



# THE REIGATE SOCIETY

The Civic Society for Reigate, Redhill and Merstham

Newsletter No. 95

December 2009

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## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

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In my last notes I mentioned a website which simplifies the making of complaints about the many problems we all encounter with our local roads: [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com). I can report a success as the majority of the potholes in my own road have been filled (I hesitate to describe what has happened as a repair) after registering their condition on this site. There was a gap of three months between the report and the 'repairs' but other roads, where the holes were marked up for repair at the same time that ours were marked, have not yet been touched. This may be coincidence but I suspect that making a complaint via an independent organisation might have a little more impact. So, if we want some action on the condition of our roads, get filing those complaints. The site is very easy to use and you get asked by email for an update on the state of your reported problem on a monthly basis. Give it a try. You can report all manner of problems some of which have been discussed by your Transport Committee.

Roads and their associated problems constitute a significant part of the **Redhill Area Action Plan**. The lack of any demonstrable progress on this issue since the last newsletter is explained in the Committee reports elsewhere in this Newsletter.

There has been much speculation in the media recently concerning the possible effect on our local environment arising from the change of ownership of Gatwick Airport. There is no doubt that the airport already exerts a huge influence on our surroundings in terms of building development and infrastructure, the traffic on our local roads and the noise of overflying aircraft. The change of ownership has inevitably revived talk of the building of a second runway and the additional pressures that would bring. The **Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC)**, of which the Society is a member, does not appear to be duly alarmed by such talk and has received assurances that a change of government would eliminate that possibility in favour of a high speed rail link to the north of the

country. However the newly constituted **Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC)**, introduced by the present government to allegedly fast-track major projects such as power stations, road schemes and other major infrastructure proposals could be used to overcome all opposition to such a project in future. It is not known at present exactly how this body will operate but it does seem to have very wide powers and that it will be answerable only to the government of the day. It will be yet another nail in the coffin of local democracy.

My earlier mention of websites reminds me to mention the Society's own site which is: [www.reigatesociety.org.uk](http://www.reigatesociety.org.uk) on which you can now find (amongst other things) the current issue of the Newsletter (together with recent past issues) and information on future meetings. Some of you already receive your Newsletter by email but the ability to read it on the website may be a more convenient way for you and many others of you who I know have computers but for whom we do not have email addresses. If you are happy to read your Newsletter on-line please let us know (see below for details of how to do this). The more of you who say yes will save us time and money on printing and distribution.

Whilst on the subject of emails, this is a quick and easy way of communicating within organisations such as ours – all your committees now use this method. As an organisation we have more and more national and local consultations to deal with and your committees have to form a corporate view within a timescale that, at present, precludes obtaining the views of the full membership. Email would enable that possibility so if you wish to be included in any future consultations could you communicate your email addresses to us (also indicating whether or not you still require a paper copy of the Newsletter). You can do this via the 'contact us' page on the website or alternatively email direct to Be assured that any addresses passed to us would

Colin Burbidge

(01737) 245264

## SECRETARY'S NOTES

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The Members' Evening was as usual held at the Woodhatch Centre on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October. Sixty-four people turned up to enjoy the buffet supper, have a glass of wine and to see the Society's Civic Awards presented. These are detailed in Tom Godfrey's Architecture & Planning report in this Newsletter. After the formal part of the meeting we had a fascinating talk by Martin Higgins on Betchworth Castle which he recently bought for £1. It is the only fortified manor house in Surrey. He explained that the castle is at present a ruin and not open to the public because it is unsafe. His main interest in this ruin has been to make it sufficiently safe so that the public can visit. It is just south of the A25 to the east of Dorking and is surrounded by Betchworth Park Golf course.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November Nigel Davenport, the Chief Executive of Surrey Wildlife Trust, gave a talk on "News from Surrey Wildlife Trust". About fifty people turned up at Holmesdale School to hear Nigel explain the role of the Trust which this year celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Trust has about 28,000 members, with an encouraging increase of 2,000 in the last two years. It has a staff of 100, about 350 volunteers, and manages 4.5% of the land in Surrey, much under contract from Councils or the MOD. It receives about £5 million income annually. It is dedicated to reversing the trend of the past 50 years of loss of the open heathland. The decline of grazing has allowed the growth of grass and trees especially birch, which has totally changed the landscape.

By planned restoration and the use of goats and cattle, it has 200 of each, it is reclaiming large areas of the open spaces in Surrey. He gave an example of Ash Ranges, a large area 5 miles across, which is owned by the MOD. Last year the Trust spent £1.3 million in restoration projects. Payments from the MOD of £400,000 and Nature England's £600,000 were topped up by farming grants such as the Single Farm Payment. He reminded us that Surrey was a county with more open land than other English counties, and the work of the Trust would ensure that this land remained a valuable asset.

