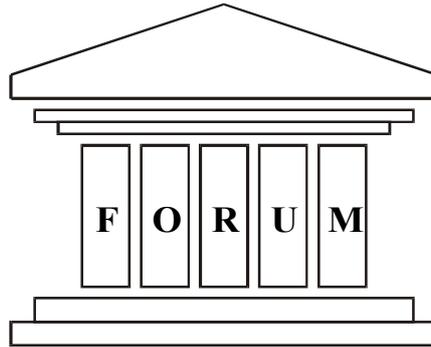


MERTON PARK WARD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



Spring 2016

Issue No 55

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This edition of FORUM contains the largest number of articles that I can remember since we started 28 years ago. There are currently an exceptional number of ongoing issues for your Independent Residents Councillors and MPWRA to monitor, some very local and some affecting wider areas of London e.g. Tramlink to Sutton and Crossrail 2. In *What Price Merton Park* (page 4) we are reminded of the need for a succession of active members to replace those who have already served, some from the beginning, as they gradually retire. In fact every page of FORUM shows that living in Merton Park and caring for its future can be an exciting and rewarding experience. Do feel free to get in touch with me or any of our councillors if you would like to get more involved with our activities.

Hubert Child, Chairman

**Our next meeting is on Tuesday 3 May at 8pm
At Poplar Primary School**

There's more to Morden - Sarah Gould, LB Merton

Come and find out what's going on where you live

Merton Park Ward Residents' Association (MPWRA) sponsors three Independent councillors who form Merton Park Ward Independent Residents (MPWIR) on Merton Council



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CLOSURE OF THE JOHN INNES PATH?

You might be forgiven for thinking that the future of the John Innes path (running between the Rutlish School buildings to link John Innes Park and John Innes Recreation Ground) had been settled by the comprehensive consultation carried out in 2010. After considering the evidence, Cabinet decided the path should remain open, and a new gate was installed where the path enters the Recreation Ground. When used in conjunction with the existing gate at the entrance to the Park, the path can now be locked down in an emergency.



police report into how the security of the Rutlish site can be improved. Amongst several recommendations to improve security is the closure of the path.

Nothing else has changed to affect the decision reached six years ago, but the police report needs to be considered in the wider context of all users of the

path. We hope to arrange a public meeting to which we will invite the author of the police report, together with the Greenspaces team to represent path users. It's too early yet to set a date as we only knew about this development a few days ago, but we will make sure residents in the vicinity are kept informed and consulted.

PS

However, the Chair of Governors of Rutlish School has now reiterated his demand that the path should be closed during the school working day, backed up by a

MERTON ADULT EDUCATION

Merton Council decided in 2015 to stop providing Adult Education directly and to commission these services from external providers. In March it announced the new providers. **South Thames College** will provide most of the courses in areas such as English and Maths, Creative Arts, Modern Foreign Languages, IT and vocational courses. **Groundwork London**, a London-based charity, will provide employability skills such as CV writing and job interview techniques and family learning courses such as English and Maths and healthy living. The council has yet to appoint providers to deliver education for people with learning disabilities or for apprenticeships.

The curriculum for the academic year 2016/17 will be published in the late spring. The Whatley Avenue site which has delivered the bulk of MAE courses will not be used for adult education from September 2016.

JS

BEDS-IN-SHEDS

We have recently seen an increase in planning applications for buildings to be erected in the rear gardens of properties in our ward. In some cases this has been clearly to create accommodation in gardens with living and sleeping facilities. Some applications have tried to show that the new accommodation was dependent on (or 'ancillary to') the main dwelling. The reality is that some house owners are attempting to establish separate dwellings to the rear of their houses. These '**Beds-in-Sheds**' can earn their owners **significant rents but they are illegal**. Outbuildings themselves can be quite legitimate; but if they are retrospectively kitted out with accommodation facilities they are not. As a residents' association we will do what we can to prevent the spread of beds-in-sheds. But this depends upon neighbours letting our councillors or the council itself know of such developments, so that they can bring enforcement proceedings.

