



Cobham and Downside Residents' Association Newsletter, Spring 2021

Residents' Meeting and 2021 AGM

Thursday 15th April, via Zoom, 7.15pm for 7.30pm start
With representatives from Cobham Free School

Our speakers will be Michaela Khatib, Executive Head Teacher of Cobham Free School, and Howard Morris, Chairman of the Governors. Cobham Free School first opened its doors in 2012 with a one-form infant department. It now welcomes students from years 1 to 13 and has moved to its new site on Portsmouth Road.

We will be sending details on how to join the meeting by email nearer the time. If you have never received an email from us it means we do not have your email address, so please contact us at info@cdra.co.uk for joining details. We will be unable to take questions on the night, so please submit any you may have by email to info@cdra.co.uk prior to the meeting.

An Exciting Opportunity for Cobham!

2021 is looking up! Surrey County Council (SCC) have allocated £100M to *Your Fund*, a scheme to provide capital investment for community based projects across the county. Funds will not be allocated for running costs or for activities which should be addressed by statutory authorities, e.g pot holes which are repaired by Highways.

The council has asked the community to 'Think Big' and come up with ideas to benefit their community. So to make a strong case for Cobham the CDRA has teamed up with the Cobham Chamber of Commerce and Cobham Conservation & Heritage Trust to bid for funds as the 'Cobham Village Partnership'. Our aim is to deliver a vibrant, inclusive and environmentally friendly village centre, principally through the expansion, enhancement and rejuvenation of our existing public and pedestrian spaces. The initial project idea is focused around three areas:

- * **Leg of Mutton field:** improve and add to the environmental, amenity, educational, and health benefits.
- * **Holly Hedge pedestrian area:** extend and enhance the look, feel and use.
- * Create a cohesive, attractive and

environmentally friendly **shopping centre** for our community and commercial outlets to utilise, access and enjoy.

You can find more detail of our initial idea on the Your Fund Commonplace website where we have had to log our initial idea for review – it can be accessed directly at:
www.yourfundsurreymap.commonplace.is/comments/601333b332c20024e7ec1b19

If sufficient interest is registered for our plan we will develop our idea based on more detailed input from the local community. The Partnership will then produce a detailed submission which will be assessed by SCC and considered for funding against other competing projects. This phase of the process is currently scheduled to take place sometime in April, with the first projects expected to receive funding in early summer.

CDRA's focus will be making better use of the Leg of Mutton field. Our initial thoughts centre around enhancing its accessibility from Holly Hedge Road and the car park, replacing the existing heavily used skate park facility with an updated version and incorporating spaces for social interaction and quiet contemplation, including appropriate seating and tree planting.

To date we have had a very positive response, with other local groups who also have ideas for the Leg of Mutton wishing to join and support our efforts.

So, if you haven't yet registered your support for our idea, we would encourage everyone who has an interest in Cobham's future to consider registering

their agreement for the Partnership to move the initial idea to the next stage. This can be done by ticking the 'Agree' box in the link identified above. In addition, if you have some ideas of your own or you wish to give more detailed feedback to the Partnership team then please email them at: thecobhamvillagepartnership@hotmail.com

From the Chairman... As well as our major focus on planning and the urban environment, we've started a project to make Cobham a greener and more pleasant place. We're planting new trees and ensuring that mature trees are protected. In addition we are orking with tother local groups, the CDRA is bidding for over £1million from Surrey's *Your Fund* to improve the village centre.

Last summer, after 22 years in Downside, my wife and I moved to East Horsley and as the chair of a residents' association should be a local resident, I felt I must resign. I was so happy that existing committee member Steve Wood agreed to become the new Chair of the CDRA. After a career in commercial development, Steve is an expert on planning matters, and Cobham and Downside are very fortunate that he will be there to help us. I would like to thank everyone on the CDRA committee and our dedicated local councillors with whom I've had the pleasure to work with. I'm still local and plan to retain many links with Cobham and Downside and when allowed(!), visit the many friends I've made in this lovely village. **Ian Clifford**

PLANNING

CDRA offers advice and assistance to improve or resist applications and policies that adversely impact neighbours and the borough as a whole. We have advised residents on applications as diverse as the Esso Filling Station on Stoke Road and Cedar House. Other requests are welcome.