We return to the Priory School for the 10<sup>th</sup> December meeting. Dennis Turner will be talking about "The origins of Reigate and Tandridge Priors". There are three meetings planned for 2010. On 28<sup>th</sup> January at St Mark's Church Hall in Alma Road, Jeremy Early will give an illustrated talk on "Reigate's heathland riches". Our February meeting is on 25<sup>th</sup> in the Tanners & Woolsack Room in The Harlequin. His talk will be on "Gatton Park: Bringing a 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape back to life". The final talk in this winter's programme will be on 25<sup>th</sup> March in the Redhill UR Church Hall in Hatchlands Road. Lester Hicks will be giving a very topical talk on Waste management entitled "How Britain manages its waste".

All these Open Meetings start at 8.15pm and are given on your Programme cards. Details of these and much more can also be seen on the Society's web site

**Michael Hellings** (01737) 245342

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## REGISTRAR'S NOTES

I am pleased to say that we have welcomed three new members, and since the last Newsletter. They are: -

**Mr P & Dr J Collins**

**Mr R J Hedge**

But you know what I am going to say now! Why so few? We need more members and we need you – the membership – to help find them! I always have a good supply of Membership Forms which you can have to give to friends, or just tell me their names and I will send the form to them. We are losing members, for all the usual reasons, at a higher rate than we are recruiting

them. This must not go on! PLEASE find me some more members!

In the last Newsletter I told you that I was sending out about 60 Reminder Notices to members who had not paid their subscriptions for 2008-09. I have heard from the majority of them and I am pleased to be able to say that most have now paid, although we have lost a few for various reasons. If you are one of those who have not yet responded to my letter, PLEASE do so now so that I can close the issue for this year. Thank you.

**John Angel**

**(01737) 242672**

## TREASURER'S NOTES

Let me remind you that the ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS are due from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 and the MINIMUM RATES are as follows:

Individual Members	£5
Family Members	£8
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For those still not paying by Banker's Order, please complete the Subscription Payment Form on page 7 of this Newsletter, and return it with your cheque (or cash) to me at the address shown.

**Charles Wragg**

**(01737) 210640**

**Email: [charles.wragg@ntlworld.com](mailto:charles.wragg@ntlworld.com)**

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING

**Chairman: Tom Godfrey (01737) 243590**

In the last Newsletter, we finished, for the time being, with the South East Plan and we will have to see what the future will bring if and when, the results of the next election bring a change of Government. The Conservatives have threatened, or is it promised, to get rid of the quango that is responsible for the South East! What may flow from this is anyone's guess and there are even suggestions that local democracy may play a part!

Our attention must now move to the Local Development Framework and to the main element of this document, which is the Core Strategy. This is subject to an Inquiry before an Inspector appointed to act on behalf of the Government. A pre-inquiry meeting is being held in November with the formal Inquiry in December. The Core Strategy sets out the framework on which a number of other Policies are hung and, in our view, was unexceptionable given the requirements of the South East Plan, inasmuch as this Strategy is required to conform to that Plan.

The other documents which are included in the ultimate Local Development Framework include:-

- Development Management & Site Allocations Development Plan Document which essentially replaces the Borough Local Plan since its Policies will be used in determining planning applications. It will cover additional matters such as the regeneration policies at Preston,

Merstham and Horley. Preliminary consultations are to be sought shortly.

- Redhill Area Action Plan which was scheduled for consultation at the turn of the year has been delayed not least because they are having to look at the transport element and parking study again following the Society's (and others) representations. It is not known when consultations will be resumed.
- Statement of Community Involvement where a revised draft is to be put out for consultation shortly.
- Sustainability Appraisal concerning the Development Management & Site Allocations Development Plan Document which will be available shortly.
- The Design and Parking Supplementary Planning Document which supports other documents by giving more detailed guidance on design and parking. Initial consultations are promised shortly.
- Open Space Assessment
- etcetera, etcetera

Only politicians could have dreamt up such a complex and bureaucratic system, which the Government avers, is to speed up planning decisions! None the less we shall seek to participate in these various consultations.

The planning application for Tesco rumbles on with the Surrey Highways querying the traffic generation figures and various other queries being raised. Network Rail appear to have thrown a spanner in the works by indicating that they may need the site to make a direct connection between the Reading line and the Tonbridge line to serve freight traffic

between the North and the Channel Tunnel avoiding London. If this becomes a formal proposal when their study is completed in the Spring presumably the application will fail – but what happens to the level crossing in Reigate?

