

MERROW LIFE

The Newsletter of the



Autumn 2025

MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

your community voice for over 50 years

Issue No 58

www.merrowresidents.org.uk

Don't
forget

Autumn
Event

on Monday

3rd November

at 8pm at St John's Centre

Not the Chairman's Notes

Earlier this year Andrew Strawson had completed six years as our Chairman and felt it was time for someone else to take over at the AGM in April. However no one had come forward to offer themselves as Chairman so the post is currently vacant.

Fortunately Andrew has remained on the Committee and Keith Meldrum has been valiantly holding the fort as both our Vice Chairman and our much needed planning expert. We still need a Chairman to help us deal with the numerous matters that affect us all in Merrow!

If anyone out there would like to become more involved in MRA's activities please let us know. We'd be happy to have a chat and tell you a little more about our work behind the scenes to represent the interests of those of us lucky enough to live in Merrow.

We welcomed **Bruce Bennet** onto the

Committee earlier this year after he responded to a request for new Committee members. He introduces himself later here and explains why he was prompted to come forward.

It has been an exceptionally busy summer which has kept us on our toes, especially as we have needed to respond to some quite significant proposed changes. The most important of these have concerned the development of **Gosden Hill** and the proposal to abolish Surrey County Council and Guildford Borough Council.

We held Zoom meetings on each topic to explain the plans, get your views and allow you to ask questions and kept you up to date with our occasional emails. You'll find more details on each of these subjects as you read on.

On 3rd November we are holding our annual talk with a guest speaker. This year we are pleased to have **Sarah Jane Chimbwandra**, Chief Executive of the *Surrey Wildlife Trust*

who will be talking about the work of the Trust and answering our questions. We expect it be a lively and also interesting evening and is open to both members and non members of our Association. You will find more information on the back page.

The evening is open to all, and we hope it gives you an opportunity to invite your local friends and neighbours and encourage them to sign up on the door to become members themselves. This would increase our presence in Merrow and also add to the weight of our interactions with local councillors on your behalf.

Anyone who lives in or has a business in Merrow can sign up and become a member of MRA on the *Join Up* page on www.merrowresidents.org or use the QR code on the back page.

The more members we have, the more representative MRA can be in our dealings with Councils and other bodies.

Planning Developments in Merrow

The last few months have been busy in the Horseshoe Lane area. The development in the orchard of **26 Horseshoe Lane West** by *Aspen Homes* is now in the final landscaping stage. At last we're over most of the numerous trade contractor vehicles, and amazingly *Thames Water* and *UK Power Networks* coordinated connection of new services with a minimum of disruption. The three large, detached house development proved what had been feared, it is a compromised development squeezed around the old *White House*. This manifested itself recently in the approval of a second planning application to reduce four trees protected by *Tree Preservation Orders*. Residents in Greencroft were incensed that GBC had failed to issue a notification of this to the trustees of the land in Greencroft.

The second major issue concerned *St. Thomas of Canterbury School's* planning application to redevelop the old caretaker's bungalow into a new school based nursery.

Whilst there was general support for the principle of nursery need, many local residents in Horseshoe Lane West, Whitehouse Drive and Greencroft objected on the grounds of increased traffic and parking. The case went to GBC's planning committee when speakers included MRA and affected residents. Compelling objections from SCC Highways swayed the decision and the application was rejected. It appears that SCC Highways didn't have any plan or resources to address the traffic issues, and the school were unable to find a way of helping to resolve the problem. You may recall that MRA has previously tried hard to find a way of addressing the traffic issues near the school and held site meetings with SCC Highways to discuss options.

At the time of writing this report we are still waiting for the recommendations from the planning officer on the planning application from **St Peter's School** in Horseshoe Lane East to build a full sized hockey pitch with floodlights, very close to houses in

Horseshoe Lane East and Merrow Croft. This application has been under consideration since May 2024 and has raised a plethora of objections from local residents and also from MRA.

On the subject of lighting, the issues caused by the very tall lighting columns installed at the sports pitches at **Urnfield** on the *Merrow Downs* have not yet been resolved by Guildford Borough Council.

The planning application for the demolition of a house at **18 Trodds Lane** and its replacement with four houses, which we covered in *Merrow Life* in the spring this year, has been turned down on appeal. It remains to be seen whether the potential developer will come forward with an amended application in due course.

We are very grateful to our ward councillors for the support that they give us, especially on planning matters.