Recently, many developer-led applications have been for high housing densities that would change the character of the area outside the village centre. Many of these have been successfully resisted at Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) planning committees despite officer recommendations to approve. Sadly, some successes have been overturned at appeal. The recent list includes: 18 Freelands Road, 36 Stoke Road, 2 Stoke Road, 4 Fairmile Lane, 9 Leigh Court Close, 32 Green Lane.

At a local level two important applications have been made which deserve residents' attention and another is expected shortly. The new tenants of the Medicine Garden have submitted proposals for a large restaurant and a new orangery running the width of the property. The gardens and outbuildings will be upgraded. Twenty seven homes, including nine affordable ones, are planned on the land currently

occupied by Challenge Fencing, McDonald Fencing and a residential farmhouse on Downside Road. It is Green Belt land but has previous development.

Both of the applications has pros and cons but it is clear that both have impact on the Conservation Area at Plough Corner, traffic speeds, local flooding and sewer overflows. We are currently working closely with local residents before reaching final conclusions on representations to the council. Should they be approved, it is important that mitigation measures are included in conditions to any permission in this highly sensitive location.

Finally, at Cedar House, we understand that a planning application is being prepared and we have been requested by residents immediately adjacent to provide independent advice.

Local Plan

As you will have seen from our emails and newsletters, EBC is currently in the process of producing its new Local Plan which includes that a minimum of 633 new homes be built in the borough each year. This number is based on a flawed government policy and threatens our residential environment.

We are delighted to be joined by other resident groups across the Borough in forming the Alliance of Elmbridge Residents and Civic Groups, which

will present a united front in opposing these imposed numbers. The group sent Statement of Position to councillors and political groups which urges them to reject the flawed policy and proposes an objectively assessed housing need. You can see this document, along with the list of resident group supporters on our website www.cdra.co.uk. It will be followed up by a paper identifying why Elmbridge is subject to exceptional circumstances, which necessitate and justify our stance.

Wisley Airfield Development

You will no doubt be aware of the proposed development of 2100 homes at Wisley Airfield by national housebuilder Taylor Wimpey. The development immediately adjoins the Elmbridge border at Old Lane, Ockham just two miles from Cobham centre. It is around nine miles from Guildford Town Centre.

Despite the proximity to Elmbridge, and Cobham in particular, it will be Guildford Borough Council who will decide the application. EBC will hopefully be a formal consultee but our representations may well carry less weight than those of residents within GBC's boundaries.

With this in mind, CDRA has secured a seat on the Community Liaison Group, set up by Taylor Wimpey for local residents to give feedback prior to application. There are many issues associated with such a large new settlement on our doorstep and we are concerned in particular about the effects of the following on our village:

- Bus route proposed from Wisley to Cobham centre along Ockham and Plough Lanes to facilitate access to the retail facilities in our town.
- Car and cycle journeys on the same route for the same purpose.
- Potential use of Cobham Health Centre
- New access corridors and cycle routes over the Green Belt between Old Lane and Plough Corner.

Taylor Wimpey has already made public that one of the key attractions of its new settlement is its proximity to the shopping and facilities in Cobham, in particular Waitrose, and have also requested feedback from EBC on the capacity of Cobham Health Centre. They will be reluctant to spend money on infrastructure to address these issues unless the case is made for it by the relevant authorities.

Our High Street businesses may benefit from the increase in trade, but the prospect of buses and a car-rat run along the narrow Plough Lane is not attractive. It is subject to flooding on a regular basis and is effectively single track in parts.

When added to the new development proposals at the Medicine Garden and 27 homes on Downside Road, serious attention is needed.

Taylor Wimpey will issue the first draft of its Travel Plan in the next few weeks and we will see what is proposed by way of bus links and hopefully the discussions it has had with EBC and SCC.

