

PWRA

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news



**New planning
document on
suburban
development**

News from the...



Cllr. Badsha Quadir, PWRA Chairman writes:

There are a number of new issues that affect, to a greater or lesser extent, residents in the PWRA area this month. First, at the end of March, the council's Cabinet approved the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2), with this decision set to be ratified by the full council in April.

Whether SPD2 will better control the current piecemeal development of flats in many of Purley's roads is a major concern. But, until the Cabinet's decision is ratified, we can

only publish what details available to us on pages 4 & 5. Our Acting Planning Officer Graham Bass will look at the implications of SPD2 as more information becomes available and let us have the benefit of his thinking in the May Issue of the PWRA News.

Secondly the proposed Mosaic Place/Purley Baptist Church development saga is in the news again. The lead story in the first issue of the PWRA News (February) reported that the planning application for this development, which had been granted by the council, had been refused by James Brokenshire, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Subsequently Croydon Council and Thornsett, the developer, launched an appeal, which was due to be heard in April, with a decision expected in the Autumn. However things have since moved fast and now an order has been drafted to overturn this decision, which means that the April judicial review hearing will no longer take place. Undoubtedly there will be further developments – in the meantime details of the latest moves in this long running saga are given on pages 4 & 5.

Away from this topic Croydon council is particularly badly affected by the continuing reduction in funding from central government. Many other UK councils are in a similar situation, but Croydon is in a worse situation than most.

PWRA *committee*

As such Croydon council has had to think laterally to come up with new ways to make its books balance – and to its credit the council it has thought of a number of solutions, rather than just imposing an inflation-busting council tax rise on its residents. Indeed, despite the large increases in the levies made by the Metropolitan Police and the Greater London Authority, the actual Croydon Council Tax rise was surprisingly restrained.

This still leaves the council looking to make up for the shortfall in its budget – and so far it has come up with two ideas, that have been made public. These are its Brick by Brick housing operation and investing in hotels.

As council tax payers and residents of the borough you might think that the council does not have the in-house management expertise to handle these types of businesses - and time may yet prove you right. But, there is method in the council's apparent madness. At the heart of both these business diversifications is the council's ability to borrow money at interest rates far below that available to commercial businesses.

The fact that the council can borrow money very cheaply is one thing, but this in itself is not a panacea to overcome lack of expertise in fields that it is investing in. And you might think that investing in hotels was a risky venture. However a little research shows that this might not be a bad idea at all.

Here the council is using its ability to borrow money at very low rates to buy the actual bricks and mortar of a building, which is being run profitably (hopefully) as a hotel, by a professional operator. What, you may ask, does the council get out of this? Well the council gets the rent – and for a successful hotel in a suitable location, this can provide a considerable return on the investment made.

The situation with the council's Brick by Brick (BxB) development venture seems less straightforward to the outside observer. BxB was set up in 2016 to provide Croydon Affordable Housing and Community-led housing. To fund this operation the council borrowed some £10+ million at low interest and lent it to Brick by Brick, who in turn used the bulk of the money to buy council owned land.

This land is now being built on by BxB appointed developers. However progress has been painfully slow – up to now Brick to Brick has only delivered a handful of new housing units. Let us hope, for the sake of local council payers, that BxB delivers in the long run.

Purley news...

Cabinet recommends adoption of planning document on suburban development



Croydon Council is set to adopt planning policy to help guide the delivery of new homes in the borough's suburbs. The council's Cabinet approved the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2) with the decision set to be ratified by the full council in April.

The SPD2 responds to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, and policies in the emerging London Plan. It supports the policies adopted in Croydon's 2018 Local Plan and will guide the delivery of around 10,000 of the borough's target of 32,890 new homes by 2036.

SPD2, if adopted, will provide guidance for suburban residential development, as well as guidance for the new areas of focused intensification and house extensions and alterations. It would be a tool for developers and residents, offering guidance on best practice when it comes to design quality, while minimising the impact on neighbours of any development.

The new document would be used to help assess planning applications. It would also help identify and frame opportunities where increased densities can enhance and bring benefit to communities. The adoption of SPD2 would mean planning applications would be determined using detailed and area-specific guidance and would help improve the quality of developments coming forward in the suburbs.

Cllr Paul Scott, cabinet lead for environment, transport and regeneration commented, "We have a housing crisis in London and we need to build many thousands more homes to ensure everyone has a decent quality home. Many of these will be built in the suburbs, either between or behind existing homes, or replacing older properties. SPD2 provides guidance for the whole borough, and should be used by residents, developers, builders and agents including architects and consultants in shaping proposals and it will assist in making decisions on planning applications."