JS

NELSON HEALTH CENTRE

In the last edition of FORUM we asked you how you thought the new Nelson Health Centre was doing after six months of operation. There were relatively few replies, some of them positive and complimenting the staff. Nevertheless some did voice concerns about the difficulty of getting an appointment at the Medical Practice (GP Surgery) and telephone contact in general. There were also difficulties in obtaining prescriptions and residents were baffled at the slow opening of the Pharmacy. Our councillors met the staff of the Medical Practice in January. It was clear that the problems were understood and they had recently written to patients about the difficulties. (Their letter can be viewed on our website explaining some of their challenges and plans.) As we write in mid-April, the Pharmacy remains in a portacabin in the car park. We continue to be supportive of the Nelson staff; the more you hear of their problems the more you can feel the weight of NHS bureaucracy bearing down on them.

JS

ADULT SOCIAL CARE – AND HOW WE PAY FOR IT

Many of you will be familiar with the problems local authorities face in funding a rising demand for adult care. The costs of home and residential care are increasing, especially now the New Living Wage has boosted rates for the lowest paid by 10%. Merton is scheduled to spend £75m on adult care this year (2016/17) but on past form will probably overshoot its budget. Merton's funding from central government will reduce to zero after 2019/20, when it will depend solely on what it raises through business rates and council tax. For five years central government put pressure on councils to freeze council tax. However, this year it acknowledged the rising cost of adult care by sanctioning an increase of 2% in council tax, the Adult Social Care precept (ASC), plus a general increase of up to 2%, making 4% in total.

MPWIR argued strongly that the cuts facing adult care made it essential to levy this ASC precept. Our online survey showed that you agreed overwhelmingly – 92% said they would be willing to pay 2% more (£22 a year for a Band D taxpayer) provided it was spent on adult care. Your comments made clear that the issue was essentially about morality rather than cost. For example:

'I feel very strongly the right thing to do is to raise the 2% precept, otherwise many crucial services will be cut to the point where people are really going to suffer.'

'Council tax has been static for a long time. Residents could and should accept an increase to pay for vital adult care services.'

The Overview & Scrutiny Commission (chaired by Peter Southgate) also recommended to Cabinet that the ASC precept should be levied, pointing out that the reduction in the GLA precept this year would result in a net increase of only £3 for a Band D taxpayer. However, in its election manifesto in 2014, the Labour administration in Merton had promised to keep council tax frozen for the next four years and at the budget council meeting it rejected our recommendation and public opinion. Instead a £1.3m Savings Mitigation Fund was established for 2016/17 using the New Homes Bonus, and the Council Leader undertook to consult the electorate on levying the ASC precept in future years. Whilst we would have preferred the precept to be levied immediately (thus avoiding a call on reserves), the offer to consult is significant and we will be monitoring proposals for the consultation very closely. It cannot afford to fail.

PS

COMPULSORY ACADEMISATION OF MERTON PARK SCHOOLS

We don't normally comment on government policy, believing we were elected to represent the interests of Merton Park and its residents and to steer clear of national party politics. But the recent budget proposal, to force all schools to become academies and to exclude local authorities from any involvement in running them, does affect three schools in our ward – Rutlish, Poplar Primary and Merton Park Primary – as well as three primaries just outside the ward – Wimbledon Chase, Dundonald and Joseph Hood – that are widely used by our residents.

These are all thriving, successful and often oversubscribed schools that have expanded rapidly to accommodate Merton's rising birth-rate, yet maintained their high standards. Merton Park Primary (where Peter Southgate is a governor) was recently rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and Poplar Primary maintained its 'Good' rating even as it expanded by 50%. Rutlish School has been transformed under its present head, Alex Williamson, and was recently rated one of the most improved secondaries in the country; 70% of pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades and 90% of its sixth formers passed three or more A levels.

What could enforced academisation possibly add to these schools? They are enthusiastically supported by parents and governors and work effectively with the Education Department in Merton. We are proud of their achievements and their contribution to our community. All of this will be lost if the council is forced out and our schools are taken over by academy chains with no local accountability. Worse still, control of the school buildings and land will pass from the council to central government, posing the threat of unwanted development to school grounds and playing fields.

