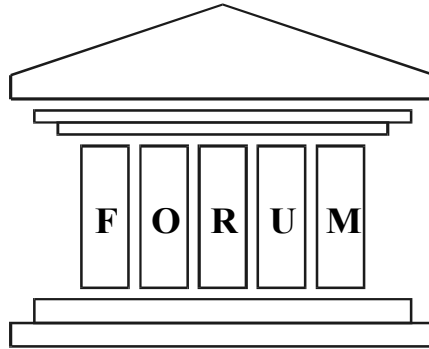


MERTON PARK WARD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



Autumn 2012

Issue No 47

In this issue of FORUM

- Page 2
- Housing Extensions – 87% say NO!
 - Email Alerts
- Page 3
- Dorset Road/Kingston Road Junction
 - Speeding in Merton Park
 - Promoting Safer Neighbourhoods
- Page 4
- Emma Hamilton Site
 - Future of the Nelson
- Page 5
- The Nelson – Next Steps
 - Wimbledon House School Site
 - Travellers in Mostyn Gardens
- Page 6
- Mostyn Gardens Action Day
 - Future Meetings
 - Parking Consultation

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN Well, here we are rushing towards not only the end of another year but, if the ancient Mayan calendar is to be believed, the end of time – although modern interpretation is that it signals not an apocalypse but simply the end of an era. Whether the new era is better will of course be up to us.

Perhaps the lesson is that we should do the best we can to improve where we live and create a better future. A good example of this on a local level is the newly formed Friends of Mostyn Gardens group. Many of you have been worried about the upkeep of our green spaces as the Council cuts spending and this is a great illustration of how we can all participate as citizens. There are a number of opportunities for residents to get involved around the borough and we look at the new Street Champions initiative with details of how you can get involved.

Over the last few months our Independent Ward Councillors have been working hard as this issue of FORUM shows. We tell the story behind the recent Nelson Hospital planning application and what our councillors are doing to address the continuing concerns of local residents. They have also responded to your worries

about intimidating behaviour in our town centres. In addition there are updates on the redevelopment of Wimbledon House School and the infamous box junction at Dorset/Kingston Road.

On page 2 we report on residents' views on the government's proposal to allow larger house extensions without planning permission. It reveals considerable anxiety about the proposals and shows they are likely to create tensions between neighbours. We shall be urging our councillors to do what they can to fight these measures. All in all it has been a busy year and I'm sure that 2013 will continue in a similar vein. Although it is only November, may I be the first to extend very best wishes for the year ahead.

Harold Forbes, Chairman

We rely on volunteers to deliver FORUM throughout the Ward. Can you spare an hour or so twice a year to deliver to a street near you?

Phone 020 8542 9361 or email mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk

**Why not support us by joining the MPWRA?
A membership form is enclosed.**

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

Karin Forbes (karin.forbes@merton.gov.uk) – 58 Mostyn Road SW19 3LN – 020 8540 3314

John Sargeant (john.sargeant@merton.gov.uk) – 2 Langley Road SW19 3NZ – 020 8542 9361

Peter Southgate (peter.southgate@merton.gov.uk) – 22 Dorset Road SW19 3HA – 020 8542 2053

www.mertonpark.org.uk

HOUSING EXTENSIONS – 87 per cent say NO!

At the beginning of September the coalition government announced plans for a three year relaxation of Permitted Development (PD) limits affecting single storey extensions and conservatories. At present you can extend up to 3 metres from the rear of your house (if it is terraced or semi-detached) or up to 4 metres (if it is detached) without needing to apply for planning permission. Under the government's proposals, these limits will be increased to 6m and 8m respectively - a chance to significantly increase households' living space but at the risk of a negative impact on their neighbours.

There will be a national consultation and we expect a debate within Merton Council. We wanted your Independent Ward Councillors to be ready to represent your views in these debates. We created a questionnaire, based on the open discussion at our October MPWRA meeting. In the short time available we used our email alert system to seek views*. 91 replies were received, all but 3 of them from within the ward and just over half from MPWRA members. In response to the key question: 'Are you in favour or opposed to the relaxation of PD limits as described (i.e. to increase the permitted extension limits)?' **87% were opposed**, 6% were in favour and 7% were undecided.

