



Cobham and Downside Residents' Association Newsletter, Autumn 2021

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH OUR ACTIVITIES!

Follow us on **Facebook**: For the most up to date information follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CobhamandDownside

Check out our **website**: We have re-vamped our website and now have a section for each of our projects. www.cdra.co.uk

Take a look at our **notice board**: We are more proactive on updating our notice board on the Ellis and Thompson side wall.

PLANNING

Firstly, to update you on three of the developments we told you about in the last newsletter

The developers of the Grade 2 listed **Cedar House** advise that they will submit a planning application in the next few months. Their proposals will be pivotal to the long-term future of this signature heritage asset.

The proposed new commercial development at the **Medicine Garden** has been approved by Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC). CDRA looks forward to the improvements and wishes the new leaseholders every success with their restaurant and leisure facilities.

We have mixed feelings about the permission for **Downside Road development**. This is on green belt land adjacent to the Medicine Garden on and is for 27 houses. The site was previously developed and occupied by Macdonald & Son Fencing and Challenge Fencing. They have provided excellent service to the area for many years but sadly will be moving from the site, taking with them 15 to 20 jobs. EBC considered that 27 homes, including 11 affordable ones, outweigh this loss. This was a difficult decision and we regret the loss of the two businesses but ultimately welcome this rare provision of on-site

affordable homes in Cobham. We campaigned hard for a controlled crossing of Downside Road to protect new pedestrian residents and visitors to the Medicine Garden from the narrow busy road. EBC has no responsibility for road safety but Councillors have secured an informative condition that the EBC will pursue this essential piece of infrastructure with SCC.

Residents of the Plough Corner Conservation Area on Downside Road had hoped that the two developments would help solve the long-standing flooding of their historic properties. Surface water run-off down the hill towards the conservation area and pressure on drains may be reduced to some extent. However, it proved impossible to persuade planners at EBC that Community Infrastructure Levy money from the developments could be set aside for permanent flood protection. CDRA will support residents in direct lobbying of Surrey County Council, EBC and Thames Water to relieve their plight.

We have previously alerted you to the proposed 2100 new homes on current green belt land at the former Wisley Airfield. The developer, Taylor Wimpey, has kindly agreed to set up an online meeting (Teams) to specifically brief local groups and Councillors on the development and its potential impacts on our community. We expect this to take place in October.

The Elmbridge Local Plan remains shrouded in mystery. For many years CDRA has lobbied Councillors to reject Government's housing target. Minutes of the EBC's Local Plan Working Group from July show that officers were asked to prepare a new draft Plan using 76% of the Government's housing

number. No logic has been given for this revised number, but a draft Plan is expected emerge in December 2021/January 2022. It will show the impact on the character and substantiability of our community, but sadly opportunities for residents' input will be very limited.

From the Chairman... When I took over the Chair back in April I outlined CDRA's priorities for the next few years. I am pleased to say that our aspiration to add projects and partnerships to our planning, transport and policing work has already begun. We want our projects to improve the local environment and will set up partnerships to help deliver them and amplify their impact. We have made a modest but effective start with our tree and hedge planting on the Leg of Mutton supported by the Woodland Trust and Elmbridge Council Open Spaces Team. We plan to expand on this theme when the planting season begins again.

We are working with FEDORA to help bring about much needed improvements to the safety and condition of **Sandy Lane** which residents have identified.

We have also set up a Community Investment Company (CIC) in partnership with Cobham Football Club to bid for money from Surrey County Council's £100 million '**Your Fund**', which we report on below. We hope that other local groups will join the CIC in due course with additional ideas for projects that meet the Your Fund criteria.

In the late summer, when we were in a position to have to confirm a booking for the village hall for our half yearly Open Meeting in October, we decided that due to the uncertainty over the Covid situation we would cancel it. However, we will be holding an online Extraordinary Meeting on on 4th November at 7.30pm. The increase in number and type of projects means we are having to change parts of our constitution, for which we seek approval, along with an increase in annual membership fee from £5 to £7.50. Membership has been £5 for at least 10 years and at £7.50 is still cheaper than many similar local organisations and will enable us to continue with our increasing number of projects. Details of this meeting will be sent out by email and put on our notice board. If you do not receive emails from us and you would like details, please call our secretary, details below.

As our activities expand it has created opportunities for up to three new committee members of all ages to help with our communications and project work. If you are interested in making a positive contribution to our area then please contact our secretary, Rosemary Bailey on 01932 863461, info@cdra.co.uk **Steve Wood, Chairman**

ON THE BUSES & TRAINS

Quite a lot has been going on recently on the buses and trains...

South Western Railway has been consulting organisations on its "post-Covid" timetables (from December 2022). SWR proposes a small reduction in services overall, compared with 2019, because it believes that business and

commuter travel in particular will not have returned to its previous levels. For Cobham, however, the plan is to keep to the current two services per hour on Mondays – Saturdays, with one extra service in the peak hours Monday – Friday (as in 2019). CDRA has responded, supporting the plan for the Cobham service, but stressing the need to avoid overcrowding in the peak, to improve punctuality and not to put up fares if passenger demand reduces.

Surrey County Council has been consulting residents on local bus services, as part of its work on a Bus Service Improvement Plan, required by the government's National Bus Strategy ("Bus Back Better"). The plan will be published by the end of October. Let's hope for some positive outcomes!

Lastly, we're pleased to see that Cobham's main bus service – the 715 – now has extra evening services on Mondays to Saturdays: the last bus now leaves Kingston for Guildford at 9.30 p.m. If you are able, please use them – or they may disappear!

