NEW TOWN CENTRE PLANS
LEAP FORWARD FOR 2021

IT’S A WRAP!

It came in time for Christmas, a gift to all Weybridge residents! The Society proudly announces that we’ve achieved what we set out to do – convince authorities to provide integrated development for our community and health services. With that done, our Weybridge Rebuild and Advance Project (WRAP) is over. But really it’s advanced to something bigger and better than before. Best of all, it’s all moving faster than we could have imagined!

For the last three years, the Society has promoted a health care and wellbeing community centre that will house all our local services. Our initial WRAP vision focused on the hospital site with new premises including the GPs and library and other community activities. Thanks to joined-up thinking and ways of working, WRAP has evolved into a broader town centre regeneration project that will utterly transform the way we live and work and think and feel about Weybridge.

As Weybridge’s main residents association, the Society has now joined forces with key stakeholders in this project to make our new town future a reality. We’re still focused on re-providing health care first, but health means embracing a wider notion of wellbeing. The Society is actively working as a partner with various authorities, organisations, charities, churches and businesses to deliver this project – something undeniably positive for 2021! Read all about it inside and see how you can get involved!
WEYBRIDGE LOOKS AHEAD TO NEW TOWN CENTRE

Plans to rebuild health care facilities in Weybridge, along with redevelopment of the library and re-provisioning of other local services, have taken a massive leap forward this autumn despite the pandemic, with integrated development of the whole town centre now firmly in the works.

In a renewed push to move the project further, key stakeholders came together in early October to form concrete plans for a holistic approach to regenerate Weybridge, with the provision of health care and the rehousing of GP practices as the clear priority.

The stakeholders, which include NHS authorities, Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC), Surrey County Council (SCC), the Weybridge Society, Weybridge Town Business Group and other local partners, are now focused on finalising an outline business case for the health care elements of the project to be submitted to NHS England for approval.

As high-level decision-makers are on the case, the project is now on a faster track than would otherwise be possible as it moves through various stages of preparation, design and planning. Local Weybridge residents and employees from organisations, charities and businesses are also being consulted and informed regularly, to ensure the project has the kind of widespread support and momentum that should enable it to succeed.

‘The GPs and residents of Weybridge have been waiting a long time for the promised new premises,’ said Dave Arnold, Chairman of the Weybridge Society. ‘The Society has been advocating for a joined-up approach to our broader health and social services and re-providing the library. We’ve been working towards this solution for the past three years since the old hospital burned down.’

Whilst the pandemic could have slowed the project, in many ways it accelerated it, as issues of out-patient services, prevention and access to medical intervention came to the fore.

‘No question, COVID also made us all re-think what needs to be provided and how,’ said Arnold. ‘For the residents of Weybridge, a holistic approach to cover all aspects of health, wellbeing and community activities is more important than ever. It will mark a significant change from previous approaches and is one that the Society welcomes and supports.’

The vision now is to create a real town ‘centre’ by integrating sites on both sides of Church Street – the old hospital site where the GP practices are located in portacabins, and the Churchfields side where the library and car park back onto the park and allotments – to provide services that are truly linked, housed in flexible space and involving all sectors of the community: statutory, community and private.
ALL AUTHORITIES ON SIDE

The priority is building top notch primary care facilities that are part of a broader health and wellbeing offer, with a view to simultaneously planning the wider regeneration and making it happen.

‘This is a fantastic opportunity for Weybridge, and now we have all the right partners working together alongside local residents, I’m confident we’re going to deliver something that will be of huge benefit to the community here,’ said Tim Oliver, Surrey County Council Leader and Councillor for Weybridge. ‘We will be providing updated library facilities to create a real community hub where people can come together and access a whole range of social, cultural, educational and economic services and opportunities.’

The project also seeks to include other local services and activities, such as those currently provided at Churchfields Centre for the Community, (‘Day Centre’), the youth centre, town hall and varied arts, culture and heritage programmes from nearby museums. At the moment, these are variously run or funded by SCC, EBC and local charities and volunteers. The goal of the project is to continue these services but in an integrated coherent activity area in the town that also welcomes new organisations and activities. By attracting all ages, the facilities should enhance the sense of community, something that will be key in our post-COVID and climate change era, when work and leisure in many ways are likely to become more local.

