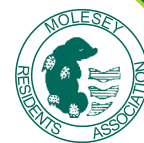


# MOLESEY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2020

[www.moleseyresidentsassociation.org.uk](http://www.moleseyresidentsassociation.org.uk)

e-mail contact: [mjaxton@live.com](mailto:mjaxton@live.com)



Chairman: Stuart Selleck, 2 St. John's Road, KT8 9JH Tel: 020-8979-2466

Molesey Residents Association Councillors at Elmbridge

**MOLESEY  
EAST**

Stuart Selleck 020-8979-2466  
Lesley Yauner 020-8224-2094

**MOLESEY  
WEST**

Ruby Ahmed 020-8979-4210  
Mike Axton 020-8979-1502  
Tony Popham 07970-107-937

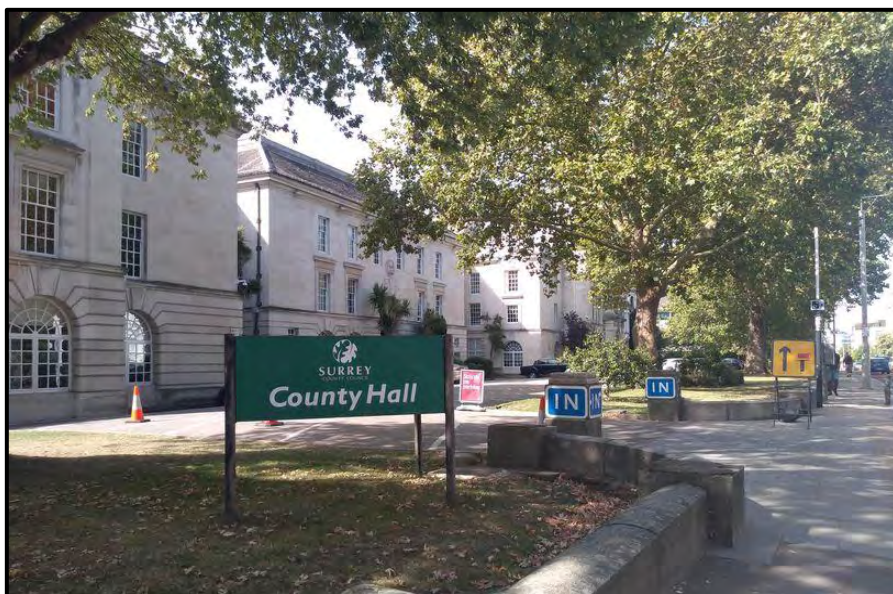
MRA Councillor at Surrey County Council - Ernest Mallett 020-8979-6446

## ELMBRIDGE COUNCIL – TO BE OR NOT TO BE?

The government has been keen to replace the present system of district councils by introducing 'Unitary Authorities' across the country – each with a controlling and active Mayor (the Mayor in Elmbridge is really a symbolic figurehead of the Council and carries out duties such as opening events and appearing as the Council representative at local functions, etc). The authorities the government has in mind are similar to those for Manchester and other large cities.

In our area this would probably mean the loss of all the district councils (such as Elmbridge) and everything being run and controlled by a much bigger (and more remote) organisation. This would mean that all local planning applications would be decided by the new large authority, making it much more difficult for local residents to have any impact in objecting to developments they see as detrimental to their area.

The Conservative Surrey County Council (SCC) Leader, Tim Oliver, initially indicated that he wanted to bid for SCC to run all local government services in Surrey, which would have made it one of the largest unitary authorities in the country (in terms of population).



Under the present system, Molesey is represented by six councillors among a total of 48 on Elmbridge Council, but by only two councillors among 81 on Surrey County Council. The whole idea could go even further with, perhaps, one gargantuan authority running the whole of South Eastern England!

We view the whole idea as a great loss of local democracy and representation for the people of Molesey, but in the face of widespread concerns about the proposals it seems that the Government is reconsidering its plans and the Devolution White Paper, initially due to be published in the Autumn, is now expected to be postponed until the New Year or even later. In the light of these developments SCC is sending conflicting messages about its intentions but we understand is still preparing a case for a single Unitary Authority.

This issue has not gone away though, but will likely come up again at a date later than originally planned. So it is still important for residents to sign the [RASSU petition](#) (Residents Against a Single Surrey Unitary) to show the strength of opposition to SCC's proposed mega-council and the consequent loss of local democracy. A minimum of 10,000 signatures is being aimed for in the petition.

We sincerely hope that Surrey does decide to withdraw its bid.

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## WHERE WILL THEY PARK?

Surrey County Council is proposing to introduce Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) in Palace Road, Wolsey Road, Arnison Road, Hansler Grove, Grove Road and St John's Road. The CPZs will operate for an hour in the morning from Monday to Friday, effectively preventing commuter parking.

