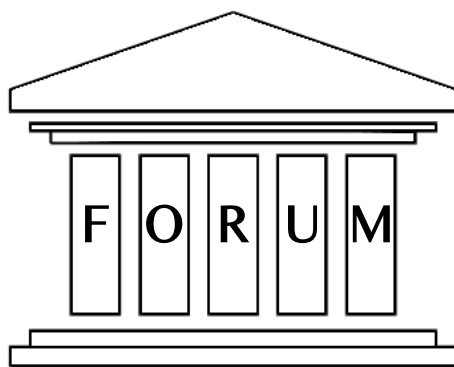


Merton Park Ward Residents' Association

for the residents of: Morden | Merton Park | Wimbledon Chase



Autumn 2020

Issue 65



MPW - HERITAGE TRAIL SUCCESS

If you have been out and about the ward in the last few weeks you may have noticed a number of signs attached to various lamp posts, buildings and in shop windows. As part of the Merton Heritage Discovery Day, Cllr Dickie Wilkinson created a trail around the ward with images taken from the Merton Memories archive.

Although the trail is now officially over, some signs are still in place as many of the local business owners and residents involved wanted to display them for even longer! Based on this success we are now looking to create a more permanent heritage trail in the future.

You can also download a map and images at mertonpark.org.uk

With thanks to: Cooperative Funeral Care, Turners Estate Agents, Bonfleur, Morden Dry Cleaners, The Leather Bottle, Tennison Property and Merton Civic Centre.

Letter from the Chairman:

Covid-19 lockdown prevented us from delivering a paper copy of the Spring 2020 edition of FORUM and so we produced an electronic copy, delivered via email alert and the website. We hope to deliver a paper copy of the Autumn issue but may have to deliver electronically again should Covid-19 rules change. You can keep up to date with this by going to our website: www.mertonpark.org.uk and signing up for our email alerts.

Unable to hold our usual physical monthly meetings, we have decided to hold them via Zoom instead. Indeed, the October meeting took place just before we went to press with this issue of FORUM.

The next Zoom meeting is our (delayed) Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 3rd November at 8 pm when we will seek approval of the Treasurer's Report and Accounts, my Chairman's Report and elect the committee and officers. Only members may vote at the AGM but councillors will be reporting and so non-members are always welcome. When allowed, we will return to physical meetings as this gives the chance for members and residents to meet and get to know each other. If electronic meetings prove popular, we intend to continue those too on an occasional basis as we know that attending physical meetings may be difficult for those of you who work or have young children.

To become a member please complete and return the enclosed form. The annual subscription is only £5, with even better deals for 5 year and Life memberships.

Hubert Child—Chairman

Tel: 020 8540 3087 | Email: hubertchild@hotmail.co.uk

Contact your local Independent Ward Councillors (pictured left -right)

Cllr. Peter Southgate - Leader MPWIR

peter.southgate@merton.gov.uk / 020 8542 2053

Cllr. Edward Foley

edward.foley@merton.gov.uk / 020 8542 5824

Cllr. Dickie Wilkinson

dickie.wilkinson@merton.gov.uk / 07905 103 686



“PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE” – WILL WE BE INCLUDED?

In recent years Merton’s planners challenged the London Plan proposal for over 1300 new homes to be built in Merton annually, compared to our existing target of 411 new homes and representing the biggest increase for any London borough. The target was subsequently reduced to 914 homes by the planning inspector – a negotiated compromise.

The new white paper on planning rules out any future such negotiated compromises. Housing targets will be set by central government and will be binding on local authorities to deliver.

This is based on a belief that the current planning system impedes the delivery of new homes. Never mind that there are 1.2m extant planning permissions awaiting build out, and that 90% of planning applications are approved first time. The Minister has been persuaded to opt for a radical simplification of the planning system, combined with a shift from local to central control of planning policy. The white paper proposes a US-style zoning system in which land is allocated into three zones;

Growth areas “suitable for substantial development” will be granted outline planning permission automatically for major developments.

In **Renewal** zones the “gentle densification and infill of residential areas” is encouraged, with a presumption in favour of development being approved for specified uses.

Protected areas development will still be allowed, but will require full planning permission.

Alongside zoning is a stripped-down planning process with a reduced role for local authorities. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the overriding policies, and local Plans will follow a template designed to ensure national standardisation. Plans will become more visual, mapping sites for development, together with design codes and clear rules for what can and cannot be done.

The white paper is highly critical of the present approach whereby planning officers can exercise some discretion; instead it suggests that digitalisation will allow

MERTON PARK WARD – BOUNDARY COMMISSION VERDICT

First the good news; the Boundary Commission reversed its earlier recommendation imposing a new boundary along Watery Lane and re-allocating all roads to the west to Cannon Hill Ward, with the loss of 810 electors from Merton Park Ward. In keeping the existing boundary, it acknowledged that Aylward Road residents feel part of Merton Park and recognised the “natural boundary” provided by the railway line.

