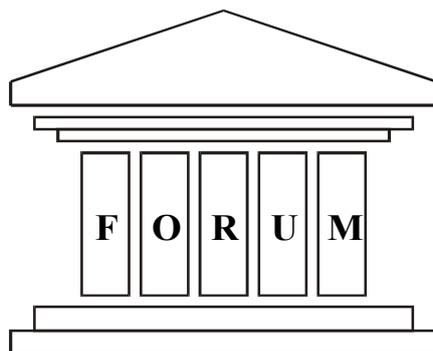


# MERTON PARK WARD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



Autumn 2008

Issue No 38

## **Merton Park Ward Residents Association (MPWRA) sponsors your Independent councillors as Merton Park Ward Independent Residents (MPWIR) on Merton Council**

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Welcome to another edition of FORUM. As you read our councillors' reports, you will see that they are working harder than ever for us – many thanks to all three.

The consultation on the proposed 20 mph limit prompted me to reflect on Merton Park's existing traffic calming measures. Before traffic calming was introduced in Merton Park some years ago, there was a significant accident rate on our roads. Since its introduction, there have been very few accidents. None of us likes speed humps but their benefit is undisputable.

In Dorset and Mostyn Roads the humps are modified with gaps that allow emergency service vehicles to pass through unimpeded. However, residents of the two roads remind me that it does unfortunately allow other vehicles to speed as well. Sgt Harman of Merton Park's Safer Neighbourhood team told MPWRA's last monthly meeting about the new Portable Speed Gun which detects speeding up to half a mile away. This is a shared facility across six wards but when Merton Park's turn comes to use it, we should ask Sgt Harman to prioritise Dorset and Mostyn Roads.

**Hubert Child, Chairman**

### **IN THIS ISSUE:**

**Are we going to have a 20 mph speed limit in Merton Park?** Peter Southgate reports on the consultation with residents and the Council's recommendation. He also updates us on the **expansion of Wimbledon Chase School**.

**The regeneration and development of Morden town centre** is being planned. Krysia Williams explains how you can give your views. She reports on **Merton Council's** proposed transfer of the **ownership and management of its homes to a new 'not-for-profit' housing organisation**. Krysia also gives us a progress report on the **extension of the MP1 Controlled Parking Zone**.

Karin Forbes reports on the search for a suitable **'bail hostel' site in Merton**. Plans for one in Merton Park have receded following objections from local police. She also tells us the good news about the **best ever GCSE results at Rutlish School**.

## 20 MPH LIMIT FOR MERTON PARK

**On 4<sup>th</sup> November the Street Management Advisory Committee recommended that a 20 mph limit should be introduced in Merton Park and eight other areas in the Borough. Armed with residents' replies to our survey, we shall be asking for the recommendation to be reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel.**

The Conservatives' election manifesto pledged to "*consult on introducing a 'Twenty's Plenty' campaign to reduce the speed of traffic*". However, the promised consultation turned out to be less even-handed than we had expected. It didn't ask if we wanted a 20 mph limit or not. It presumed a 20 mph limit would be introduced unless there were valid objections. And in order to limit dissent the consultation period was restricted to the statutory three week minimum with opponents required to state their objections in writing to the Council.

**As your Ward Councillors we are genuinely open minded about the introduction of a 20 mph limit in Merton Park – we believe it is you, our residents, who should have the final say on matters affecting your daily lives. But we were concerned that such a limited consultation might be ignored if we did not draw attention to it – we do not favour a limit being introduced by stealth.**

So we decided to distribute our own newsletter and questionnaire, to stress how important it was to respond and to make it easier for you to do so. Our decision was fully vindicated by the massive response – 480 of you sent back questionnaires. That's over **six times** the number of responses to the council's statutory consultation (78) and represents about 22% of the households in the proposed 20 mph limit area. It also confirms our belief that Merton Park is a community that wants to determine its own future. We are grateful for this demonstration of your commitment to our neighbourhood.

I have read every one of your replies and they have guided my conclusions. Your replies show 52% supported a 20 mph limit in Merton Park and 48% opposed. At first sight this might suggest we are split down the middle but closer analysis of the reasons you give reveals much common ground. Nearly everyone wants to see excessive traffic speeds reduced; where we differ is in our confidence that a 20 mph limit which is not enforced could achieve this.

The top reasons given by those **supporting** the limit are to reduce speed and traffic noise and to ensure safety, particularly of our children. Some supporters hope a limit might deter commuters from using Merton Park's residential roads in peak hours and make further traffic calming measures unnecessary. For a few, their support is conditional upon removing the traffic 'humps' but this is not part of the council's proposal.