Another key component of the project will be to look at integrating a renovated Churchfield car park, paths and main roads, to make sure that the flow of traffic through the town centre for cars, pedestrians and cyclists links up and works together.

Ray Lee, Strategic Director at Elmbridge Borough Council, said there was no question that key local council services would be re-provided but that the project also offered the chance for services to be updated.

‘Long gone are the days of cabbage soup and high backed chairs for the elderly – older people using council services now want to be engaged and active,’ said Lee. ‘We will of course maintain critical services, but many activities can be improved, and some could be phased out. Through this project we want people to come forward and let us know which are their favourite, indispensable activities so we can improve offerings in the future.’

The project is as much about changing cultures within various organisations as it is about building new buildings – breaking down silo-type thinking so organisations and authorities and groups can really work together as a local team.

‘There’s a massive transformation going on in healthcare and we’re trying to make sure we join up care in every direction so that local people and our brilliant range of healthcare staff can thrive,’ said Jack Wagstaff, Director of the North West Surrey Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). ‘We’ve got one chance to get this right in Weybridge, so we’re looking at every critical detail whilst also moving as quickly as possible for the new healthcare facility.’
WHY THE PUSH NOW?
Lately the Weybridge project gained momentum when Well North Enterprises (WNE), a social enterprise, came on board to facilitate exchanges among various stakeholders. Already engaged by North West Surrey ICP to help reconfigure outpatient services, WNE has delivered several successful integrated developments and ground-breaking regeneration projects across England.

After speaking with more than 60 people in the Weybridge community to identify local needs, on 8 October WNE brought together key parties in a day-long online ‘immersion’ conference that helped articulate those needs and shape a future vision for the town. Since then, participants have moved ahead with speed and urgency to organise a structure for delivering the broader town regeneration, setting scope, starting pre-work for putting together initial designs, building a business case and discussing further how to best combine and provide various services. (see Delivering the Vision, p.6)

Whilst in the past, local services were provided on both sides of Weybridge’s Church Street, there were no linkages among them. Thus, what is revolutionary for the project is the three massive shifts in ways of working: a new integrated way of thinking about health and wellbeing that will underpin the work, all local authorities finally working together, and bringing area residents and the wider community into the discussions at every stage to make sure that new facilities are dynamic, sustainable and in sync with one another and local needs.

The new approach also encompasses the idea of ‘social entrepreneurship’ – looking at generating area businesses that serve a societal purpose and give back to the community and encouraging individuals to come forward and participate in the new facilities and activities so that the community feels a strong sense of ownership.

A BACKDROP OF BIGGER CHANGE
Leading the team at WNE and now chairing the Weybridge project, Lord Andrew Mawson OBE, said that as the internet becomes the defining principle of our age, communities need to redefine how they connect and act.

‘New ways of living and working don’t come out of the clouds, or for that matter from the many policy documents emanating from Whitehall,’ said Lord Mawson. ‘They come from new relationships where individuals connect locally and come together and start to explore new ways of working in a shared space.’

He added: ‘We need as a society to think again about the public square and the places where we physically meet and engage with each other, our health depends upon it. Weybridge has a real opportunity here to lead the way in what is increasingly becoming a national conversation.’

The town centre regeneration project also dovetails with a wider programme of transformation both at Surrey and the NHS. SCC has recently launched ‘Your Town’ and Fund Surrey initiatives to help communities decide their funding priorities and take ownership of changes in their areas. The NHS, meanwhile, is looking closely at how it provides all kinds of care, with a view to emphasising care in the community, prevention and early intervention. (See Changing Face of Health Care, p.7)

From a local perspective, the project also offers the opportunity to improve sites adjacent to Churchfields and the old
hospital site. Special attention is being given to how any new construction will impact those sites and how the town can better utilise its allotments and park at Churchfield Recreation Ground and improve connections to the two churches, St James’ Church and Christ the Prince of Peace, as well as local schools, area museums and green spaces.