Now the bad news; Kingston Road becomes the new northern boundary with roads to the north becoming part of a new Wimbledon Town and Dundonald Ward, stretching across Wimbledon town centre eastwards to Haydons Road.

Merton Park Ward will lose 1160 electors who will no longer benefit from being represented by Independent councillors.

The brief section on Merton Park Ward in the Commission’s report makes it clear that it did not take an open-minded approach, instead selecting submissions reinforcing its draft recommendations. The views of other political parties with a presumed interest in seeing one less Independent councillor were given undue prominence, even though the Commission avowedly seeks to avoid political considerations.

Insufficient weight was given to the 296 submissions from our residents, 284 of whom wanted Merton Park to remain a 3-member ward, with only 12 favouring a reduction to 2 members. Misleadingly, while views for and against were given, the relevant numbers of each were not.

The Commission received only 26 submissions to the first consultation on which its draft recommendations were based, and just one suggesting Kingston Road as the north boundary for Merton Park Ward. Its analysis of the 410 submissions to the consultation on the draft recommendations is superficial and selective, and does not reflect the quality or quantity of submissions received from Merton Park residents.

There is no appeal against the Commission’s final recommendations, so these boundary changes will come into effect for the local elections in May 2022. Although we are deeply disappointed with the outcome, be assured your councillors (whether 3 or 2) will continue to work tirelessly in the interests of our residents.

You can find the report on our website: mertonpark.org.uk with further links to the Boundary Commission.

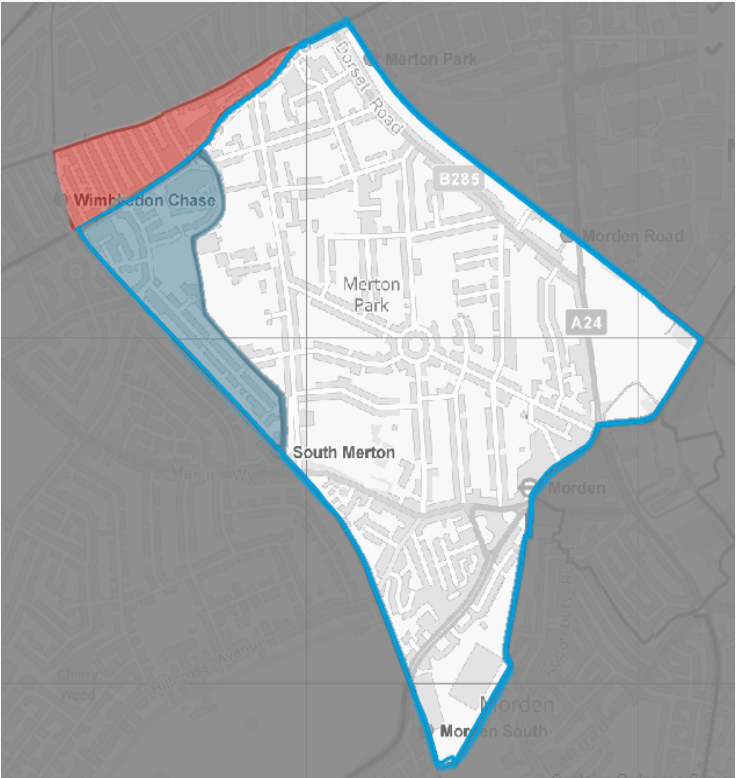
Cllr Peter Southgate

applications to be screened automatically.

Local communities can have a say in the planning process via their involvement in the development of Neighbourhood Plans that could be incorporated within Local Plans, or published as supplementary documents. But communities will be discouraged from having any say in determining **individual** planning applications in their areas. Detailed planning decisions will be delegated to planning officers “as a matter for professional planning judgement”. Having served on Merton’s Planning Applications Committee for 18 years I deeply regret the proposal that elected members should no longer have control over what gets built in their neighbourhoods.

The closing date for responding to the consultation on the white paper is 29th October. MPWRA will be objecting vigorously to the loss of local accountability, as will Merton Council.

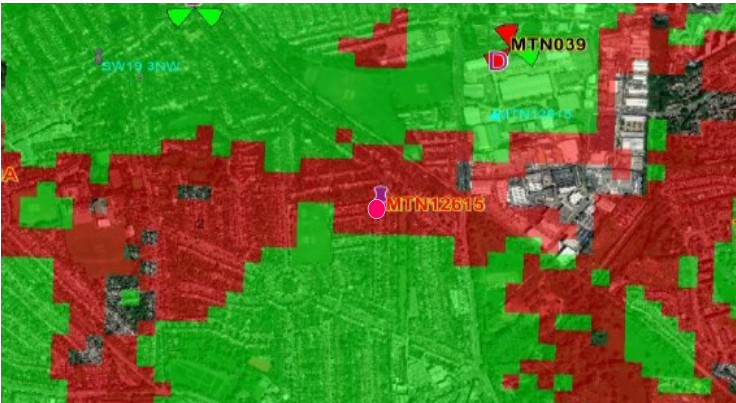
Cllr Peter Southgate



Merton Park Ward from May 2022

We successfully campaigned to retain the area in BLUE. But we say goodbye to our friends and neighbours north of Kingston Road in RED. They will be moved to Wimbledon Town & Dundonald Ward which stretches across the Borough.

