

## Annual Review

2024 was a busy time for the Society. We have been regularly responding on behalf of residents about local matters including the delivery of Borough and County Council services at a time when everyone's finances are stretched. We have also been actively involved in influencing and shaping the emerging Local Plan so that it hopefully will safeguard the best of our environment whilst contributing to delivering much needed new housing. Throughout the year we have supported our three Ward Councillors each of whom are incredibly committed to the Ward and to delivering for local people.

In our previous Annual Review we announced that we had shifted our communications to our website and wished to develop an email circulation list and social media channels. We hope that you have noticed that we now regularly provide up to date information on a whole range of local topical issues on our web site. Our e-mail list also continues to expand and is an excellent way of receiving Society and Council news straight to your inbox. Please do provide your e-mail contact details if you have not already done so as it is a cost-effective way for us to communicate with you.

W(E)RS, as indeed with the other residents' associations across the Borough, is not funded by national party donors, but by local membership subscriptions which are therefore vital if our work on behalf of residents is to continue. To bolster our membership we have produced an updated promotional leaflet for the Society including a bespoke invitation flyer to join and pay the £5 annual membership subscription.

Meeting and talking to you is key to us being able to represent you and voice your concerns and priorities. Two meetings have been held since July in Langley Vale Village Hall for residents concerned about the serious public order incidents that occurred at the 2024 Derby meeting. A third meeting is planned for 7 February with monthly meetings then scheduled leading up to the 2025 Derby Festival. These meetings have been organised by W(E)RS and attended by your ward Councillors, the General Manager of Epsom Racecourse and the Borough Police Commander. A number of actions are being planned including a proposed Public Spaces Protection Order.

We were also delighted to hold a well-attended meeting in October at Epsom Sports Club focussing on the future of Epsom Hospital with James Blythe, MD of the Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust attending as speaker and to answer resident questions. We plan to hold a further public meeting in the ward again later this year.

Other events the Society was involved in organising included the Music in the Park free music event in August by Epsom & Ewell Silver Band sponsored by Councillor Steven McCormick and the fund-raising Quiz Night at St Joseph's Church Hall in October.

As usual the Society has been busy responding to planning applications and meeting residents who have contacted us with planning concerns. We were successful in persuading the Council to reject an attempt by the developer to downgrade the quality of the Langley Bottom Farm residential scheme previously granted on appeal. We were also instrumental in a planning application for a separate new dwelling half-way along the access road being rejected on the grounds that the site was not previously developed land and that it would seriously undermine the openness of this area of Green Belt. We also secured a refusal of a 5-unit residential re-development scheme between Whitehorse Drive and Bucknills Close despite an officer recommendation to permit with Cllr Liz Frost speaking at the Planning Committee on behalf of

residents. The Society also submitted objections to a planning appeal lodged by the same developer for an earlier 6-unit scheme. We were delighted that the Inspector supported our concerns about highway safety and access off the busy Whitehorse Drive and dismissed the appeal.

We have continued to ensure that the planning enforcement issues relating to the Woodcote Grove residential development are pursued and have been pressing for the replacement of the Castle Road footbridge. Unfortunately, the programming of works is out of our control and in the hands of Network Rail but we're hoping to see a new bridge shortly and shall update residents as soon as we have contract dates.

The Society through the umbrella organisation for the Residents Associations across Epsom and Ewell (SCoRA) responded to the Government consultation on planning reforms. We supported some of the suggested policy changes relating to improving the delivery of much needed affordable and social housing but lodged strong objections to Government proposals for maximising housebuilding which would be likely to result in excessive high density and high-rise development at odds with the prevailing character and heritage of the Borough. Regrettably, the revised National Planning Policy Framework has confirmed this approach which will likely result in much higher density residential development in the future. We are trying to minimise this impact by making representations to the Regulation 19 Borough Local Plan with the aim of safeguarding residential amenity standards, protecting important green spaces and protecting against inappropriate high-rise development through improved design guidance.

Our County Councillor Steve McCormick has responded to resident requests by ensuring that important maintenance and road safety improvements have been undertaken in the ward notwithstanding limited resources. These include resurfacing the top end of Woodcote Road, vehicle activated signs and road safety signs on Langley Vale Road, road safety signs on Ashley Road, double yellow line and junction repainting on Avenue Road. Steve has also been pressing Surrey County Council to increase the frequency of the E5 bus service.

This year the Society has regrettably lost two valued members of the committee. Kristine Gronemann Damberg who led for us on sustainability issues and Bernard Woolfe who co-ordinated our road reps for distributing newsletters and leaflets. We would very much welcome any offers of help to join our committee.

Many thanks as always to Cherrill Auton, our Treasurer and to Beavis and Co who have generously acted as our Honorary Auditors for many years now.