75% had no intention of taking up the opportunity but 56% felt it was possible or likely that their neighbours would. On reflection, 82% were 'very concerned' that under the proposals they would lose the right to object to their neighbours' extensions beyond the current 3m and 4m limits (plus 13% 'fairly concerned').

There were many comments fearing the loss of amenity that nearby extensions would cause, especially through loss of light. But here for us is the crux of it: the proposal seems designed to sow the seeds of mistrust - **irrespective of whether extensions are actually built**. Opposite are some typical reactions to the prospect that neighbours would be able to extend out to the new limits.

We think that the proposal is the opposite of what we as a residents' association stand for: strengthening trust, community spirit and good neighbourliness. Given that some local authorities, like the London Borough of Richmond, may adopt legal powers to retain existing PD limits and opt out of their relaxation, **95% of respondents said they were in favour of Merton retaining the existing 3m and 4m PD limits**.

We asked: If you feel it's likely or possible that your neighbours will extend to the new limits how would it affect you? You said

If both neighbours did it would be as if I "had blinkers on" at the rear of my house

Relaxation of planning laws for extensions will give rise to another 'beds in sheds' type situation

My neighbours are elderly... new buyer could build to the detriment of my property

We would not be happy with our neighbours at all and we would be stuck with the extension for ever

create more crowded urban feel

I would feel hemmed in

I think this is a terrible idea

Ruin the character of Merton Park

This adversely affects my pleasure in the elegance of the road... thanks to others' grandiosities

We are already seeing large amounts of large garden buildings in the area. Our large gardens are part of the character of the area and to be surrounded by buildings instead of gardens is a real shame. People only think of themselves in these situations.

I cannot bear the thought of them doing another bigger version

Thanks to all those who took part in the survey. We believe it will give our councillors just the steer they need to speak with authority on your behalf.

** If any residents who did not take part in the survey wish to register their views, we would be pleased to discuss them – and add them to the results. Please call 020 8542 9361.*

Cllr John Sargeant

MPWRA EMAIL ALERTS

Since the last edition of FORUM there have been 12 email alerts, roughly one every two weeks. We have let residents know about many issues including plans for the Nelson Hospital and the Emma Hamilton pub, the future of Thameslink rail services, Mostyn Gardens (the creation of the Friends and the visit from the travellers), local plans for the Jubilee and the Olympics and of course our recent survey on House Extensions. If you would like to receive them in future, just email mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk and put 'alerts' in the title. And if you do not have easy access to a computer, your councillors still welcome your comments by phone or post.

DORSET ROAD/ KINGSTON ROAD JUNCTION

In March the Council suddenly started using mobile CCTV units to issue penalties to motorists stopping in the yellow box junction while turning right into Kingston Road. We particularly objected to the use of **covert** surveillance by unmarked vans to catch unwary motorists. If the aim is **enforcement** to deter motorists from illegal manoeuvres, the CCTV vans should be clearly identifiable. Using unmarked vans suggests the real aim is **entrapment** to generate revenue from issuing Penalty Charge Notices (PCN). So if you see small white Citroen vans parked in Kingswood Road facing traffic queuing to turn out of Dorset Road, be warned – you may be unwittingly caught on camera. The registration numbers to watch out for are LC12 COU and LC12 CPE.

We have not received any reports of PCNs issued to motorists turning right out of Dorset Road in the last

month. We can't encourage you to disobey the Highway Code but please be aware of the situation.

We believe a greater problem lies in the long-standing practice of motorists jumping the red light at the tram crossing when travelling west on Kingston Road. Motorists' thoughtless behaviour poses a real danger to users of the pedestrian crossing at this point. We have been pushing for a camera to be installed outside the White Hart. In fact, Merton's own Traffic Engineer recommended this as part of the junction improvement work carried out earlier in the year, but so far TfL has not responded. We will continue to press TfL to install a camera before near misses to pedestrians turn into serious accidents.