A landowner has put his marker down for land to be released from the Green Belt if and when the Borough has carried out the study required by the Secretary of State. The application is for a mixed use development comprising 93 residential units, retail and medical centre on the south side of Nutfield Road just to the west of Canterbury Road. It is the site of an old school and the applicants are arguing that it is a "brown field" and that there are "very special circumstances" why it should be released – it is for affordable homes and they are providing open space and allotments. The cynic in me feels that anyone could make such provisions if they had sufficient land!

This is the time of year when the Society has presented its Awards and for those of you who did not come to the Open Evening at Woodhatch and have no access to the Society's website, the successful schemes were:-

### **1. The addition of Beech House to St Mary's Choir and Preparatory School, Chart Lane, Reigate**

**Developed by Reigate Grammar School with Chartered Architects Barnsley, Hewett and Mallison**

The panel was asked to consider the new detached extension to St Mary's school which comprises a new sports hall together with additional class rooms.

The Society has been aware over recent years of the school's various proposals to extend their facilities on the land to the west of the existing buildings. While the size and scope of the built scheme is much less ambitious than earlier proposals, we believe this reduction in size has allowed it to integrate satisfactorily into the available site. The form of the new building, stepping down the western slope of the site, is confidently handled, incorporating an imaginative use of the site spoil as part of the new landscape features.

The architectural form of the new building, together with its carefully considered selection of materials - mainly stock bricks and stone accents to the lower levels - successfully provides a

visual link to the earlier structures on the site. The upper storey is built in a grey metal framed cladding and glazing system. The large overhanging fascias to the roof successfully tie together the various elements and levels of the new building.

The panel was unanimous in considering the new development worthy of an award. It demonstrates how successfully a good modern building can fit into an historic setting, particularly when compared with previous additions to the school which attempted to match the original buildings.

### **2. Restoration and conversion of Wallfield House, West Street, Reigate**

**Developed by Lochplace Ltd with Fourem Architects**

There have been comprehensive repairs and redecoration together with limited additions to the external fabric of Wallfield House. Also, there have been extensive internal repairs and reinstatement of architectural detail, together with alterations to the existing layout to form 7 flats of various sizes.

It is primarily due to the exemplary quality of workmanship and materials used both on the external and internal renovation of Wallfield House that the panel unanimously recommended that an award be made.

### **3. Two new sedum roofed bungalows, 1 Five Oaks Place, The Grange, Merstham In the Merstham Conservation Area J R Burton Builders Ltd**

Five Oaks Place comprises a small development of two single storey houses set within the quiet grounds of Grange Court, a private development in a conservation area.

The basic concept behind the design of the houses is that they are hidden behind what appears to be a solid brick garden wall containing a minimum of penetrations. This wall forms the main front or entrance elevation to both dwellings, broken only by two entrance lobbies fitted with wrought iron security gates. Black stained, lean to, timber structures set against the wall provide garage accommodation for both dwellings. By contrast to the solid entrance side of the dwellings, the whole of the private garden elevations are formed of floor to ceiling fully glazed patio doors. These in turn lead onto a

simple deck facing a new grassed garden area with several mature trees.

Internal spaces resulting from the plan form are well lit from above by west facing laylights. Unusually, the highly insulated flat roof is planted with a sedum green roof system.

The panel expressed reservations regarding some internal details and materials used. Particular concern was expressed regarding the elaborate plastic entrance doors selected for the dwellings. Notwithstanding these reservations, the panel was encouraged by the strong and successful concept of the scheme and its good mannered modern resolution. The panel recommended an award be made to the scheme in recognition of its concept and in the hope that similar thoughtful contemporary designs may be encouraged in the Borough.

#### **4. 18a Flanchford Road, Reigate Heath Phillip Plumb**

This is a small scale project which comprised the refurbishment, redecoration and provision of new windows to a small detached cottage facing onto Reigate Heath. The results of this exercise are, however, an object lesson to all, no matter the size of the project. Its success is due to the appropriate palette of colours selected and the replacement of existing windows with new timber windows and gable details of the correct proportion. The whole effect is entirely harmonious and appropriate for its setting.

The panel agreed that the project was worthy of an award. This project demonstrates one of the original purposes of the Society's civic award scheme; that is to encourage the careful use of proportion, materials and colour in improving an already attractive environment.