Keith Meldrum Vice Chairman

Proposed Unitary Authorities

The Government wants to reorganise local government to create *Strategic Authorities* which will combine county, district and borough services into a single level of government led by an elected Mayor. Both Surrey County Council and Guildford Borough Council as we know them will disappear completely.

For us in Surrey this first involves re-organising the county council and its eleven district and borough councils into a new structure of unitary authorities, merging the county and district/borough services into a single level of government in 2027. There are two main proposals for this: either to have **two unitary authorities** (East and West Surrey) proposed by Surrey County Council and some district councils or an alternative proposal from other district and borough councils for **three unitary authorities** (East, North, and West Surrey). Both aim for more efficient services and cost savings, with the ultimate goal of establishing a Strategic Authority led by an elected Mayor for the entire county.

The government launched a recent consultation on the option to have two or three unitary authorities in Surrey and MRA responded that we favoured having three unitary authorities. You can read our response letter on the MRA website www.merrowresidents.org.uk on the 'Latest Information' page.

Flood Forum

MRA has accepted our MP Zöe Franklin's invitation to join the local **Flood Forum**, which is currently focused on Burpham.

The Flood Forum brings together key stakeholders including Surrey County Council, the Environment Agency, and Guildford Borough Council. It serves as a valuable space for collaboration, enabling resi-

We on the MRA Committee are unconvinced that the new arrangements will deliver the efficiencies and savings that are being promised and are concerned that the introduction of the new authorities could be a very difficult bureaucratic task. A decision from the government on which proposal to implement is expected soon.

There is one more angle to the unitary authority initiative that MRA has been considering. Guildford Borough Council have consulted on whether new parish councils should be established to cover those areas in the Borough which have no parish council to represent them, which includes Merrow and Burpham. We have responded that after consulting with our members we have concluded that we can support the establishment of a new Parish Council to cover the unparished areas in Guildford, including Merrow, but we cannot come to a firm view as to whether there should be one, two or three Parish Councils for the unparished areas of Guildford until the consultation on the formation of new Parish Councils is at a more advanced stage.

We are concerned that when the unitary authorities are established that it will be even more difficult for residents' associations to influence events and decisions taken by an authority based some distance away.

Keith Meldrum



dents and representatives to raise concerns, share updates, and work together on practical solutions to local flooding issues.

It is keen to expand the forum to include Merrow, recognising the importance of a joined-up approach to addressing local flooding concerns. This will ensure that the needs and experiences of Merrow residents are fully represented and supported.



Community Spirit -

Guildford in Bloom 2025

During the summer the Merrow flower tubs have been an eye-catching splash of colour. Walking or driving along Epsom Road the tubs outside the *Horse and Groom* were unmissable. Our thanks go to *Edwin's Garden Centre* for supplying the plants and also to the MRA watering team of Magdalena, David, Mary, Laura, Ian, Shirley, Caroline, Michelle, Ingrid and Andrew for tirelessly watering throughout the summer, which meant the plants carried on blooming despite the heatwave.

At a very lively **Guildford in Bloom** ceremony held at *GLive* in September we were awarded a well-deserved *Silver Gilt*. Congratulations must go to *Merrow Bowls Club* for winning Gold - and they were also the overall winner in the *Themed Neighbourhood Project* class. They have created a beautiful garden with wild areas of nettles, wildflowers, plants for pollinators along with a bug hotel and willow butterfly stakes.

MRA would like to thank Councillor **Paul Spooner** who is stepping down after his ten year stint as Chair of Guildford in Bloom. Councillor Sallie Baker, past Mayor of Guildford, is taking his place. To all of you who entered and entered into the community spirit, congratulation on



your awards. Keep on gardening and we hope to see you at the Awards ceremony next year.

Kate Dumbleton



Guildford's E-bike Scheme update

Guildford's e-bike hire scheme has been rolled out across Guildford, designed to provide a flexible, healthy and affordable travel option for people living, working or visiting Guildford.

The original plan was to create a bay in the Merrow Shopping Parade where the e-bikes would be left and collected. However the wide pavement in front of the shops is not owned by either GBC or SCC and it has not been possible to get consent from the landowners to create a bay. There are no plans that we know of for an alternative location nearby.



Merrow History group

As you will see elsewhere in Merrow Life we are an active history group and would love to see you at our meetings, or to receive information about Merrow. If you have found items of interest let us know, before throwing them away!