All political parties in the Local Government Association are opposed to local authorities being excluded from education, as are teaching staff, school governors and parents. In the face of such united opposition, compulsory academisation may not come to pass. But if it does, we will be pressing for a local, independent trust to run our primary schools in preference to a national academy chain.

PS

WHAT PRICE MERTON PARK?

As a residents' association we are no strangers to the need to challenge unsuitable development. We take a constructive approach but we know we must engage closely with all proposals if we want to preserve Merton Park as a pleasant and distinctive area. Right now we are faced with three massive developments which each threaten the character of where we live. All three schemes are supported by huge national and commercial interests. There is a momentum growing behind each one, with the danger that local issues in our own area may be ignored in favour of the schemes. **Each will require our close attention for many years, so we need new people to come forward to lead the Association as others retire. The choice is up to you, Merton Park's residents.**

Hubert Child, Chairman MPWRA

CROSSRAIL2

Momentum is building behind Crossrail2 which is planned to pass through Wimbledon and Raynes Park in the early 2030's, just to the north of our ward, boosting regional train links into and across London.



Latest news: Development funding for Crossrail2 was allocated in last month's UK Budget. This will fund further design development and public engagement ahead of submitting a Hybrid Bill to parliament for powers to launch the project by autumn 2019. This summer Crossrail2 will publish revised plans for the route promising to reflect the issues and concerns raised during the consultation held at the end of last year. Results of this consultation can be viewed now on the Crossrail2 website.

Consultation highlights: Along with some positive comments about regeneration benefits and improved transport connectivity, the key concerns for people in the Wimbledon area included:

- The impact of building a new station on the town centre, losing key buildings

- The lack of any alternative options presented for consultation
- Residential impacts near new marshalling yards at Dundonald Road
- The impact of increased train frequencies on houses facing the railway line
- The reduction in train services into Waterloo as Crossrail 2 services will operate into central London
- The Crossrail2 tunnel portal at Gap Road and the shaft and depot at Weir Road and the impact on Weir Road Industrial/Commercial Estate.

MPWRA view: We are pleased that the cross-party response to the consultation reflected many of the views put forward by our Independent ward councillors. It stressed that the current proposals represented a uniquely unacceptable level of upheaval and disruption and that *'If the plans remain as they are, we would be forced to reconsider our support for the project.'*

By contrast there are many excited comments from councils across south east and eastern England welcoming this £27 billion scheme with impatience to just get on with it. In our meetings, residents have noted that Crossrail2 is fundamentally to enable the national transport infrastructure to cope with an increasing population and projected increased demand for travel into London. **There is a real danger that Wimbledon and the surrounding area including Merton Park will be forced to make sacrifices for the national good without adequate compensation.**

MORDEN TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

Work is progressing on plans to transform Morden Town Centre. They include building over 1,000 new homes as well as new retail and business premises with new public spaces. Much of the site falls within our ward and many hundreds of households will be affected.

Latest news:

- Merton secured Housing Zone status for Morden in late 2015 and funding from the Greater London Authority to kick-start the regeneration. The terms of collaboration with Transport for London (TfL)

have been drafted and a development partner is expected to be in place by the autumn, with specific plans drawn up for consultation within a year.

- Construction is unlikely to begin before late 2018.
- This month the council will receive the finance to redesign and build Morden's roads over the next three years, working closely with TfL.
- As part of the overall programme, a New Homes Bonus of £600,000 is to be used to renovate Morden's 'Retail Gateway' by restoring the original Art Deco frontage of Morden Court Parade in London Road, Morden which we hope will soon enhance the look and feel of the area.

Consultation highlights: Late last year the council consulted residents on what they wanted to see in Morden. The results largely (80%) supported the 'vision' to upgrade the town centre, improving its shopping and other facilities and making it more of a destination, not merely a transport hub. **Frankly, it asked a number of 'soft' questions without spelling out the reality of the scheme which could**

bring high-rise, high-density, parking-challenged development to our ward.