Cllr Peter Southgate

SPEEDING IN MERTON PARK

At our October meeting, residents raised the issue of speeding in the ward, particularly along Dorset Road. We asked the Safer Neighbourhood Team to use their speed gun to conduct a Speedwatch operation in Dorset Road. We watched as they did this on October 12 during the morning rush hour.

The vast majority of motorists were immediately deterred from speeding when they saw people in high-visibility yellow jackets at the roadside. But in all 16

vehicles were stopped at the roadside for exceeding the 20mph limit between 7.15 and 8.30 – more than one vehicle every 5 minutes. None of these were sufficiently above the statutory 30mph limit to warrant enforcement action being taken. About a third of the vehicles were local Merton Park residents.

The Police intend to continue to run these 'Speedwatch' events periodically.

Cllr John Sargeant

PROMOTING SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS IN MORDEN – AND ACROSS MERTON

Following the removal of people occupying a corner of the car park which serves Sainsbury's in Morden we have been pushing for action to avoid further occupations. These could include minor physical changes to the car park itself.

While that's taking more time than we would like, our Safer Neighbourhood Team have reacted to residents' concerns. Faced with drunken and intimidating behaviour around Morden Station, in mid-October they hand-delivered letters to all local retailers selling alcohol, explaining the problems with anti-social drinking in Morden and reminding them it is illegal to sell alcohol to intoxicated individuals - they could lose their licence if they do. The letter also asked them not to stock strong beer, cider or lager (over 7%).

They also handed the street drinkers personalised letters warning them they face Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO) if their behaviour persists.

We have also been pushing for a **Controlled Drinking Zone (CDZ)** in Morden Town Centre. In practice, a CDZ can give the police useful discretionary powers to confiscate drink from anyone acting in an intimidating way. Several other areas in the Borough have requested CDZs.

At the October meeting of Merton's Licensing Committee I seconded a recommendation to the Council to consult the public on a CDZ across the borough to give the police these powers and, critically, avoid the enormous set-up costs that multiple zones would incur. The recommendation has cross-party support.

We recognise that drinking in public places can be a real nuisance. It only takes a handful of people to spoil the atmosphere in any Town Centre. We believe that the CDZ and these other police initiatives will help to deliver light-touch but effective policing.

Cllr John Sargeant

60+ LONDON OYSTER

Londoners currently have to be at least 61 years old to qualify for a Freedom Pass. But from 1 November all London residents over 60 are eligible for the 60+ London Oyster Photocard which costs £10 from TfL. It carries the same entitlements to travel on London's transport network as the Freedom Pass but is not valid on non-TfL buses outside London

EMMA HAMILTON

Earlier in the year there was concerted public opposition to plans to demolish the Emma Hamilton pub on the Kingston Road (just outside our ward) and replace it with a five storey development of 57 flats with commercial use at ground floor level. A new design was submitted in the summer. The consultation ended in September (see Planning Explorer, reference 12/P2328). Local residents have welcomed the new plans as an improvement on the original design. A date has yet to be published for Merton's Planning Committee to consider them.

Cllr Karin Forbes

FUTURE OF THE NELSON



The decision

Nearly all long term residents of Merton Park will have personal recollections of the Nelson Hospital. But for too many years now it has been a shadow of its former self, a ghost building hosting minor test facilities while awaiting redevelopment. So it was welcome news when the planning application for the Nelson Local Care Centre (LCC) was finally approved on 6 September by the Planning Applications Committee, of which I am a member. Now the Nelson does actually **have** a future, something that many people in Merton Park have worked hard to achieve over many years. (Thanks go particularly to Bob Welchman, who founded and chaired the Nelson Hospital Reference Group to make sure the voice of the local community was heard by the NHS.) Given the uncertainty surrounding the future of other local NHS facilities such as St Helier, this is vitally important.

