks Ltd in May to discuss the position and appearance of the large green gas cabinet in front of the Clandon Gates.

SGN explained that the cabinet had to be above ground as underground plant had previously flooded. They had wanted to position the kiosk closer to the roundabout but its current siting was at the insistence of Surrey Highways. As a utility company SGN were not required to get planning permission.

As it would now cost too much to move the eyesore, camouflaging it seems to be the best solution. Various options are being considered including replacing the green kiosk with a “brick effect” one or, more likely, hiding it behind appropriate planting. Mr Diaper has suggested upright evergreens (holly, ‘green pillar’ etc) placed in strategic areas to break up the silhouette during the winter, together with native shrubs (guelder rose, hazel etc) to blend with the wood behind it and provide habitat for wildlife.

Further discussions are due to take place within the next few weeks.

Local changes

- We are pleased to see that all the shop premises in Kingfisher Drive, Merrow Park, are now occupied. We have Boots the Chemist; the family-run Little Market offering fresh bread and meat from local suppliers; Kerry’s Hairdressers and now a Dental Surgery.
- Less welcome news is that the trailer library service that has visited Merrow for many years was withdrawn in September by SCC. It will be missed by many, young and old, who enjoyed its convenience and informality.

Merrow Depot

SCC recently opened a new Highways office at the Depot and relocated administrative staff from Kingston and elsewhere.

Residents living in Merrow Common had hoped that with SCC permanently based at the Depot the noise nuisance could be monitored and controlled. Unfortunately noise continues to impact on those living nearby even though Countryliner have reduced their bus operations on the site.

May Gurney, who recently replaced Ringway as SCC’s highways maintenance contractor, are responsible for carrying out ongoing programmed highways works and repairs, gritting, flooding and drainage for the next 6-8 years. Particularly noisy operations were found to emanate from their road surface dressing programme, which has now been completed.

Other significant noise is caused when Skanska, SCC’s street lighting contractor, handle the large number of old

lighting columns that are being replaced as part of the upgrading programme which will continue until 2015.

SCC has requested a study of all significant noisy operations at the Depot to assess which work practices could be changed to minimise noise, and has requested tenants in the vicinity of the former Workshop and MOT Testing station to mitigate such disturbances. MRA will continue to support those affected.

Additional problems are caused by lorries who incorrectly use Merrow Common Road to attempt to access the Depot, as sat. nav. drivers who enter the Depot’s postcode are directed towards the end of Keepers Close. SCC hope that improved road signage will soon be installed at the roundabout by Merrow Common Road and on the Burpham approach to the railway bridge. After many months the overgrown vegetation obscuring the existing road signs has now been cut back.

Merrow Conservation Working Parties

On Saturdays 15 Oct, 19 Nov and 17 Dec our friendly group of volunteers will be coppicing areas of hazel near the A25 below the Manor Hotel, Newlands Corner, to improve the habitat for dormice.

Meet us at 10am at the coppice site (limited parking) OS Explorer series 145 TQ 0445 4995, or at 9.45 in the car park on Merrow Downs for a lift. All tools and training are provided; all you need are work clothes, boots, gloves, a packed lunch and enthusiasm. You don’t have to stay the whole day; any help is appreciated.

For further information contact Tony Cordery on 07909 881847 or countryside@guildford.gov.uk



Picnickers in front of Hinemihi, the Maori meeting house

Policing Matters

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There are recommended deterrents such as weatherproof grease containing a unique chemical signature which will remain on the surface it is applied to, and if touched, stays on the skin or clothing for some weeks. If examined in time it is possible to prove which premises it came from. You can also purchase an anti climb paint which can be put on porches and metal downpipes on buildings.

The police are working in partnership with local scrap metal dealers to help them identify suspected stolen metal. For specific advice on theft of metal from historic buildings contact Guildford Crime Reduction Advisor Neil Smith on 630064

Merrow Police Priorities

Alice Bennett, the new Neighbourhood Officer for Merrow and Burpham will be targeting the owners of cars dangerously parked at junctions near schools, as this issue was raised as a priority by residents at the Neighbourhood Panel Meeting in September. You can contact her on

101 ext 38031 or

bennett4623@surrey.pnn.police.uk

Andy Coumbe, Community Safety Warden for Stoughton, Merrow and Christchurch dealt with a number of issues in Merrow during the summer including fly posting, fly tipping and graffiti. He can be reached on

07901 513650 or

Andy.Coumbe@guildford.gov.uk ❖

How can you save a life?

Donate one pint of blood at the donor session at Merrow Village Hall, and you could do just that.

To be potentially able to give blood you must be between 17-65 years old, weigh over 7st 12lbs (50kg) and be in general good health. However there is no upper age limit if you have donated in the past two years.

As yet, blood cannot be manufactured, and maintaining blood stocks is reliant on the generosity of blood donors. NBS is coming to Merrow Village Hall on 11 January 2012. To sign up to become a blood donor call 0300 123 2323 or visit www.blood.co.uk. Further dates and other locations in Guildford are available on the website.

DIARY
NOTE

AGM
on Monday
23rd April 2012
at
St John's Centre

MRA AUTUMN MEETING

ST. JOHN'S CENTRE, EPSOM ROAD,
MERROW

Monday 24th October 2011
at 8 PM

Chris Mansfield,
Head of Economic Development
at Guildford Borough Council

will give an illustrated talk on
**"Making the best use of
Guildford's public assets"**
All welcome - not just members,
so bring your friends and neighbours.

Wine and nibbles afterwards
(a small contribution towards the evening's expenses
will be requested)

MRA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2011-2012

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Subscriptions

If you haven't paid your subscription for 2011 you will have received a reminder letter with this newsletter. Please send your cheque - household membership £5. single membership £3 (double if you wish to pay for two years) to the MRA Treasurer, 91 Horseshoe Lane East, Merrow, Guildford GU1 2TW. Please note the Annual Subscription runs from 1st January each year

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Any enquiries should be addressed to the Chairman

If the name or address on the envelope is incorrect please advise the Membership Secretary on 578006