Recent topics have covered tracing the Roman road in Merrow, the history of the Merrow farms and the tithe map of 1843. Research continues into the large Victorian houses and their occupants.

Can you help with talks or research? Please let us know.

Ian Anderson



Major developments in Guildford

Gosden Hill

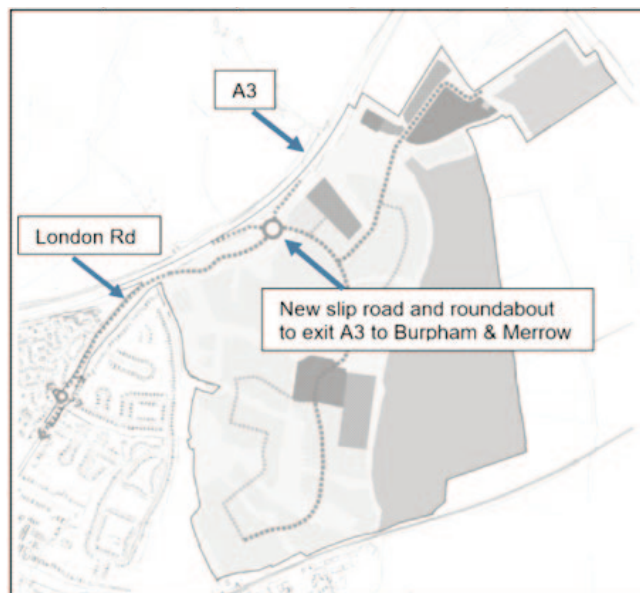
The long awaited outline planning application for Gosden Hill has been submitted and MRA responded with our considered objections in early October. A copy is in our website together with a slide pack on the application. The application contains no surprises and primarily covers road access to and from the site, which lies between Burpham and West Clandon. All other matters have been reserved for a later planning application.

The application reference 25/P/01156 proposes a phased development of up to 1,800 dwellings, six Gypsy and traveller pitches, a mixed use local centre, public open space, employment floor space, land for the provision of a primary school and a secondary school, creation of a new junction onto the A3, a new vehicle access from London Road and Merrow Lane, a park and ride facility, green infrastructure including allotments and sports pitches and a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace.

Notable changes from previous proposals are that no new Merrow railway station is now included in the outline planning application and the original size of the Park and Ride will be reduced. Also, the access road shown on earlier plans from New Inn Lane at the south of the site will not be pursued.

We are very disappointed that no four-way junction with the A3 onto the site has not been included in the proposal. This means that traffic travelling Northwards from the site will have to go south through Burpham in order to join the existing northbound access to the A3 at Clay Lane. It is surprising that there will only be a single point of vehicular access to the site from Burpham via London Road, since the Inspector at the time of the public examination of the Guildford Local Plan was very concerned about the site infrastructure and the possible unacceptable traffic congestion problems arising as a result, either in Burpham or in neighbouring areas. The Inspector was very clear that if the A3 improvements were not forthcoming, other mitigations should be put in place. However, no such mitigating sustainable transport options are proposed as part of this application. .

What is proposed is that the existing southbound exit from the A3 to Burpham will be permanently closed and replaced by a new exit from the southbound carriageway into the Gosden Hill site. A new roundabout will become the only southbound exit from the A3 towards Burpham and Merrow as shown on the plan. Traffic from the site will also use this new roundabout to travel to Burpham and Merrow as shown on the plan. Merrow Lane will provide for access to Gosden Hill Farm only and not the rest of the site.



Although the MRA are pleased that it is proposed that the previously proposed south access to the site from New Inn Lane will not be opened, there are likely to be very serious traffic congestion problems in Burpham which will affect those of us living in Merrow. We are also concerned at some of the phasing proposals, since the planning application suggests about 150 new houses will be built on the site before the new junction and roundabout with the A3 have been constructed.

Keith Meldrum



Enhancing our Environment

Merrow Community Volunteers.

In July, **Bruce** and **Nan Bennett** cut back the excess overgrowth which partially obstructed the footpath connecting Harewood Road to the open space to the South. This effort was in response to a request by one of our elderly members living nearby. This was the third year that we have cleared this footpath and while we were working hard we were saddened to receive comments from local passers-by saying things like "Why don't you leave it to the council?" The footpath is on private land and has not been adopted by GBC. It is a shame that the nearby residents who use the path can't make more of an effort to keep the footpath clear themselves.