MPWRA view: Last year a group of MPWRA members came together to keep a close eye on the plans and their huge impact on our neighbourhood. They met council officers in October to probe more deeply into the proposals and then made a detailed submission to the consultation on the town centre. It covered far more than the questions posed in the council's survey and can be viewed on the home page of our website.

The group highlighted: the danger of over-massive development; the need to build homes that are right for local people, not Nine Elms-style investments; the need to make adequate provision for schools, health, etc. as well as parking. They are concerned that the council select the right developer, who is sympathetic to the area and wants to collaborate with local groups, to create the best solution for Morden. The group are looking forward to further engagement with the council as the scheme's specifications are further refined.

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF CROYDON TRAMLINK TO SUTTON

TfL is developing its plans to build a spur of Croydon Tramlink joining Wimbledon to Sutton, with significant implications for traffic flows and amenities in Merton Park and neighbouring wards.

Latest news: In March TfL committed to spending £100m on a new Tramlink spur from Wimbledon to Sutton. Sutton and Merton councils have offered to pay a further £50m. But in total, £240m needs to be found for the project to proceed.

Consultation highlights: Consultation on a spur to Sutton was held in the summer of 2014. Sutton residents made up two thirds of the total responses but Merton less than a quarter. Both boroughs expressed strong support for the scheme. MPWRA made a detailed submission to the consultation which is accessible on the Local Issues page of our website.

MPWRA view: Plans for the Sutton spur still retain several worrying features. Rat-running through Merton Park would rise considerably (it's already a problem) as trams will occupy part of Morden's through-traffic space.

In addition, the Tramlink crossing on the Kingston Road is now at full capacity. Our recent discussions with Tramlink (*see page 6*) confirm there is no money in the budget to send the trams under the Kingston Road. So an additional spur diverting some trams to South Wimbledon, instead of terminating at Wimbledon, would be essential and not just an 'option', as was presented in the consultation. But this would take trams either

across the Nursery Road Playing Fields or along an extremely busy section of Morden Road. Residents strongly opposed the playing field route and the congestion impacts of using the road are clear.

Solving the problems would cost money. But all the signs are that it won't be available. Quite the reverse – we hear that savings are already needed and over-bearing new development required to fill emerging gaps. TfL are saying: *'There remains a shortfall to be addressed by looking at the scheme's scope, value engineering and increasing the local contribution from development.'* **The Greater London Authority has previously demanded Merton and Sutton commit to building 10,000 homes in return for the tram extension.**

But, just like Crossrail2, enthusiasm for the scheme is building amongst those least likely to bear the consequences. The London Assembly member for Sutton and Croydon, said recently *'This is a really important stage of the process because it shows that nobody can back out now. We know that the business plan is not enough, but it is a sign that this plan is being taken seriously in that TfL have committed to it. Of course, a deal has to be struck first. Everyone else involved has really got to up their game.'* **There is a real danger that Merton and Sutton councils become committed to a scheme before it is properly defined.**

JS

TRAMLINK CROSSING IN THE KINGSTON ROAD



From 4 April Tramlink services between Wimbledon and Croydon have increased from eight to **12 trams per hour in each direction** with an extra tram platform at Wimbledon station. This follows growth in passenger numbers from 18.5 million in 2000, its first year of operation, to over 32 million in 2014/15.

In January 2015 our councillors met Tramlink, together with councillors from neighbouring wards, to understand what this meant for the Tramlink crossing in the Kingston Road. Tramlink's modelling work showed that without some modifications to the junction, congestion would increase significantly at this already busy junction.

These modifications included repositioning and rephrasing of traffic lights and prohibiting left turns out of Hartfield Road (to bring the lights closer to the tracks and save time at each changing of the lights). The loss of the left turn could inconvenience some residents but, faced with the reality of a 50% increase in trams it was judged essential to avoid traffic gridlock. The changes also promised to reduce the problem of motorists running red lights and endangering pedestrians.