Some useful revisions

Planning is a complex process of trying to design the optimal solution between competing interests, and not every aspect of the plans met with local approval. A new road layout closing the west side of the Rush and routing all traffic to the east caused consternation among residents of Watery Lane and Manor Gardens, and was wisely dropped in favour of the current layout before plans were finalised. On-site parking provision for patients is grossly inadequate, with 41 of the parking spaces reserved for staff and just 27 allocated to patients. Cllr John Sargeant has used the Council's own traffic forecast to demonstrate that the allocation needs to be reversed, and I suggested that staff could park in the underused bays in Sheridan Road. A condition was placed on the approval. This will be monitored through the travel plan.

Concern over the Care Home

McCarthy & Stone submitted plans for a care home on the car park site. These were received late in the day, and consultation with local residents was minimal. Manor Gardens and Cleveland Avenue are most closely affected, and objected to what they perceived to be an over large and insensitive development so close to the Conservation Area.

I moved a motion to defer the decision, to allow more time for McCarthy & Stone to consult local residents, and to seek a professional opinion on the merits of the design from the Design Review Panel, a body of architects that advises Merton's planners. This motion to defer was narrowly defeated.

Planning Committee cornered

Conservative members of the committee then moved a motion to refuse the application in its entirety i.e. redevelopment of the Nelson **and** the McCarthy & Stone care home. None of us liked the way these two elements had been bundled into one application, but we were told finance for the Nelson was conditional upon planning approval for the care home. Submissions from Dr Martyn Wake, senior partner of the Church Lane Practice, and Dr Howard Freeman, chair of Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, made it clear that planning permission was required before the NHS would sanction the Nelson development. Unless permission came very soon, the whole project would fail to meet NHS financial deadlines, the proceeds from selling the car park would not go towards the Nelson and the project would be scrapped.

Avoiding the high risk that the Nelson LCC could have been lost

In the circumstances I decided it was reckless to pursue refusal of the application, and voted against this motion. Gaming the system in an attempt to get an application improved is a high risk strategy. The applicant may simply walk away, but if there is an appeal and it is upheld by the planning inspector, the original proposal goes ahead without modification and costs are awarded against the Council. If the appeal is dismissed, the applicant must then decide whether to submit new plans. Either way, the timetable for the appeal process would probably have extended beyond the year-end deadline, causing the whole scheme to collapse because all such schemes have to be approved by NHS London before they are caught by the imminent demise of the Primary Care Trust. We have waited too long for the redevelopment of the Nelson to take that risk.

Cllr Peter Southgate

THE NELSON NEXT STEPS



The McCarthy & Stone (M&S) Care Home has been given a green light. The decision has left many residents feeling short-changed by the planning process despite the prospect of a new Care Centre for Merton in our Ward. So where do we go from here?

At the October MPWRA meeting we promised to seek ways to create a dialogue with M&S. We have found one. On 19 October, the Nelson Community Reference Group (NCRG) was introduced to both the Nelson LCC building contractor and a representative of M&S. The meeting asked me to meet M&S in the near future to devise a way in which residents' issues can be made clear, so that M&S can consider where it might be feasible to improve the design of the Care Home. As one NCRG member noted, issues which are trivial for M&S can have a huge impact

on their neighbours and there may be places where local knowledge can produce improvements for all sides.

I would hope and expect that some periodic open meetings would form a key part of this process - it seems vital that there should be a continuing direct channel of communication with the local community, open to all.

I am meeting M&S just as FORUM goes to press; the signs are that they wish to hear the community's views.

Make no mistake, M&S have the planning permission they need to build the Care Home. Faced with this decision, we could simply send round a petition asking 'Do you approve of this recently granted permission, Yes or No?' But that would not make any difference to the decision. It's more useful to start from where we are rather than where we would like to be.

Cllr John Sargeant

WIMBLEDON HOUSE SCHOOL

Work has finally begun on the massive task of bringing Wimbledon House School back into use as a nursery school. Located on the corner of Dorset Road and Kingston Road, it was sold to Casterbridge Nurseries Ltd in April. Since then, the company has joined Bright Horizons Family Solutions. Extensive refurbishment is planned although no plans have yet been published.