However, even amongst these supporters there is little confidence a 20 mph limit would be fully effective, especially as it will not be enforced. This is the top reason cited by those **opposing** the limit. They see it as no deterrent to speeding. In the circumstances many believe spending £500,000 on unenforceable 20 mph limits across the borough is a waste of money. Several believe that speeds are adequately controlled now by traffic calming and congestion.

A minority feels the new signage required for a 20 mph limit would be unsightly. In fact, we now learn that intrusive "repeater" 20 mph signs would be required every 200 metres on lamp posts and on the road to comply with the law.

Many point to the complete absence of evidence to justify the 20 mph limit, either in terms of current traffic speeds or accident statistics.

Professional expert advice from Ward residents has warned us that the proposed limit for Merton Park fails to comply with Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines. These state that, with the road conditions in Merton Park, a signed-only limit is likely to have little or no effect on traffic speeds.

The administration has been made aware of the DfT guidance, but has chosen to ignore it. They have also chosen to ignore police opposition to the introduction of a 20 mph limit that is not self enforcing. We have made the results of our survey available to the traffic engineers but, again, they may choose to ignore it.

To be clear, by ignoring all this advice the administration is not acting illegally. But if the 20 mph limit has no measurable impact on traffic speeds it will be a cruel deception on all those who want to see excessive speeds curbed, and a safer street scene for our children and the elderly. As your Ward Councillors we are unwilling to endorse

(continued p3)

a proposal for a 20 mph limit in name only that fails to address the real problems of speeding traffic which we witness daily on the roads in Merton Park.

**In the complete absence of data to support the 20 mph limit, we will be asking for the recommendation to be reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel. Many of you have supplied**

**us with email addresses, and we will use these to keep you informed of the result. If you would like to add your e-mail address to the circulation list, please contact us.**

**Thank you again for supporting our survey so strongly.**

**Cllr Peter Southgate**

## **BAIL ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT SCHEME**

**Prompt and effective objections from the local Police Safer Neighbourhood Team mean that the setting up of a "Bail Accommodation Support Scheme" (BASS) house in Daybrook Road is now very unlikely.**

These houses are operated on behalf of the Ministry of Justice by ClearSprings Management Ltd to "*provide accommodation/support to those the court considers eligible for bail or the Governor considers eligible for home detention curfew but have no sustainable address or require additional support*". Merton must provide a site for a BASS house able to accommodate four people living in separate rooms.

ClearSprings property searches require them to consult only the Police, the probation service and the local authority, with just five days to lodge any objections. There is no requirement to consult with residents or get planning permission. The two immediate neighbours are only informed *after* a

house is chosen. Your councillors attended a presentation by ClearSprings which was not reassuring. It suggested the company has limited resources to fulfil its security obligations. It also showed a disturbing lack of transparency in the way they operate which inevitably feeds rumour and speculation.

The Police objected that Daybrook Road was not a suitable location for a BASS house. We understand that ClearSprings have never taken a property where there has been a police objection so the threat to our ward has receded. The public has no right to know where ClearSprings are looking or the criteria they are using.

At least in Merton Park Ward we know we can rely on our Safer Neighbourhood Team to let local residents know immediately if a site is being considered so they have an opportunity to comment.

**Cllr Karin Forbes**

## **PLANNING UPDATE – 30 DORSET ROAD**

Neighbours will know that the application to demolish the bungalow and build a four storey block of flats on this site was refused by the Planning Committee a year ago. The developer went to appeal and in June the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Community and Local Government dismissed the appeal in terms that left no doubt about his views. He described the design as *charmless* and *alien and*

*incongruous* in the context of the spacious residential environment around it. He also felt it would appear as a *jarring and intrusive element* in relation to the Conservation Area. Let's hope the developer will take note and come back with proposals more in keeping with this part of Merton Park.

**Cllr Peter Southgate**

## **BEST EVER GCSE RESULTS FOR RUTLISH**

**Five or more A\*- C passes 57% (up from 47% last year)**

**Five or more A\*- C passes including English and Maths 44% (up from 34% last year)**

The teachers and staff at Rutlish School work very hard to ensure that every boy realises his full potential and the results this year were the best on record – congratulations to everyone involved!

The Governors were particularly pleased with the increase in boys achieving five or more A\*- C passes *including English and Maths* as this is the key measure that the government now uses. We will be setting even higher targets for next year, fully expecting the school to continue its path of improvement.

