West Clandon Parish Council - Chairman's Report 2014-15

During the past 12 months, West Clandon Parish Council has continued to monitor and actively comment upon all planning matters affecting the village. Although the Parish Council has no control over specific planning applications, we can and do comment on planning applications in the same way as the public. During the past year, we raised concerns over a number of applications, either to pass on concerns raised by residents or because we believed the applications raised matters of concern.

One particular application that we commented upon was at the Drift Golf Club in East Horsley, where it has been proposed to import large quantities of waste and soil from London's Crossrail project to remodel part of their course. Although outside West Clandon, this proposal would affect the village because of the enormous number of lorry movements planning to use the A247 with their loads en route to the site in East Horsley. A final decision on this application is expected to be made later this summer.

As most residents of West Clandon will know, the main area of activity has been in relation to Guildford's proposed Draft Local Plan, where the Parish Council has vehemently responded to the Borough's Issues and Options Consultation and, at the same time, opposed the housing development planned at Gosden Hill Farm near Burpham, part of which is actually in West Clandon parish. Our main concern throughout has been the protection of West Clandon from any inappropriate development, which could affect and damage our village.

Perhaps the most significant proposal was the idea, slipped into the draft plan at a late stage, to build a five form entry secondary school on the flood plain of Cuckoo Farm next to the station. Without any prior consultation, the Parish Council only got to learn about this proposal after receiving a terse three line email from the Planning department at Guildford Borough Council.

With the help and support of local residents, the Clandon Society and its 'Protect Clandon' group, a highly visible campaign was organised, which culminated with the Parish Council organising a site visit on August 8th, at which representatives from Surrey County Council's property, education and highways departments were present. As we walked around Cuckoo Farm, we did our best to demonstrate the total unsuitability of the site for a host of reasons, not least the lack of any safe access from the A247 and the flooding that could result in the northern parts of the village, if a large school was constructed on Cuckoo Farm's flood plain.

The following month, a letter from the SCC's Environment & Infrastructure Directorate confirmed that "there would be little justification in locating a new school on this site". We later found out that no one from either the County Council or Borough Council planning departments had ever visited Cuckoo Farm to see if it was suitable for such a development.

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At our March meeting, Mr Dan Knowles from the Borough Council's planning office briefed us on the advisability of adopting a 'Neighbourhood Plan' to afford the village greater protection against any major or unexpected developments, so that anything like the Cuckoo Farm debacle can be prevented from happening again. So far, 10% of the towns and villages in the UK have introduced these plans under the 2011 Localism Act and the villages of Puttenham, Ripley, the Horsleys and Burpham have already adopted these, with Send currently in the process of taking the same action.

Last Autumn, the Surrey County Council's Local Committee made £17,500 available to Parish Councils on the eastern side of the Borough at an 'Eastern Cluster' meeting in Effingham and in October, the six Parish Councils concerned agreed to spend this sum on additional jet washing of roadside drains to minimise flooding.

In November, we discussed the current transport review being undertaken by the Surrey County Council and noted that to make savings, our heavily restricted bus services might have to be cut further. We responded to the consultation saying that further reductions in bus services would substantially disadvantage a significant number of West Clandon residents and requested that this was taken into consideration, when making these difficult decisions.

On August 10th, the village's main sewer failed, when the syphon under the railway line stopped working due to lack of maintenance. This resulted in sewerage flowing down the station approach into people's gardens, local water courses and even stopped train services for several hours. The Parish Council wrote to Thames Water complaining about the lack of regular servicing of this syphon, which has now resulted in a more rigorous maintenance programme being put in place.

Throughout the year, the Parish Council continued to financially support the village school, the church and the village hall using S137 grants for specific projects. We also continued to maintain our playground on the recreation ground and new play equipment in the form of a new basket swing and an 2.4 meter high 'cone climber' are due to be installed soon in the near future.

The Parish Council continued to support the West Clandon British Legion, following an attempt by the national Royal British Legion charity to increase their annual rent by an amount that was unsustainable for the club. After a long-running saga, a final settlement was achieved in June and new lease signed, in the hope that this much used village facility will be able to continue for many years to come.

In May, we received a request from Send United Football Club to use our recreation ground for matches at weekends, as some playing facilities in their own village had been withdrawn and they were unable to accommodate fixtures for their 10 kids teams. After site visits and discussions, their regular use of our ground was agreed, together with the purchase of some new goalposts. We also agreed to commission another 'cut' of the grass to facilitate the process of marking out the pitch.

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With children's football teams using the recreation ground, we have had to confront the problem of dog walkers not cleaning up after their animals and leaving dog mess on the playing surface. With the help of Guildford Borough's Dog Warden, warning notices have been obtained and we continue to monitor the situation on health safety grounds.

I would like to thank my Vice-Chairman Jonathan Murphy for taking charge of all the planning applications that were considered by the Parish Council during the year and also Christopher Dean for his continued help in dealing with the Local Plan and our liaison with the East Guildford Residents Association.

My thanks also go to Alice Pashley for her supervision of all matters concerning the Recreation Ground and its Playground, Lorraine Merry for all her efficiency and help in looking after West Clandon's many footpaths and to Stephen Meredith for his continued help with the administration of the West Clandon Parochial Charities. Nothing would happen on the Parish Council if it wasn't for our clerk John Stone, who has continued to has continued to organise all of us in a most efficient manner throughout the year.

I would also like to thank our Borough Councillors Jen Powell, Jenny Wicks and Andrew French and our County Councillor Keith Taylor for setting aside the time to attend and contribute to our meetings with their help and advice.

It is with great regret that both Alice Pashley and Lorraine Merry have decided to step down from the Parish Council in May and I would like to thank them for all their time and expertise that they have dedicated to the West Clandon Parish Council over a number of years.

Finally, I would like to thank all the residents of West Clandon for their practical support during a very difficult year, when our village has come under the very real threat of planning blight for the first time in many years.

April 12th 2015 Terence Patrick

(Chairman)

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