RISE OF THE 5G MASTS



5G Mast applications include a map like this showing the preferred site of the mast (pink dot) but the actual application may be for somewhere very different.

5G masts do not cause Covid-19 but can cause a blight on the landscape. This new and improved technology allows our phones to be connected at ever faster speeds but requires much larger masts, placed closer together. 5G comes under general permitted development orders (GPDO) meaning that councils cannot block or query the need for the masts.

I investigated two proposals. An informal pre-app enquiry sought to erect a mast on Poplar Road, outside Old Ruts Rugby Club. The survey said that this was the only possible site within a 100 metre radius of its ideal location, Kendor Gardens. Elsewhere it said “Best outcomes would have been to the east in the industrial estate.” I asked the surveyors, informally, why the industrial estate was not considered to which the unconvincing response was ‘we weren’t sure if that was council land’. A small, but significant, point; telecoms providers do not have to pay councils any money to erect such masts if the land is public highway. I believe that this proposal has now gone back to the drawing board, with no idea if my points have been taken into account until an actual application materialises

A planning application was for a 5G mast immediately outside Wimbledon Chase Station, some way from its ideal location in Cannon Hill Ward. The application reasoned that an 18 -metre mast and several grey boxes would look perfectly harmonious outside the station. As part of GPDO, applicants have to list other sites, explaining why they are rejected, and also state the potential for mast sharing. I noted the comment that it could not be sited outside the BP garage on the other side of the bridge due to an advertisement hoarding, yet Google Maps showed that a 5G mast is already in that exact location! Fortunately, before I could challenge it, the planning officer dismissed the application out of hand as being unsightly and blocking pedestrian access.

We cannot reject all applications and, as technology progresses, we will have to compromise. But importantly, unlike other applications which are deemed refused until accepted, GPDO applications are deemed accepted if the council does not respond by the due date. So, if you are aware of any such applications in the ward, do let us know.

Cllr Dickie Wilkinson

AN EXTENDED YEAR OF BEING DEPUTY MAYOR OF MERTON



opening the dog show at Morden Park and opening Mitcham Carnival the next week, added to the welcome that I always enjoy at engagements elsewhere.

Our family joined The Mayor, Councillor Janice Howard, and her family on Christmas Day in serving lunch at Vestry Hall to homeless people and others on their own and in need of company and a hot meal. We talked to many people, and heard some quite moving stories. In light of the ongoing pandemic we have been discussing what might happen this year and hope the lunch still goes ahead.

While aware of some charities, I didn't really know much about others that I was due to meet. Most engagements required a speech and those that said they didn't would suddenly ask you to say a few words! Before an engagement it became sensible to find out more about an organisation or event and the people behind it. This helped both in preparing a speech and starting a conversation on arrival. I enjoyed finding out about the history of some of the places, and the work that charities had been doing.

My experience as Deputy Mayor has reinforced the description I had heard of Merton as rich in diversity and history. I am privileged to have met so many interesting and inspiring people working and volunteering in local businesses, charities and other organisations.

Looking back through the many photos that were taken, I have some very fond memories that I was lucky enough to share with Miranda, Annabel and Sam as consorts.

Cllr Edward Foley

Join us at Our Future [Zoom] Meetings - All Welcome

Tuesday 3rd November—8pm

Annual General Meeting

Plus: Councillors' Reports

Tuesday 1st December – 8pm

Details to be confirmed

To receive a zoom link please email:

mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk quoting, 'attend next meeting'

Not yet a member of MPWRA? - Join at: www.mertonpark.org.uk

CONTACT YOUR CLLR VIA WHATSAPP

One thing that Covid-19 did teach us was just how quickly our residents mobilised to help one another and provide support.

WhatsApp groups for individual streets popped up and have continued to be a great way to access local information rather than relying on the rumour mill of Nextdoor.

To help individuals and groups access their local Cllrs, you can now contact Cllr. Dickie Wilkinson via WhatsApp: 07756 400 423.

While anyone welcome to do so, we would suggest that 'reps' from local groups make contact allowing Cllr Wilkinson to update you as appropriate and operate like a [now old-fashioned] telephone tree.

MPWRA Officers

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

MPWRA Committee

Ingrid Holtz Krysia Williams Greg Bryant
Graham Clark Stephen Mercer Pauline Southgate
Pauline Lightfoot David Merriman Jolanta Nowak
Ian Garbett

Contact MPWRA:

Website: www.mertonpark.org.uk
Email: mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk
Telephone: 0208 540 3087