Whilst the residents in those roads (like many others around Molesey) would, no doubt, be pleased to see the parking reduced in their roads, we are very concerned that the displaced cars will transfer to other roads nearby, such as Church Road, Vine Road, Manor Road, Kent Road, Park Road, etc. Most of these roads are quite narrow and have very limited off-street parking capacity, whereas the 'CPZ roads' are mostly wide, straight and have adequate off-street parking.

Surrey County Council carried out a similar survey in these roads of exactly this situation in 2016 and concluded that a scheme, such as that now proposed, should not go ahead because of the predictable result of displaced parking swamping other roads, which are much less able to accept the parking.

MRA has always opposed the introduction of parking restrictions in Palace Road, Wolsey Road, Arnison Road etc because of the very real potential for parking displacement into neighbouring roads which (unlike those roads) do not have much off-street parking capacity. Local Conservative Councillors (Steve Bax at Elmbridge and Peter Szanto at SCC) have pushed this through on behalf of a group of residents in Palace Road and Wolsey Road, who have been campaigning for many years to prevent commuters parking outside their houses.

Nothing has changed since the 2016 survey and we can see no reason to introduce such a scheme now. The proposals are subject to public consultation and Surrey has circulated many of the roads around the 'CPZ area' with information about the consultation, inviting residents to respond.

We urge all residents likely to be affected to make their opinions known to Surrey County Council at <https://www.surreysays.co.uk/environment-and-infrastructure/parking-proposals-elmbridge-parking-review-2019-20/> or by letter headed "Elmbridge Parking Review" to: Mr David Curl, Parking Team, Hazel House, Merrow Lane, Guildford, GU4 7BQ. Although the official closing date for responses has passed, reasonable late responses will still be considered.

## WHEN WILL IT BE DEFEATED?

We are, of course, talking about the Corona Virus. This has caused major disruptions to so many aspects of our lives and caused the cancellation of so many activities. The May local elections were cancelled, our Summer newsletter did not appear, and our 2020 AGM had to be cancelled. We are hoping that our 2021 AGM at 8pm on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at the Methodist Church in Manor Road will be able to go ahead, but our annual Charity Quiz this November will not be possible.

Molesey Carnival did not go ahead and Molesey Musical Theatre's celebration production to mark their 50-year history has had to be put on hold until next year. They are now aiming to stage 'That's Showbiz' in May 2021 and they have their 'Sleeping Beauty' panto scheduled for November 2021.

However, important services have to carry on – often supported by volunteers. One of these is Meals on Wheels, which operates around Molesey from the Community Centre at Mole Hall, delivering hot meals to elderly or disabled people - to whom they are a godsend. MRA Councillor, Lesley Yauner, is a volunteer (as she has been for many years before she became a councillor) delivering Meals on Wheels around Molesey. It is only due to volunteers like Lesley that these services continue – and they are very valuable to the people receiving them.

## DAFFODIL APPEAL

One thing that did go ahead before the dreaded lockdown struck was our 'Daffodil Appeal'. This is an appeal we make in the Spring – at a period of growth and vitality - when we invite residents to remember loved ones no longer here by making a donation for charity.

We are pleased to report that the results of this year's appeal, together with an MRA contribution, allowed us to make donations of £400 to Marie Curie and £100 to Alzheimer's. The charities were very grateful for these donations and we would like extend our sincere thanks to all those who donated.

Normally, MRA County Cllr. Ernest Mallett goes to Spalding at his own expense to get our MRA Winter planting daffodil bulbs but this time they arrived on an embarrassingly large lorry, blocking Walton Road.

Ernest and his helpers, particularly residents of Fleetside, will now be busy planting over a quarter of a tonne of daffodil, crocus and snowdrop bulbs around Molesey to give us all pleasure in the Spring and to be the basis of our Spring Appeal for the Marie Curie and Alzheimers appeals.





## **POOL ROAD DEVELOPMENT**

In Pool Road, West Molesey, opposite the Fleetside entry road, is a commercial building with space behind it – for which a planning application has been made by Paragon Homes.

The proposal is to build a new entry road to 75 new affordable homes in the space behind the front commercial building and backing on to the rear gardens of properties in Monks Avenue.



The proposal is for 14 semi-detached 3-bedroomed houses and 61 flats (in 2 blocks of 4 storeys) together with a landscaped communal area and 80 parking places.

Although this land had protected status in the Local Plan as employment land, it had become clear in recent years that there was no realistic prospect of it ever being taken up by a new employer.

Since all the dwellings will be 'affordable housing', all parties on the Planning Committee concluded that, in view of the miserable conditions forced on some residents due to lack of housing, the

urgent need for more affordable housing outweighed the designation in the Local Plan.

Hence, the application was approved with cross-party support and the backing of MRA councillors.

## **WALTON ROAD PLANTERS**

The photograph shows the state of the planters after an unidentified lorry damaged them in November 2019. MRA County Cllr Ernest Mallett cemented enough bricks back in to allow last year's Christmas tree to be fixed in place and to make the planters safe for the 2019 Magical Molesey event.