SOS's decision to refuse Purley Baptist Church planning permission is quashed

The Secretary of State's (SOS) decision to refuse planning permission for the Purley Baptist Church site is to be quashed. An order has been drafted to overturn James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government's decision to refuse the Purley Baptist Church planning application last year. This now means the judicial review hearing, set for April 10&11, will no longer take place.

To quote the press release issued by the council, "The SOS has conceded he failed to give adequate reasons when refusing planning permission and has accepted his decision letter should be nullified. It is expected the order will be confirmed by the High Court in the next few days and the application will be referred back to the Secretary of State for reconsideration.

The council and the developer had submitted written legal arguments to the High Court earlier this year, highlighting a lack of explanation and justification regarding the Secretary of State's decision.

Back in December 2016, Croydon Council had resolved to grant planning permission to Thornsett Group to build 220 homes, including 39 affordable, along with a new home for Purley Baptist Church with community facilities including a sports hall and community and exhibition spaces.

The principle of a tower on the site was properly considered as part of the Croydon Local Plan and planning application process, and an Independent Design Review had supported such an approach. Although the proposed 17 storey tower was one storey higher than the Local Plan, there was no reason to refuse."

Cllr Paul Scott, cabinet lead for regeneration and planning said: "It's pleasing the Secretary of State has accepted errors were made in justifying his refusal of planning permission for this important brownfield development, which was fully endorsed, not only by the council's planning committee, but also the Mayor of London.

The proposed development was also supported by the Secretary of State's planning inspector – and it would provide much-needed homes in the borough, with a replacement church and community facilities, while incorporating the highest standards of architecture and materials.

Development on the site remains long overdue and I hope the Secretary of State fully recognises the full regenerative potential of these proposals."

More local news...

POST- a Purley organisation with a world outlook

Purley is not short of organisations and clubs – but Purley OverSeas Trust (POST) was a new one to me, writes Phil Reed:

I first heard of POST when I recently attended an informative and interesting lecture, “Feeding the 10 Billion” by Dr Richard Strange, co-founder and former Editor in Chief of the international journal, *Food Security: the science, sociology and economics of food production and access to food*, and a world expert on global food security.

This lecture outlined the fact that the world’s population - currently 7.5 billion and rising - is expected to exceed 10 billion by 2100. Dr Strange said that more than half of today’s world population has an inappropriate diet: around 800 million are hungry while 2 billion suffer from “hidden hunger” (lack of vitamins or micronutrients such as iron or iodine) and another 2 billion are overweight.

What is to be done? Obviously there is not one single fix to solving issues of this magnitude. Dr Strange outlined various means that could ameliorate and indeed solve some of the problems.

Food security and all its associated social, political, economic, agricultural and scientific elements are central to POST’s work. POST funds educational, agricultural, medical and social projects in the developing world. If you would like to know more about POST or would like to help with its work or donate to its activities please go to: www.purleyoverseas.org

Plant sale at St Swithun’s Church

A plant sale is being held St.Swithun’s Church Hall, on Sunday May 12, from 9.00am to 12.30pm, at Grovelands Rd. Purley CR8 4LB. Annuals, perennials, patio plants, tomato/vegetable plants and much more will be on sale with all proceeds going to charities.

If you would like to donate plants for this sale please telephone: 020 8660 4119



OUR COUNCILORS *report...*



Cllr. Helen Redfern, Purley Oaks & Riddlesdown reports:

One of the most enjoyable parts of being a ward councillor is distributing the Community Ward Budget, with each councillor having £8,000 to spend on community initiatives. Whilst it is very nice to have funds to give to good causes, from a personal perspective I have found considering the use of the Budget to be a good way to learn more about activities and needs within Purley Oaks & Riddlesdown ward.

In this first year, I have been able to support the 19th Purley (Riddlesdown) Scout Group who will be fixing their Scout Hut roof; Croydon Borough Neighbourhood Watch Association who will be producing literature to be distributed across the ward; Riddlesdown Lawn Tennis Club who will be offering free coaching to children and adults, St Edmunds Church Riddlesdown who will be refurbishing one of their rooms in order to open it out to community-focussed activities and The Charter Trust's Lily Pad Appeal that is raising funds for the new oncology unit in Croydon University Hospital's new Paediatric Village.

Finally, in February, the five Purley councillors have been able to announce their financial support of the 'Iron Horse' sculpture that will commemorate the Surrey Iron Railway (the world's first railway) that passed through Purley Rotary Field.

These projects encompass such a range of activities that hopefully every ward resident could benefit from at least one of these initiatives. It will be interesting to see what ideas come up in the next year.

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Our team performed outstandingly throughout the extensive judging period on each occasion for the past three years.

With the market conditions that we are currently facing, it is more important now than ever before to choose the **right** agent. We are an Independent agent trading since 1862, we are local people and we have the expertise.

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