The project even envisions the possibility of a new town square or plaza as a result of future redesigns, as this would contribute to the feeling of Weybridge at last having a recognisable town ‘centre.’ Whatever the final look there will certainly be an emphasis on high quality architecture and landscaping, as architects already working alongside the project are looking at various ways to make the two sites work together as one coherent whole.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

For a long time we called it WRAP – the Weybridge Rebuild and Advance Project. Now that phase is over, and it’s a bigger and broader project with health care and wellbeing, town centre regeneration, reviving community spirit, and much more.

We need a new name for this effort, to capture all the themes and keep up enthusiasm, and we’re hoping our members and all residents can help.

We’ve bandied about a few catchy titles (some options that go easily with a social media hashtag), but we need to know what you think. It’ll be a name you’ll be hearing a lot over the next few years, so it’s got to be great and something that will stick!

#WellBeingWeybridge    #WayBetterWeybridge
#ReviveWeybridge       #RenewWeybridge

Can you add any more? Have a strong preference? Send us feedback and original thoughts to hubfeedback@weybridgesociety.org.uk

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For more than 65 years, the Weybridge Society has worked for Weybridge. Now, more than ever, our volunteers need your help to keep our town a great place to live and work.

Support us as we keep you informed of events and issues that affect your community. Your contribution helps us work for the common good, and as a member you’ll receive dedicated emails with local news you can use.

The QR code alongside goes to our website joining page or visit weybridgesociety.org.uk/join/. At just £8 a year for individuals or £12 for two at the same address, it’s a small but valuable donation to our charity, so join today!
DELIVERING THE VISION – HOW IT WORKS

From a practical standpoint, the Weybridge town centre regeneration project entails building a place – several buildings and areas that function together – to house GPs and other NHS services, Elmbridge and Surrey services, and a new 21st century library as a centre for the community, including co-working areas, café and other flexible spaces, services and provisions not yet imagined.

The project is open now and in future to changing circumstances and new ideas and participants – people who have great ideas for activities that they want to realise in the new space. Our future town centre can only be socially and economically successful if the project makes sure from the start that once any space is built, it will be filled with entrepreneurs and employees coming to work, young people gathering to study and socialise, older people connecting through activities and families spending their leisure time.

To deliver this vision for a joined-up regeneration – getting from ethos to construction – the project will plan and build the ‘centre’ that Weybridge sorely lacks. In tandem, it will reach out to all in the community to revive a sense of unity and enthusiasm and participation. Enthusiastic individuals coming forward to generate ideas and help realise them will be key to the success of this project.

Delivering the vision could mean adopting a campus-type approach of contemporaneous, phased construction on both sides of Church Street, focusing on but not limited to the old hospital site (and its boundaries with housing and St Charles Borromeo/Prince of Peace) and Churchfields (library, car park and boundaries towards park and St James.) It will also need to factor in access via footpaths, cycle paths, street traffic and town flow to major arterial roads.

A team is delivering this large and complex project. Lord Andrew Mawson, executive chairman of Well North Enterprises, a social enterprise helping to navigate and deliver the Weybridge town regeneration project, is the Project Chairman. He was named by the Surrey County Council Leader and Councillor for Weybridge Tim Oliver, who is also on the steering Project Board.

They named local resident and Weybridge Society editor Lesia Scholey to be Project Champion to lead the work of connecting with various local groups. She reports to the steering Project Board and sits on all task groups, manages engagement with the design team and coordinates with those delivering specific elements, from business to communications. She will be instrumental in identifying local needs and new ideas and activities to bring into the project, as well as communicating with the Weybridge community on the project’s progress.

Two sizeable Task & Finish groups are charged with operational tasks, with the Project Board taking overall responsibility and making strategic decisions. Task & Finish Group 1 broadly deals with communications, vision and design, while Task & Finish Group 2 deals with organisational, business and finance matters. The task groups include key individuals from various local authorities, NHS services and active members of the Weybridge community, including members of the Society.

The initial stages of town planning and design are already underway, and more information will be forthcoming in the new year as the project progresses. Get ready for much more news in 2021!
THE CHANGING FACE OF HEALTH CARE

Just after we entered lockdown in March, behind the scenes a less noticeable but still very significant NHS organisational change took place in Surrey. Our local North West Surrey Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) merged with three other CCGs to form a new Surrey Heartlands CCG. This CCG now covers the majority of the county and handles the planning and buying of health services for over 1 million people (about 75% of Surrey), with an annual budget of about £1.5 billion.