**Cllr Karin Forbes**

## CONTROLLED PARKING – EXTENDING THE MP1 ZONE

By now, residents of the relevant roads in Merton Park should have received 'formal consultation' letters from the Council on the extension of the MP1 zone. This follows the 'informal consultation' in the summer when the Council wrote to 195 residents and 134 replied - a great level of response. The majority of replies in Erridge and Poplar Roads showed residents supported including their sections in the CPZ.

Your councillors have kept you informed during this complex process and, following requests from the residents, pressed the Council to include Kenley Road in the consultation. The majority of residents who replied in Keswick Avenue, Stratton Road and Kenley Road said they do not wish to be in the CPZ.

If the results of this formal consultation continue to show a majority of residents in the relevant sections of Poplar Road and Erridge Road in favour of inclusion, then this is likely to be implemented in Spring 2009. Your councillors also pressed for Circle Gardens residents to be consulted. The Council have done this informally and found that 24 of the 28 residents who replied would wish to be consulted. This formal consultation will follow towards the end of this year.

A more detailed report on the informal consultation and council officer's recommendations can be found on the Merton website at [www.merton.gov.uk/democratic\\_services/ds-agendas/ds-reports/7000-7999/7786.pdf](http://www.merton.gov.uk/democratic_services/ds-agendas/ds-reports/7000-7999/7786.pdf)

**Cllr Krysia Williams**

## EXPANSION OF WIMBLEDON CHASE PRIMARY SCHOOL

**As pressure on school places tightens in Merton, the school is to move to three form entry. It is also proposed that its catchment should shift northwards away from Merton Park.**

Wimbledon Chase School has educated many of our children over the years. It is a very popular primary school, with 215 applications for 60 places last year. In fact demand for places in nearly all Merton primary schools rose last year, and is predicted to go on rising beyond 2010. All schools have been reviewed to see whether they can accommodate more children. Four have been identified as suitable for an additional form of entry – Wimbledon Chase, Holy Trinity, Benedict and Liberty. Even this expansion may be insufficient to meet demand in the future.

Three form entry means expanding Year 1 from 60 to 90 children. We took up the concerns of some current parents and carers, who are unhappy at the prospect, with education officers. We questioned whether alternative sites had been rigorously investigated. We came to the reluctant conclusion that there is no alternative to expansion on the Wimbledon Chase site in the medium term. A completely new school may be needed eventually to meet demand but it is not clear where this will be sited or how it will be funded.

We are still greatly concerned at the proposal to skew the catchment area for the extra form of entry towards the north to favour children in Hillside (between Worple Road and the Ridgeway)

and Wimbledon Village. This is the Admissions Priority Area (APA), where the shortage of primary places is most acute. But these children can only be prioritised at the expense of children living just south of Kingston Road who are eligible for Wimbledon Chase under the well-established distance measure.

As your Ward Councillors we believe that equality of educational opportunity is a fundamental right and it is critical that parents are kept informed. So, in the face of refusals by the borough education officials, we printed and distributed copies of the consultation document to the roads affected\*, encouraging all those concerned to respond to the council consultation.

The results of the consultation have now been published, and they show overwhelming opposition to the Council's proposals, both to expand the School and to skew the APA. Following further informal consultation, the Council's Cabinet meeting on 7 December will decide whether to publish a statutory proposal for permanent expansion or, if not, whether to apply for the school to admit 90 pupils in September 2009. If expansion is agreed, they will also decide on the APA for the school.

**Cllr Peter Southgate**

\*Aylward Road, Hadleigh Close, Mostyn Road, Church Lane north of Church Path, Church Path, Langley Road, Sheridan Road and Stratton Road

## A NEW DIRECTION FOR MERTON HOUSING

**The Council is consulting residents on a proposal to transfer the ownership and management of its homes to a new, local, not-for-profit housing organisation that would work with the existing housing association 'Circle Anglia' as its partner.** The new local organisation would be known as '**Merton Priory Homes' (MPH)** and would be run by a voluntary board of management made up of four tenants and two leaseholders, five independent members and four council nominees. I represent Merton Park Ward Independents as one of the council nominees.

Currently 60% of the Council's homes fall below the Government's basic decency standard and without substantial investment this will rise to 80% by 2015. While some may feel that the standard of service currently provided by the council is acceptable it is clear things cannot stay the same. If the Council continues to own and manage the homes the Housing service will become increasingly stretched across the board. The Government places a levy on the rents income that Merton has and so the Council would have just over £50m to spend on homes in the next 10 years. Housing Associations are not required to pay this levy and so MPH will have £129m to bring tenants' homes up to the decent, modern standards they deserve.