Given the strong local interest in the future of the building and what the school may offer, we are very pleased that Casterbridge have confirmed they will be

addressing our meeting on November 6 at 8pm at Merton Park Primary School.

We shall be reminding our email alerts subscribers before the event.

Cllr Karin Forbes



TRAVELLERS IN MOSTYN GARDENS

In September travellers moved into Mostyn Gardens. Although the community wanted them removed as soon as possible, there was a standoff during which the Council followed, as they had to, a formal protocol balancing the rights of travellers against those of residents affected by the encampment. The travellers were served with a legal notice soon after they arrived and the public was kept informed of the situation. The process meant that it took well over a week for the Council to get a hearing in the Magistrates Court to obtain a removal order. In the end, the travellers left just before the hearing to avoid possible

legal restraints. I attended a discussion between the travellers and council officials. It was quite clear that both parties are fully aware of the law pertaining to travellers' rights.

Once the travellers had left, your councillors discussed improved security needs in the Gardens. At their request, an additional gate is being installed down the ramp from the Mostyn Road entrance which will prevent similar occupations in future.

Cllr John Sargeant

MORDEN TOWN CENTRE - CONSULTATION COMING EARLY 2013

Plans for Morden Town Centre, reported in our Spring FORUM, are making progress. The Draft Planning Brief for Morden Station is the next step. It is scheduled for December 2012 and consultation is expected to start in Spring 2013. Your Ward councillors are keeping close to these developments and as soon as they have more details, they will publicise them.

MOSTYN GARDENS ACTION DAY

Saturday 29 September saw the Friends of Mostyn Gardens, local residents, councillors and young volunteers coming together to transform Mostyn Gardens in a collective effort organised and hosted by Merton Council. The weather was kind, and together we managed to:

- paint over 50 metres of fencing bordering Poplar Primary School
- plant over 200 daffodil bulbs
- produce over 50 bags of green waste from weeding borders and flower beds
- collect over 10 bags of litter

To add to the excitement, a bag containing suspected stolen jewellery was discovered and handed over to the Merton Park Safer Neighbourhood Team.

This was the second clean up event for the newly formed Friends of Mostyn Gardens chaired by Linda Treacy (lindajtreacy@hotmail.com). But it would not

have been possible to achieve so much without the input of an army of young volunteers from Challenge, (see www.the-challenge.org) part of the National Citizen Service. They appeared to be having a lot of fun too.

The event marked the launch of **Merton Street Champions**, a scheme that encourages volunteers to act as the 'eyes and ears' of the community, reporting environmental problems so that they can be sorted out quickly (see www.merton.gov.uk, 'street champions'). Of course, in Merton Park we've been doing this for years – it's an important part of what makes our Ward a special place to live. But the role of 'Friends' groups in our parks and the opportunity to work with young volunteers takes this a stage further, towards accepting greater responsibility for looking after our parks and open spaces ourselves and not simply relying on the Council to do it for us.

Cllr Karin Forbes

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

6 November	Plans for Wimbledon House School - Casterbridge Nurseries	5 February	Merton Residents' Healthcare Forum
4 December	Councillors' Question Timeand seasonal treats!	5 March	Councillors' Question Time
1 January	NO MEETING	2 April	Mrs Katharine Davies, Headteacher, Poplar School (tbc) Meeting at Poplar School, Poplar Road South

PARKING CONSULTATION

The Council's consultation on parking in Merton's Town centres closed in October. Before the end of the year you can give your opinions on parking in our smaller, but critical shopping centres like Wimbledon Chase and Merton Rush.

MPWRA Officers

Chairman: Harold Forbes 020 8540 3314
Vice Chairman: Edward Foley 020 8946 2930
Secretary: Christine Stutt 020 8543 6843
Treasurer: Fred Rayner

MPWRA Committee

Janet Broadmore	Graham Clark	David Slocombe
Desé Child	Ian Garbett	Pauline Southgate
Hubert Child	Jolanta Nowak	Paul Wood
Philippa Foskett	Judy Sargeant	

www.mertonpark.org.uk