We were therefore surprised, when we approached Tramlink early this year, to learn that no road modifications were to be made. An objection had apparently been received which, unbeknown to us, had overturned several months of analytical work. Our Independent councillors therefore met Tramlink again in early April. They agreed that the crossing should be monitored for a period to see just how much additional congestion the extra trams bring. If road traffic is severely affected, plans to introduce the previously agreed scheme will be advanced by Tramlink, followed by a public consultation in Merton. The whole process, if changes are required, could take up to six months. The delay is disappointing but it will be an opportunity to make decisions based on real data.

JS

20MPH IN MOSTYN ROAD

For several years we have been pressing for electronic 20mph signage in Mostyn Road. In 2014 the council's evidence showed a majority of vehicles exceed the limit and a large number travel at over 30 and sometimes over 40 mph along this road.

In January we celebrated the installation of two radar signs which nearby residents said did make a difference. But these were removed after only two weeks, as they were deemed too expensive to maintain! After much debate, we have now been promised two permanent signs, which will run off mains power and will be installed in the next few weeks. **They can't come soon enough – on April 7 a car smashed into and demolished a mature roadside tree half way up the road. It was a major accident.**

We are not naïve; some motorists will ignore any 20mph signage. But we do believe these signs can make a difference.

JS

SMILE, YOU'RE ON CAMERA: ANPR PLANS

Merton is installing new cameras to enforce moving traffic offences using **Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)**. They will appear at junctions with a yellow box or no right turn and at bus lanes and will start operating from June. A pilot study demonstrated that the technology helps to combat bad driving and ease congestion, which is a major concern with residents. ANPR automates much of the process, saving council officers' time. The location of all moving traffic restrictions that will be enforced by camera is on the council website.

After our discussion with the council it is agreed that, given the difficulty in turning onto the Kingston Road out of Dorset Road and Kingswood Road, where there is a yellow box, the council will **not penalise vehicles that turn right out of Dorset Rd or turn left out of Kingswood Rd** into the box junction and wait for the traffic on the Kingston Road, **as long as no part of the vehicle is over the central point of the box junction** where traffic comes from the South Wimbledon direction.

JS

TRIP HAZARDS

Did you know you can easily report potholes in the road or broken and uneven pavements?

Go to www.merton.gov.uk and look for *Transport and Streets/Road and Pathway Maintenance* and follow the links.

You can also use the app *Love Clean Streets* on your smartphone or tablet to report a whole range of environmental issues. Go to www.lovecleanstreets.com to find out how it works. You can also use this website to report problems directly.

PARKING ROUND UP

Now named the *Merton Park South* area by the council, **Cranleigh Road, Keswick Avenue, Kenley Road** (between Circle Gardens and Mostyn Road), **Mostyn Road** (between Kenley Road and Martin Way), **Tybenham Road** and **Poplar Road South** responded to a statutory consultation to join **MP1**, the existing CPZ that covers much of the ward up to the Kingston Road. Given that the statutory consultation concluded at the end of last year, it is extremely disappointing that the report from Traffic and Highways and the decision of the Cabinet member, Cllr Andrew Judge, to implement the CPZ, was only published on 12 April. You will find a link to the report on our website www.mertonpark.org.uk

One aspect of the MP1 extension that has not received much attention is the inclusion of Mostyn Road between Cranleigh Road and Martin Way (known locally as *the Ramp*). The station side will be Pay & Display bays only but I have asked for the other side to have more shared use (P&D plus Resident) bays than originally proposed, to allow for overflow parking from Cranleigh Road and Mostyn Road below the Ramp. Having to pay is likely to deter commuters from parking on the Ramp. This will improve sight lines for motorists navigating this section of Mostyn Road and make it safer for pedestrians crossing to Mostyn Gardens.

PS

Residents in **Wessex Avenue** have been frustrated recently to find council staff using the limited number of parking bays in their road, sometimes denying resident permit holders a place to park. These staff are '*Essential Users*' such as social workers who need to use their cars during the working day to visit clients. Their permits are marked 'VARIOUS' allowing access to all parking zones in the borough. And there are a lot of them – over 800 at the last count. Departments pay £212 for each permit issued, so they have a financial incentive to limit their distribution only to those who need them.