Under the transfer proposal, the Council's 6,350 homes would transfer along with responsibility for the services for 2,550 leaseholders and 783

### moreMORDEN

**The Council are planning the development of Morden over the next 15 years. The 'moreMorden' vision considers possible regeneration and development opportunities for the Town Centre and now your input is being sought.** The Council has just completed its consultation with local community groups. They have produced a booklet outlining the draft vision on which residents can comment, both online and by letter. The results will be published in April 2009.

The Council emphasises that Proposals are by no means 'set in stone'; the ideas set out in the vision are intended to get people talking about what they feel about their town needs and whether the ideas in the vision can go some way to achieving that. They say that they want to make Morden a more

freeholders. MPH will be a not-for-profit organisation, so that any surplus money would be ploughed back into improving homes and running the housing service. It will work in partnership with the established housing association 'Circle Anglia', enabling MPH to benefit from their experience, share their facilities and tap into their buying power. Circle Anglia provides general needs and specialist housing to more than 180,000 people. It has existing partnerships with seven other organisations in London, the South East and East Anglia.

I have visited many of the estates managed by both Circle Anglia and partners and would support a Yes vote for transfer. However, transfer is not a foregone conclusion. A ballot will take place in 2009 which will decide the future of the Council's homes in Merton. Tenants, leaseholders and freeholders who pay a service charge to the council will receive a vote in the ballot. The homes will only be transferred to the new organisation if the majority of tenants who vote in the ballot, vote in favour of transfer.

The Council's 'Better Homes' Team on 0800 923 0037 will answer any queries and there is an Independent Advisor from TPAS on 0800 731 1315 (both freephone numbers). You can email questions to [betterhomes@merton.gov.uk](mailto:betterhomes@merton.gov.uk) and I would also be happy to help with any questions or concerns.

**CLlr Krysia Williams**

attractive destination where a growing population can live, work, shop and socialise.

Some residents are unhappy about the scale of proposed residential developments. Others feel that there is not enough emphasis on small retail outlets serving local needs. Getting the right economic balance in Morden is a tough challenge. Your councillors support the regeneration of Morden and will continue to convey your views and to work on the development of the vision through the Morden Community Forum, now chaired by Karin Forbes, and the Morden Project Group on which I sit. Do give us any more comments that you may have for improving Morden.

**CLlr Krysia Williams**

**CAN YOU HELP US** by delivering FORUM twice a year? We need help in the Kingston Road, Martin Way, Martin Grove, Dorset Road, Grasmere Avenue, Camrose Close and Queen's Road.  
Email: [mpwra@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mpwra@yahoo.co.uk) or tel: 020 8540 3087

## **MPWRA MEETINGS - ALL WELCOME**

Monthly Meetings take place on the first **Tuesday** of each month at **8pm** at

### **MERTON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Entrance from Erridge Road Playground Gate**

Each meeting includes time for questions to your Ward Councillors

**Tuesday 2 December  
at 8pm**

**Councillors' Question Time  
.....and mince pies**

**Tuesday 6 January**

**NO MEETING**

**Tuesday 3 February  
At 8pm**

**Pete Steward, Co-Head Teacher of  
Merton Park Primary School**

**Tuesday 3 March  
at 8pm**

**Dr Martyn Wake, Medical Director,  
Sutton & Merton Primary Care Trust**

MPWRA would like to apologise for giving Dr Wake the wrong date for the AGM in July. We are grateful to him for agreeing to speak at our March meeting

**Tuesday 7 April  
at 8pm**

**Councillors' Question Time**

**Tuesday 5 May  
at 8pm**

**Jonathan Lewis, Senior Planner, LB Merton**

**Tuesday 2 June  
At 8pm**

**Chris Frost, Chief Executive, Merton Voluntary  
Services Council**

#### **Officers of Your Association**

Chairman: Hubert Child 020 8540 3087  
Vice Chairman: Graham Clark 020 8542 9101  
Secretary: Christine Stutt 020 8543 6843  
Treasurer: Fred Rayner

[www.mpwra.co.uk](http://www.mpwra.co.uk)

#### **Your Committee**

Diana Cairns John Sargeant  
Desé Child Judy Sargeant  
Philippa Foskett David Slocombe  
Ian Garbett Bridget Smith  
Edward Foley Pauline Southgate  
John Nelson-Jones Paul Wood  
Jolanta Nowak

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT** Join us or renew your membership on the enclosed form  
Enquiries to [mpwra@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mpwra@yahoo.co.uk) or tel: 020 8542 2053