CDRA will keep the community apprised of progress on the matter.

POLICING

Surrey Police's 'Policing your Community' events, attended by Chief Constable Gavin Stephens, PCC David Munro and the local Borough Commander, have returned - virtually! They provide an opportunity to hear what the police are doing to support local residents and allow residents to ask questions. The public engagement session for Elmbridge took place on February 1st and included our Borough Commander, Inspector Dean Bert. You can view a recording of the event at: https://youtu.be/I2-G5rDx_wE

Supporting our Borough Commander at a local level we also have a PCSO for Cobham and Oxshott. Sarah Janes took on the role in December 2020. In addition, we have a very active Community Engagement Volunteer, Anne Pickering, who works as part of the Elmbridge Neighbourhood Team. Anne produces weekly reports on burglary and vehicle crime, key issues



Flooding in Plough Lane at the Pointers Road junction area after the recent wet weather. This will be problematic for increased traffic to and from the Wisley Airfield development

arising from which CDRA highlights when appropriate: for example, the recent dramatic increase in catalytic converter thefts from cars (particularly Honda Jaz) parked in Sainsbury's car park. We use our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/cobhamanddownside/ to get this kind of information out quickly.

For those interested in supporting local Neighbourhood Watch activity, the local regional coordinator for Cobham, Stoke D'Abernon and Downside is Patrick Mollory (cohbamnhw@gmail.com). Visit www.elmbridgenhw.ourwatch.org.uk/ for information, including the local representatives for specific areas in Cobham.

HIGHWAYS

For those interested in avoiding delays caused by road works, Surrey Highways provides a very useful link for information about existing and planned road works at:

www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roadworks-and-maintenance/roadworks

You may have noticed a lot more road works than normal just recently: the council has taken advantage of the relatively quiet roads during the Coronavirus pandemic to get them done more efficiently.

Potholes, the other bane of drivers and cyclists lives, can be reported at:

www.surreycc.gov.uk/HighwayIssue/whatistheissue.aspx?&code=potcw

At a local level, residents have been working with Surrey Highways and local councillors to address



Sandy Lane, local residents are trying to tackle a range of road related issues. Apologies for shadows on road.

traffic speeds along Stoke Road for some 10 years. During this time the speed limit has been reduced from 40 to 30 mph, several large signs have been installed which light up when drivers exceed the speed limit, and one of three new pedestrian crossings, the first stage of a traffic calming scheme, has been installed. These, combined with the efforts of a Community Speed Watch team, which has deployed regularly for the last three years, have led to a gradual reduction in speed, although there is still a minority of drivers who still speed along the road.

Based on this experience CDRA are well placed to assist other local residents address similar traffic speed and other highway issues. Indeed, the residents of Sandy Lane in Cobham are in the process of forming a local group to tackle a range of road related issues after advice from CDRA.

ENVIRONMENT

Planting NEW TREES!

The CDRA has started exciting new initiatives to improve our environment by working with EBCI Tree Officers to try to save trees threatened by redevelopment and other building work and embarking on a programme of planting new trees and hedges within Cobham and Downside.

Having engaged with a very supportive Open Spaces Team at EBC, we have been able to identify a range of locations where we can plant new trees and hedges. Fortunately, as a registered local organisation, CDRA can also take advantage of free trees on offer from the Woodlands Trust.

To date, we have successfully bid for some hedge saplings which, following agreement from the allotment holders, we will be planting on the Leg of Mutton field alongside the allotments. This planting will take place hopefully in April and will not only provide an attractive screen, but will also encourage wildlife to flourish – something the gardeners hope will keep nuisance insects at bay!

We have also secured agreement to plant some tree saplings in the Downside Bridge area. This follows consultation with the Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust and reference to a recent survey of the area conducted by the Surrey Wildlife Trust. An application for free trees will shortly be submitted to the Woodlands Trust.

We are looking for willing volunteers to help in our tree planting, and if you are interested please email us on info@cdra.co.uk