Also in July, David Agg, Rosie Reid, Clare Harrington, Shirley and I helped four tree wardens to drag recycled fencing material (originally from Tytings Farm) to block off the unofficial cycle paths through the woodland either

side of Walnut Tree Bottom near some of the ancient yew trees. These cycle tracks have been created by cutting back trees (including yews) using saws. Some of the cycle tracks cross badger runs.

Disappointingly our efforts to stop up the cycle tracks were wasted as very quickly after we finished the fencing material we erected was pulled away by the cyclists and they have continued to damage trees and habitat. GBC are aware and are asking for volunteers to help again in the Autumn. We feel that more signage is needed from GBC to inform the cyclists of the damage they are causing as unfortunately the original signs have been torn down by the offenders. More information and photos showing the damage are on our web site at <https://merrowresidents.org.uk/unofficial-cycle-tracks>.

If you want to be added to our list of occasional helpers, then please email communityhighways@merrowresidents.org

Dave Smith



Snippets of news

After a very long wait for a **Post Office**

Counter to return to Merrow, we are pleased that one was finally approved for the *Nisa Local* in the Merrow shopping parade. It was officially opened by **Zoe Franklin** MP for Guildford in May. They would appreciate our custom – especially to buy stamps and send parcels.

Our application for a **replacement bench in Kingfisher Drive** to be sited near the bottom of Merrow Street was successful and Councillor George Potter agreed to fund it



out of his Surrey County Council allocation. It is now in place with a plaque stating that it was installed by Merrow Residents' Association and Surrey County Council to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

After a consultation exercise carried out by SCC the **speed limit in Park Lane** has been reduced to 40mph.

Requests for specific food to be distributed by the local **Food bank** are posted on our website.



Bruce Bennett

Our newest Committee member introduces himself

I have lived in Merrow for over thirty years and it was always a challenge to find out about local issues and events. Joining the Merrow Residents' Association has been a great way to integrate into the local community and at the same time hear about all the new proposals for Merrow and Guildford.

I have been retired from the Aviation world for eight years and with more time available, an invitation to join the MRA committee was difficult to refuse. We are so blessed to live in this part of the world and this is a great opportunity to assist, albeit in a small way, to look after it.

My first assignment will be to represent the MRA on the *Burpham Flood Prevention* committee. It will be an interesting time. ❖

Please tell your neighbours, friends and especially newcomers to Merrow that anyone who lives or works in Merrow can become a member of MRA for a small subscription. They can join via the link on the JOIN US page of our website merrowresidents.org.uk or use this QR code —



MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN EVENT

Monday 3rd November at 8pm at St. John's Centre, Epsom Rd

~

Open to both Members and Non-Members
at St. John's Centre, Epsom Road

~

'Recovering Surrey's Nature'

by **Sarah Jane Chimbwandira**

Chief Executive of *Surrey Wildlife Trust*

~

Why nature in Surrey is so special,
where we are now (nature in decline),
and what we need to do to achieve real impact.

~

Her talk will be followed by wine and nibbles.

(a small contribution towards the evening's expenses will be requested)

The Horse and Groom's History

If you are interested in the history of Merrow there is a local history group that meets occasionally at St John's Centre on Wednesday evenings. Their next meeting will be on 26th November talking about WW11 as we remember the recent 80th anniversary of VJ day. Any contributions will be most welcome.

The group welcomes those who want to listen and others who want to carry out their own research. In order to tempt you to attend, biscuits may be available! For more information contact Ian Anderson on iana.anderson@btconnect.com or 01483 570475. ❖



**Don't
Forget**

Autumn Meeting

on Monday

**3rd November at 8pm
at St John's Centre**

Annual General Meeting

**23rd March 2026
at St John's Centre**

MRA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2025-2026

Chairman	Vacant
Vice-Chairman	Keith Meldrum
Hon. Treasurer	Dave Smith
Environment Officer	Vacant
Membership Secretary	Claire Rymell
Hon. Secretary	Henriette Whitehead-van Prooije
Webmaster	Richard Collins
Publicity Officer	Vacant
Committee Members	Gordon Farquharson, Lorna Seymour, Kate Dumbleton, Andrew Strawson, Stephen Rudd and Bruce Bennet.

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

Subscriptions

If you haven't paid your annual subscription for 2025 you will have received a reminder letter with this newsletter. Preferably pay by bank transfer Sort Code **30-93-74** A/c **01511541** 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, 6 Swaynes Lane, Guildford GU1 2XX.**

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