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#### **REDHILL**

**Chairman: Gerry Moss (01737) 765508**

There has been no overt progress in the Redhill Area Action Plan since the last Newsletter. The Borough Officers have been engaged in considering what revisions are necessary to their Core Strategy which was found wanting by the Planning Inspector.

The latest Head of Policy, Dr Kathy O'Leary was appointed recently, to replace Bev Hindle, and no doubt is busily engaged in absorbing the content of the muddled past and set on meeting her Core Strategy revised dead lines. I have lost count of the number of changes in Officers engaged on this project since it first began three attempts ago. Kevin Munnally, who has been promising our meeting, has also left recently. Each new officer has had to absorb what has gone before and cope with decisions they may well not agree with. Then they, in turn, pass on to advance their career or for more money with another authority (probably deep in the same process). It is certainly a job and a way of life where no one can eventually be held to account for what transpires.

On the vexed question of the Town's road system the Society was promised a meeting with the Borough Officers and SCC Road Tsars finally for last August, only to have that time scale extended to September, but we are still waiting.

No hurry we are told, the process has been put back.

Members may be interested in more detail concerning this contentious road problem. We are all aware of the national problem of congestion and pollution from road traffic. But Redhill and Reigate should not be used as guinea pigs for the radical solution of excluding cars with public transport as the sole option for most.

You will read elsewhere of the total inadequacy of the local road system to cope with growth quite apart from the large increase in the planned local population. Redhill is the junction of A23 and A25; Reigate that for the A25 and A217. In Redhill the present "solution" is the replacement of the roundabouts with signalled junctions sympathetic only to buses, along with the reduction of Princess Way and Marketfield Way to one main carriageway in each direction to provide for right turns (which still leaves the other lane subject to congestion from such turns). This, of course, means it will not be possible to make U-turns without a roundabout. The concept of "living streets" (where pedestrians may cross where they will) is added to give this proposal some attraction for those who do not use cars. It takes no account of present levels of traffic, let alone natural growth and increases from planned population increases and also the considerable growth planned for the Town. It is a solution

attractive only to those who favour the exclusion of cars from towns so that the only option is public transport. Such a policy will undermine the performance of the present town and inhibit the growth which is the very reason for these plans.

What will happen to the road traffic? Well, as indicated the underlying assumption by the planners is that the consequent congestion will cause travellers to move to Public transport but there is very little support for this conclusion elsewhere. Certainly through traffic will where possible avoid the town. There is no option for east west movement apart from the overloaded M25 but some north-south would choose the A217, exacerbating the already parlous condition of Reigate town centre.

We have been waiting for the SCC solution to what is certainly a very difficult problem. Apparently they now have produced many schedules of statistics and projections. What we

fear is that these will be used to demonstrate that if the two carriageways are retained this can be satisfactory even with the three signalled junctions and probably further signals as well. If you bring your car you will have to negotiate the bottleneck of the station bridge to park at a good price in a car park of difficult access. You are likely to have to say goodbye to "kiss and goodbye" at the station and drop off somewhere else of your choice (which will not be easy).

But we must hope that the enforced delay will call forth its own solution. Those who hope a change of government will make it all go away may well be disappointed but, who knows, the traffic experts may yet come up trumps. If they do, I for one will be very relieved.

**Harry Ingram (Secretary)**

## **TRANSPORT**

**Acting Chairman: John Chittenden**

**(01737) 242328**

At a recent meeting of the committee John Chittenden was confirmed as acting chairman.

In discussing the LDF and Redhill Hub development Proposals it was decided that the Authorities should be reminded of undertakings dating from 2003 relating to the long term need for the provision of a Ring Road if Reigate and Redhill are to be developed into a major Population & Transport growth Hub.

Namely:

1. "The Local Transport Committee Task Group has recently reaffirmed the Objectives of the RELIEF ROAD and associated traffic schemes. The scheme is still high on the agenda for both Reigate & Surrey C. C. and is in both

authorities' structure plans."

(An extract of a letter received from Surrey C. C.)

2. "We consider that developments in the vicinity of the M25 which generate large volumes of car trips should be controlled so that the benefits of the newly provided road capacity are not eroded. We recommend that a review of the current controls on land-use development adjacent to the TRUNK ROAD and MOTORWAY network should be undertaken."

(DETR Report: "ORBIT Transport solutions around London")

Other local problems which need addressing range from parking on and damage to footways, potholes in need of repair, the need for a park and ride scheme, the obstruction of cycle and bus routes.