It has taken some time but he has now persuaded the County Highways to get them repaired – but only by allocating some £3000 of his personal Highways budget. Ernest has also taken on some personal path safety repairing where elderly persons have been tripped up as some paths are outside Surrey Highways control and they have no budget anyway. Added to this, Ernest has been out with his chain pole-saw to settle some residents' concerns as to tree branch safety.



## **GOVERNMENT TO OVERRIDE PLANNING CONTROLS?**

Many people feel there is already too much house building going on in Elmbridge. If the government gets its way it is going to get a lot worse!

At the moment there are about 282 new houses built in Elmbridge every year. Last year the government decided that this should be increased to 623 per year – as reported at length in our last two newsletters. Now the government is publishing 'Changes to the Current Planning System' aiming to increase this to 774 per year – every year for the next 15 years – that's 11,610 houses!

If Elmbridge Council doesn't decide where these houses should be built in the forthcoming Local Plan, a planning inspector could well make that decision for us!

The changes would also allow developers to avoid having to make any contribution at all towards 'affordable' homes, whether in terms of actual homes or money – drastically reducing the number of affordable homes built.

Further, the government is publishing a planning White Paper which aims to introduce a planning system which favours developers much more strongly and will severely restrict the ability of local residents, councillors and even planning officers to object to, or refuse, planning applications.

This is the government wanting to take even more control away from local authorities and a further loss of local democracy. Elmbridge needs more affordable housing but the consequences arising from these plans will be highly detrimental for us all.

If enough people object to these changes they could be stopped.

If you want to object to the White Paper proposals, you can do so at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future> before 29<sup>th</sup> October.

If you want to object to the 'Changes to the Current Planning System' you can email your MP, Dominic Raab, at [dominic.raab.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:dominic.raab.mp@parliament.uk) to show the strength of local opposition to the plans

SUBSCRIPTIONS

With the corona virus restrictions, we decided it was not sensible to collect subscriptions door-to-door during this year. However, although the MRA does have some savings, we do need incoming subscriptions to cover our expenses, such as the production of this newsletter, and to enable us to continue representing Molesey on a long-term basis. MRA is a purely voluntary organisation, so nobody gets paid – and all income goes to cover our expenses.

If you have not yet paid your subscription for this year, it would be a great help to the Association if you could forward it to any of the addresses at the bottom of this page or, if you prefer, you could make an online payment to the MRA Santander account number **86284805**, sort code **09-01-28**. Please also send an email to [mra.subs@gmail.com](mailto:mra.subs@gmail.com) with your name and address – to make sure we know who sent the money! We will send you a membership receipt. The annual household subscription stays at only £3 per year (hardly the cost of a cup of coffee!) – or, to save having to subscribe every year, £15 for five years. If you could see your way clear to making the 5-year subscription it would be a great help to us as it reduces the amount of administration involved.

A big Thank You in anticipation of your support.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

In East Molesey, on the corner of Beauchamp Road and Spencer Road, stands this glorious Victorian house, surrounded by spacious gardens.

A planning application (number 2020/1273) has been submitted to demolish the house and replace it with two new buildings, two storeys high with rooms in the roof, each containing five flats. The proposed buildings would occupy almost the full width of the site.



The application was refused on the grounds of the bulk of the new buildings and was judged to be out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area. The developer could now appeal the decision – or come up with a different plan.

Meanwhile, McCarthy & Stone has withdrawn the application to build 35 retirement homes on the Majestic Wines site on the corner of Langton Road.

The Environment Agency has employed an external enforcement company to manage the riverbank and will be starting on 1st October. So, let’s see how effective they are in solving the unauthorised moorings along our riverbank.

THAMESIDE MOLESEY/ BOOK OF MOLESEY

Christmas is coming and we can supply some copies of these excellent Rowland Baker histories of Molesey. We have a reasonable number of ‘Thameside Molesey’ which describes historical events along the towpath and the history of ‘The Hurst’ area, covering the Suffragette activities on Hurst Park racecourse and the extravagant Fred Karno’s ‘Karsino’ on Tagg’s Island. These are brand new at a discounted price of only £15 – the same price as when they were first published in 1989!

We have also found three copies of our previous sold-out prints of the more general ‘Book of Molesey’. The new copies were held back because two of them have the hard covers on upside down and one with normal covers but the cover is slightly wrinkled. The ‘Book of Molesey’ is very hard to find and has retailed on Amazon up to £80. The upside-down cover ones are £11 each and the slightly wrinkled cover one is £14. All books are available from Ernest Mallett at 20 Walton Road, 020-8979-6446 or [ernest.mallett@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:ernest.mallett@surreycc.gov.uk)

Your Membership is Greatly Appreciated

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MOLESEY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION HOUSEHOLD MEMBERSHIP - AUTUMN 2020

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