To avoid CPZ's near the Civic Centre being swamped by *Essential Users* to the exclusion of resident permit holders, roads such as Camrose Close, Queens Road and York Close are on a proscribed list from which VARIOUS permit holders are banned. Following representations from your ward councillors, it was agreed that Wessex Avenue should be added to the proscribed list. This addresses the immediate problem, but with MP1 about to be extended to the south of the ward, other roads that are closer to the Civic Centre such as Poplar Road South may come within range for Essential Users. We will keep the situation under review.

PS

Parking in the **Cannon Hill Lane area** has become even more difficult and dangerous with the opening of the **Nelson Health Centre**, as we and many local residents predicted. In late 2015 residents in the area raised a petition calling for a consultation into a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) which was presented to the council in November. When we asked in March when the consultation would start, we were told not until September at the earliest. But our councillors demanded an earlier start, saying that the funding already exists. They have given the council a copy of the contract with the Primary Care Trust, which paid for a CPZ consultation as a condition of the planning approval granted in 2012 to rebuild the Nelson Health Centre.

A CPZ would reduce the number of parking spaces but would exclude vehicles from outside the zone other than residents' visitors. Of course, whether the consultation leads to a CPZ will be up to local residents in the roads concerned.

JS



FUTURE OF DORSET HALL

Dorset Hall in the Kingston Road has provided sheltered accommodation for several years and was transferred to Circle Merton Priory Homes (CMPH) as part of Merton's housing stock. CMPH is now conducting an appraisal of its future and a number of options, including disposal are under consideration. We have asked that CMPH keep us closely informed of the process, as this Grade II listed* building is also of considerable historical significance.



One of Merton's architectural gems, it was built in 1770 and at the start of the twentieth century was the home of Rose Lamartine Yates, a key member of the Women's Suffrage Movement. Rose was a close associate of Emily Davison who threw herself under the King's horse at the Derby in Epsom in 1913. (**Grade II listing is given to national buildings of special interest which warrant every effort being made to preserve them.*)

From this month, Merton is taking a firmer approach to restricting some pavement (or footway) parking. It's been prohibited by law across London for years but councils have the discretion to allow vehicles to park on footways where appropriate. For example, on narrow streets vehicles parked fully on the road would cause obstruction especially to emergency vehicles. However, following numerous complaints from Merton's residents, the footway parking policy has been revised and the changes will be implemented from this April. In future footway parking will be prohibited in some roads; in others it will only be allowed if a minimum gap of one metre has been left on the pavement for wheelchair users and pedestrians to pass. Vehicles parked inconsiderately will be issued with a PCN. The rule applies to grass verges as well.

In Merton Park, roads scheduled for no pavement parking are Aylward Road, Cedars Road, Cranleigh Road, Leafield Road, Manor Gardens, Stratton Close and Tybenham Road. Also in our ward, in Cannon Hill Lane, Cleveland Avenue, Martin Grove and Rothesay Avenue pavement parking will be allowed only if a gap of at least one metre is left on the pavement. Roads that become part of a CPZ (see page 7) will then be governed by the rules of the CPZ.

Do you think this solves the problem? Are there other roads that you think need to be included? Let us know.

JS

MPWRA MEETINGS - ALL WELCOME

Meetings are at **8pm** at **MERTON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Entrance from Erridge Road Playground Gate
Each meeting includes time for questions to your Ward Councillors

- 3 May** *There's more to Morden* - Sarah Gould, LB Merton
AT POPLAR PRIMARY SCHOOL
- 7 June** *Policing in Merton* – speaker to be confirmed
- 5 July** **AGM** plus Councillors' Questions

MPWRA Officers

Chairman: Hubert Child 020 8540 3087
Vice Chairman: Bryan Anderson
Secretary: Christine Stutt 020 8543 6843
Treasurer: Fred Rayner

www.mertonpark.org.uk

MPWRA Committee

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