## **NATURAL AMENITIES**

**Chairman: Colin Burbidge (01737) 245264**

Following the introduction of the reorganized household waste collection arrangements the borough council has now approved its **Recycling Blueprint**. A further eight week round of public consultation will take place before the details of the doorstep collection of recyclables are

finalised. There will then be a further wait until the scheme can be implemented.

Additional stackable storage boxes are planned to enable a weekly doorstep collection of food waste, glass and plastic in addition to the existing collection of paper and cans. With a corresponding reduction in the amount of non-recyclable waste and the separate collection of putrescible material it will be safe and sensible to

introduce fortnightly collection of the non-recyclables in the wheelie bins.

We have always been keen to see an increase in recycling in the borough and we welcome this new initiative.

Further to the earlier mention of Gatwick Airport it has just been announced that a request for a public inquiry into a planning application submitted by BAA for a massive extension to the North Terminal has been refused.

The request for an inquiry was made by GACC so that the case could be made for conditions which would minimise any increase in noise, pollution and water waste or climate change damage as the application had been passed by Crawley Borough Council with virtually no conditions attached. The proposed extension was to enable the airport to expand from its previous peak of 35 million passengers a year to 40

million.

It remains to be seen whether the new owners will proceed with the approved plan or will wish to revise it. Either way it seems that we are destined to suffer more noise and air pollution in the future despite the assurances that there will be no second runway.

You may also have seen reports about a crack-down on problem parking. The introduction of new powers has coincided with the announcement of further restrictions on local roads in Redhill. More yellow lines do not solve problems on their own. There does need to be enforcement of such restrictions and punishment for inconsiderate parking. If you have or are aware of a problem make a complaint. The pressure of numbers does bear fruit eventually!

**The Reigate Society**

- President:* Crispin Blunt MP
- Chairman:* Colin Burbidge, MSc., C Eng., 16 Brokes Crescent, Reigate, RH2 9PS. Tel: 01737 245264
- Hon. Secretary:* Michael Hellings, 53 West Street, Reigate, RH2 9BZ. Tel: 01737 245342
- Hon. Treasurer:* Charles Wragg, 3 Weald Way, Reigate, RH2 7RG. Tel: 01737 210640

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(NL 95)

<b>CORPORATE MEMBERS</b>
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Note that all addresses are of Reigate town and all telephone numbers have the code 01737, unless otherwise stated.

	<b>Address</b>	<b>Business</b>
Bakers Radio Ltd	6 Western Parade, Prices lane RH2 8AU (240543 / 242322)	TV, Electrical Retailers
Care Unlimited	Chaldon Rise Mews, Rockshaw Road, Merstham RH1 3DE (645171 / 646266)	Care Homes
Care Homes of Distinction Ltd	Wray Park, 55 Alma Road RH2 0DN (242778)	Care Homes & Property Development
Crow Watkin	14 Bell Street RH2 7BE (245886)	Independent Estate Agents, Surveyors & Valuers
Dunottar School	High Trees Road, RH2 7EL (761945)	
East Surrey College	Claremont Road, Gatton Point, Redhill RH1 2JX (772611)	
Iain Johnston	4 Chart Lane (244160)	Podiatrist
Michael Jones & Associates	Crossway House, 8 London Road RH2 9HY (245610)	Engineering Consultants – Building Services
Keymex Ltd	59-61 Bell Street RH2 7AQ (240171)	Domestic Appliance Sales, Service & Repairs
Holmesdale Building Society	43 Church Street RH2 0AE (245716)	Your local Building Society for all your mortgage and investment needs
James Knight & Sons	8-10 Bell Street RH2 7BG (242195)	Drapers & Soft Furnishers
La Barbe Restaurant	71 Bell Street RH2 7AN (241966)	Restaurant & Outside Catering
Micklefield School	10 Somers Road RH2 9DU (242615 / 224211 / 224212)	Independent Preparatory School for boys and girls age 2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> to 11
Ormerods	Suite 4 Chapter House 33 London Road RH2 9HZ (0208 686 5000)	Solicitors
Reigate Priory Cricket Club	Park Lane, RH2 8JX (244477)	Cricket Club with senior & junior sections
Reigate Priory School	Bell Street RH2 7RL (245065 / 240229)	
Royal Alexandra & Albert School	Gatton Park, RH2 0TW (649050)	Boarding school for boys and girls ages 7 to 18
Stanton Construction	1 Castlefield Road RH2 0SA (227430)	Development & construction service to industry, public & commercial sectors
TWM Solicitors LLP	40 West Street RH2 9BT (221212)	Solicitors
White & Sons	24 High Street RH2 9AY (222600)	Independent Estate Agents, Surveyors & Valuers