PWRA news

issue two
March 2019

Purley's new public art project to celebrate the Surrey iron railway

News from the...

Cllr. Badsha Quadir, PWRA Chairman writes:

The harbinger of Spring these days in Purley is the builder. Or to be exact multitudes of builders, accompanied by their vans, drills, mixers and circular saws – and also big builders merchant's lorries driving up onto pavements to deliver bricks, timber and the like.

It is these big delivery lorries that are a current bugbear of mine. They are causing no end of damage to pavements and, around the area there are many roads where heavy kerb stones have also been dislodged and some even knocked into the road, to the dangerous discomfort of pedestrians and other road users alike. Couple this with the council's could-not-care-less attitude to road maintenance and our local roads are now in a deplorable state. I and my local councillor colleagues will be taking the council to task on this matter.

A month after the first issue of the PWRA News I am pleased to report another first for the Association's new communications programme. This – and subsequent electronic issues of the PWRA News – will be sent directly to those Association members who have given us their email addresses. And, for those that haven't, it will also be posted on the Association's website: www.pwra.co.uk

We are planning to produce future electronic editions of the PWRA News around the middle of every month from now until the year's second printed issue in mid-November.

Members will be pleased to hear that the PWRA is now involved, along with other organisations, in the commissioning of a new world-class art installation in Purley's Rotary Field. My colleague Cllr. Simon Brew has done a great deal of work on this project, which will be funded in part by the five local Conservative ward councillors. Please see pages 4 and 5 for more news on this.

PWRA committee

We are also pleased to be able to carry news from our MP Chris Philp, please see pages 6 and 7 for his campaign to encourage brownfield site development.

For your interest after years of out-sourcing virtually every council function possible, there has been a change of plan, at least in respect of the maintenance of council-owned grounds. Croydon council has announced that it is bringing this facility back in-house, as a means of "improving this service". We shall see.

The PWRA committee needs your help!

We are urgently looking for an assistant planning officer to join the committee.

Can you help the PWRA in this role? Please email: planning@pwra.co.uk for more information.

We need your email address!

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The PWRA News is published by the Purley & Woodcote Residents' Association, whose objects are to protect the interests and to preserve and improve the amenities of the district. Full details of the Constitution and Rules of the PWRA are available on request.

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Purley news...

New art installation to celebrate Purley's proud past

Every Purley resident knows that it is a great place to live – but few appreciate the part it played helping Britain transform from an agricultural economy to an industrial power-house. All this is about to change with the commissioning of a world-class art installation in Purley's Rotary Field, which has been funded, in part, by the five local Conservative ward councillors.

A proposal of how the final sculpture might appear

Professional artist Alan Potter has won the competition to design and install an art installation in Purley. His 'Iron Horse' design will celebrate the heritage of the Surrey Iron Railway which was one of the very first railways anywhere in the world.

The railway was established by Act of Parliament in 1801 and opened in 1802/1803. It was a toll railway where carriers used horses to pull wagon loads of coal, building materials, lime, manure, corn and seeds. From 1805-1837 the track ran from a river dock in Wandsworth, through Mitcham, Croydon and Purley to Merstham and Godstone. Part of this historic railway is still visible in the Rotary Field.

The sculpture is subject to modification, depending on consultation with the local community, but is likely to comprise a series of life-sized cast iron 'relief panels' of a dray horse pulling loaded wagons on an iron rail.

The installation will symbolise the dramatic transformation from agriculture to industry that the Surrey Iron Railway helped to facilitate.

The competition for the new art installation was launched last year out of a recognition that Purley carries little reference to the town's long and proud history. Artists were invited to respond with details of how they would capture the town's exciting history through art and create an installation that would contribute to the area's attractive surroundings. Out of the 23 artists that applied Alan Potter was chosen. His proposal reflects the strength of his idea and commitment to using opportunities to develop and encourage local art groups and to help nurture a culture of creativity in the places he works.

