



MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

your community voice since 1969

Dear Fellow Merrow Residents

We are writing this between Christmas and New Year when the tempo of everyday life has slowed down for a few days. Those of us lucky enough to have tested negative for covid and able to meet up with family and friends have been enjoying some quality time together. It has also been a time to reflect on MRA's activities during 2021 and to plan ahead for 2022. Though we haven't been able to meet in person, the Committee has been very busy online!

Autumn Meetings

Several new members joined MRA specifically to hear the speakers we had lined up for our Zoom events in the autumn. The first informative talk was with our Guildford MP Angela Richardson. She spoke about the major strategic developments in Guildford that will impact on the A3 and on the Green Belt, the possibility of a tunnel under Guildford, the planned development of Gosden Hill Farm on the Burpham/Clandon border and its impact on Merrow, and more generally about the importance of having joined up thinking on infrastructure improvements.

The second event was with Councillor John Rigg which covered an amazingly long list of topical issues that affect Guildford. John is the Lead Councillor responsible for major project developments in Guildford, so we were able to discuss some of these and also the new GBC planning policies. He answered many excellent questions posed by our members, including ones on the North Street development, local bus services, master planning, water supply and sewage disposal, the height of buildings in the town centre, air pollution, the Sustainable Movement Corridor (see below), congestion on the A3, housing requirements in Guildford, GBC's running costs and Guildford's bid for city status.

The Weyside Urban Village

MRA have been considering a large number of public consultations, including some outside Merrow, that would affect us here. We commented on the planning application for the Weyside Urban Village (WUV) that covers the GBC Slyfield site. This has now been given limited planning approval subject to conditions and will lead on to a plethora of subsidiary applications. This large and extremely costly development covers the relocation of the

current sewage works, the construction of up to 1,550 homes, a local community centre, new council depot and the creation of a Sustainable Movement Corridor (SMC). We were involved with two useful meetings with the companies involved with the planning of the development and we were able to explore concerns relating to highways access to the WUV, proximity of the road and the houses to the River Wey, "greening" of the site, contamination of the land and the SMC.

Sustainable Movement Corridor

The SMC is a route that will link WUV with Surrey University, Royal Surrey County Hospital and Guildford town centre and will run through Burpham to the proposed housing development at Gosden Hill Farm. It will use existing roads but linked to a new road on the WUV site. It will give priority to buses, cyclists and pedestrians but we wonder if there will be sufficient buses running on the route to meet the aspiration of the SMC at a time when bus companies are facing difficulties (As evidenced by Arriva who have recently pulled out of Surrey, to the detriment of some bus users). We have discussed our concerns with some Borough Councillors noting that only partial plans for the SMC have been produced so far and that it has been suggested that it might extend into Merrow through Park Lane.

St Mary's Wharf

Then we have the current consultation on St Mary's Wharf, which is the proposed development to replace the old Debenhams 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 lost to really open up the river to the public. It is clear that the financial viability of the development is a key issue that has to be considered by both developers and Councillors. On the one hand the developers argue that they need to build to a considerable height otherwise the development won't be financially viable, whilst others are equally insistent that the height of the new buildings shouldn't be so tall that they adversely impact on the town centre and the surrounding area. That discussion is likely to run and run.

Boundary Commission report

We are also in the middle of yet another public



consultation on new Guildford ward boundary changes that will affect both Merrow and Christchurch wards. The

Boundary Commissioners are recommending that the number of Borough Councillors should remain at 48 but have recommended that Christchurch and Holy Trinity should become one ward. We are pleased that they have supported MRA's suggestion that the Merrow ward be enlarged to include both Boxgrove Park and Boxgrove Gardens and that the number of Borough Councillors to represent the ward should remain at 3. We expect that not everyone will agree with the recommendations but the population of Guildford is increasing and adjustments are necessary to ensure that each Councillor represents a similar number of electors. The closing date for this review is 7th February.

Surrey Hills AONB review

MRA are also considering the review of the boundary of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the extent to which additional areas in Merrow should be included within this AONB. The closing date for this review is 31st January.

And Yet More Reviews...

We are expecting to deal with a significant number of public consultations in 2022, including new GBC management policies and the proposals for the development of North Street. MRA members will receive updates on all of these in our newsletters, by email and at our AGM on 28th March.

If anyone would like more information on any of the issues that we have covered here, you are very welcome to contact us at secretary@merrowresidents.org. You can also see our website at www.merrowresidents.org.uk for details of more of our activities and for a link to join MRA.

We wish you all a happy, healthy and trouble-free New Year.

The MRA Committee

Contact us via email:
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