ENVIRONMENT

As part of our efforts to improve our local environment the CDRA has continued to work on reducing the number of trees being removed in Cobham and its residential areas by commenting on planning applications for work to trees with Tree Protection Orders (TPOs), and those in Conservation areas and on development sites.

We have been liaising with Elmbridge Tree Officers to raise issues of concern and finding



One of the saplings we planted on the Leg O'Mutton Field, you can see the news buds for next year

ways to work together to retain and enhance the green character of Cobham and Downside. There is now an updated page on the Elmbridge council site regarding trees.

We also continue to raise awareness of the importance of retaining trees for our neighbourhoods with local councillors at our regular committee meetings.

As well as trees, hedges are also an important but often neglected environmental element and so we have embarked on a hedging programme following liaison with Elmbridge Borough Council's Green Spaces Team. In April we planted 120 native saplings provided free of charge by The Woodland Trust on the Leg O'Mutton Field. The saplings have been regularly cared for during the summer with watering, grass reduction around bases of plants and mulching with the grass cuttings. This, along with the purchase of larger guards and supports, has enabled good growth of the hedge saplings. We also have been giving them an 'airing', removing loose dead leaves now that the plants are preparing for autumn and young buds are already showing ready for next year's growth. We have another delivery of 120 saplings expected in November to continue the project and will be looking for volunteers to help with the planting and will advise you of the date. A big thank you to our members who donated towards the cost of the new stakes and guards.

YOUR FUND

In our last Newsletter we told you about our exciting bid for funds from the £100M Surrey County Council *Your Fund* initiative in partnership with the Cobham Conservation and Heritage Group (CCHT), Chamber of Commerce (CoC) and Cobham Football Club (CFC). *Your Fund* will support projects which would deliver significant benefit to local communities. Unfortunately, changes to the criteria for *Your Fund* mean that the CoC and CCHT parts of the project are no longer eligible as they require SCC Highways involvement. As a result, it was agreed that the CDRA and the football club should continue together to pursue our Leg O'Mutton Field focused projects. These in outline

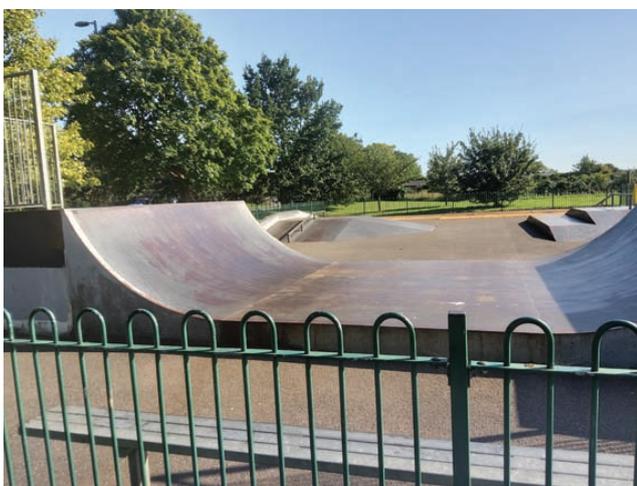
include proposals to:

- * Replace the existing community skate park with a new updated version, create a community nature trail around the Leg O'Mutton field and, install appropriate seating and accompanying trees;
- * Replace and enhance the existing football club changing rooms and clubhouse.

The current skate park is one of the most heavily used facilities in the borough and is nearing the end of its life. Through replacement and enhancement a wide range of users within the community will not only be able to continue to capitalise on the social and physical benefits of using an up to-date facility, but they will also gain unique experience by being involved in the its design. By creating a trail and installing some seating on the Leg O'Mutton field, both young and older members of the community will be able to gain improved access, amenity, educational and health benefits, in addition to enhanced opportunities for social interaction and quiet contemplation.

CFC's changing rooms and clubhouse are old, not fit for purpose and also contain condemned areas. A new building and facilities will greatly benefit the young players and staff of what is a thriving and growing youth football club. In addition, they will enhance the experience for players' families and supporters and will also support a greater range of community activities for local residents.

We have recently submitted an application to establish a Community Interest Company (CIC) with our partners, CFC; this will allow us to



Cobham Skate Park, part of our Your Fund application is to replace the existing skate park with a new, updated version

receive and disburse funds to our proposed community projects. Once the CIC is formalised, we will then be able to address the *Your Fund* Idea Submission Application, a necessary compliance check by SCC. Assuming both the CIC is formalised and that we satisfy the compliance check, we can then start the serious work of compiling and submitting our detailed bid for project funds. This work will not only involve securing formal quotes from potential suppliers and developing detailed project plans, but will, most importantly, involve further engagement with the community to ensure our proposed projects have the support and buy-in of Cobham and Downside residents.

SANDY LANE

We are delighted to tell you about our project to improve Sandy Lane. Consultation with residents identified the need to repair/replace the tarmac surface as required; improve pedestrian access along the length of the lane; reduce the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph, but without the need for street lighting; improve the Sandy Lane junction with the A244.

We have support of Reeds School and have met with David Lewis, our Surrey County Councillor and Nick Healey, Surrey Highways Area Manager, who have assessed the condition of the road. We are excited to report that as result the council:

1. have started to address flooding issues near Reeds School
2. will repair serious defects to Sandy Lane's road surface. It is important that as many residents as possible report defects at www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport
3. will clear overgrown vegetation near Sandringham Park to open up an informal footpath towards Reeds School

In addition, a reduction in the speed limit to 30mph, widening of the junction with Warren Lane (A244) and a formal footpath being built along the south side of the road have been added to Elmbridge Local Committee's prioritisation list.

These improvements will take time, but persistence is key. The Sandy Lane community's proposed improvements are now very much on the radar of the Surrey Officers and Councillors, with some positive commitments already.