Simon Brew, Conservative ward Councillor for Purley and Woodcote says:

"When it is in place Alan's design will give residents yet another reason to feel proud of the town they live in. The new installation will remind us of the town's proud past, but also serve as a poignant reminder that with creativity, innovation and enterprise our best days remain ahead. I look forward to introducing Alan to the local community organisations who will work with him to finalise the finished product."

Volunteer artists required to celebrate the Iron Horse project

Alan Potter, the artist writes: "To mark the installation of the Iron Horse sculpture I would like local groups to help construct a trail of colourful painted and decorated models of the sculpture leading from Brighton Rd up to the site of the original railway in the Rotary Field where the sculpture will be sited. I will organise a workshop, probably in the first week of April, where each volunteer would paint their own individual double-sided panel (approx. 45cm x 9cm). If you are interested please will you email Phil Reed, PWRA Vice Chairman (philreed3949@gmail.com) who will relay your names to me so that I can let you know the date and place of the workshop in Purley.

Your MP writes:

Build more homes on brownfield sites

Chris Philp Member of Parliament for Croydon South writes:

The council's planning committee is currently granting 95% of applications that are put before it. As a result, applications that are unpopular with residents or are not in keeping with the area are waved through.

The council plans to build 10,000 more homes in suburban areas by 2036. To achieve this, it intends to build blocks of flats in traditionally quiet areas – and it will require knocking down existing houses or building on green land. I strongly oppose this – indeed last month I spoke to make my opposition to the council's plans clear.

It is not that I oppose building new homes. London needs new homes. Building more homes will help young people into homeownership. It will prevent first time buyers from being priced out of the market and is vital to solving London's housing crisis.

However, building blocks of flats by destroying family homes in areas that have always had a quiet/suburban character is not the answer. Across the south of the borough, the council is granting permissions to knock down 4-5 bedroom houses, to build blocks of around 9 flats. This creates buildings that are out of character with the area around them. The council should be prioritising building flats on brownfield sites, near existing tall buildings.

New buildings should be appropriate to the area and only built on suitable sites. The Croydon Local Plan states that planning permission should only be granted for buildings that fit the character of the area. In the south of the borough most homes are 4-5 bedroom family homes. Homes like these are important for young families and should not be destroyed.

The council is only focusing on hitting its target through blocks of flats. As a result, it is failing to meet its target of 30% family homes (homes with two or more bedrooms. I will be launching a Brownfield First campaign on this issue in the near future. There are many buildings that are unused in Croydon town centre. These should be a priority – either repurposed or rebuilt as flats.

A focus on Brownfield First will allow the borough to meet its housing demand and preserve the historic character of our neighbourhoods.

More local news...

Expanding school street programme

Following a successful pilot scheme which introduced pedestrian zones around Woodcote Primary School and two other schools in the borough during 2017, further schools could benefit from this initiative. A shortlist of eight schools has been drawn up, with letters sent to the school communities and nearby residents to gather their views.

The new School Streets would come into effect from September 2019, but only during the morning and afternoon school run. They are designed to help improve road safety around the schools and air quality.

Residents' cars would not be affected by the pedestrian zone. Locally, among the eight shortlisted schools, is Harris Academy Purley.

Extra tax on empty houses

The owners of private homes in Croydon that are left empty and disused long-term face paying double, triple or even quadruple council tax under cabinet proposals being considered next week.

Currently, local authorities can charge residents 100% of a council tax bill if the property is occupied, with an additional 50% if it is empty for more than two years. But, from April, councils will have stronger legal powers to charge higher rates for long-term empty properties to encourage owners to bring them back into use and increase local housing supply.

Each council can decide how much to charge depending on the local housing market, and proposals going before Croydon Council's cabinet include:-

- an additional 100% council tax on homes empty between two and five years – from April 2019
- an additional 200% council tax on homes empty between five and 10 years – from April 2020
- an additional 300% council tax on properties empty for more than 10 years – from April 2021

Spring will soon be here

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