The CCG is part of the Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership along with all the area’s NHS hospitals and community health providers, together with Surrey County Council as the social care provider. Working together, the partners aim to transform health and care services and support people to live healthier lives.

Although it spans a wide area, Surrey Heartlands still manages to focus on more local geographies like ours in North West Surrey (NWS) through a more targeted grouping called an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). There are four ICPs, and each is a grouping of all local health and care organisations, plus borough councils and the voluntary/community sector. Each ICP is developing its own priorities, reflecting the different needs of its local population and looking at how its partners will work together differently in the future.

Both Surrey Heartlands and the ICPs are working to implement local plans based on the national strategies of NHS England. One of those strategies has been in progress for some time – a long term programme to transform how all GP practices operate.

ADAPTING TO COVID

While one might have expected the COVID pandemic to slow down NHS reforms, in fact, we have seen strands of transformational work implemented in double-quick time. For example, within weeks the CCG was able to offer GP practices a new website facility, enabling online patient interaction. This was taken up by over 90% of the practices in Surrey Heartlands.

Much of our contact with GPs is now being done on-line, or by phone and text. Face-to-face appointments with clinicians are generally only available after an initial telephone assessment (triage) by a GP, following a patient request using an online form or by a phone call.

Our local practices and patients are finding the new approach beneficial. Doctors can handle more interactions, with a proportion being re-directed to another clinician or service like a nurse or pharmacist, and patients are often experiencing faster access to care.

Data shows that patient demand for services initially lessened during the first lockdown, giving the GPs time to adapt to the new demands of COVID and new ways of working. However, from summer onwards, pent-up demand rapidly increased to levels greater than pre-COVID.

Among other adaptations in the healthcare work environment, during the
pandemic actions were taken locally to maintain GP surgeries as ‘cold sites’, i.e. COVID free. Therefore, any patients with COVID symptoms are redirected to be seen at a ‘hot site,’ a section of Walton Hospital manned by staff from the local practices. Another change was that evening and weekend appointments were stopped because of safety issues and the already high staff workload.

Many shifts in working practices also took place at our local hospital trust, Ashford & St. Peters. It too moved to more online and phone contact, reducing the numbers going to the hospital sites. Currently 80% of the trust’s consultations are now ‘virtual’ using their Attend Anywhere easy-to-use video consultation service. With the onslaught of COVID, the trust also moved a number of services from St Peters to Ashford, with Ashford working as a ‘cold site’ to protect both staff and patients, where more face-to-face consultations now take place.

What can we expect for the future?

With GPs, the new system of pre-appointment assessment or triaging is here to stay, so we should expect it to be the new norm.

Primary Care Networks (PCNs) are another new way of working that will change the way GPs and other professionals offer care locally. PCNs are groups of typically four or five GP practices, which together with other providers, operate at a local level to plan and buy care for their patients. Over time they are expected to provide a wider range of services across their combined populations and are important partners within the local Integrated Care Partnerships.

More changes are also happening with regards to access to urgent care. From December 2020, under the slogan ‘Think 111 First’, the NHS 111 telephone service in Surrey begins to triage patients and directly book appointments for them into A&E. It is hoped this innovation will reduce patient waiting times for those pre-booked. Locally in NW Surrey we have already had this service of pre-booked appointments for the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) at St. Peters, which for much of the day acts as a walk-in ‘front-end door’ to A & E. The 111 service also continues to direct patients to alternative urgent services, like the out-of-hours doctors at Woking and Ashford.

With our hospitals, we can assume that online outpatient consultations are here to stay, and that more face-to-face consultations will move into community settings. The future face of health care will be one in which hospitals will be largely for those seriously ill, with outpatient hospital visits for major tests and diagnostic procedures, whilst more care is provided locally in the community. The focus will also shift greatly towards preventative care and wellbeing and healthy living more generally, which in turn will mean a more joined-up approach with social care.

The impact of these changes on patients is that they should receive ever more joined-up health care now and in the future, helping everyone improve their personal health and wellbeing.

In Weybridge, we are now fortunate to have the opportunity to look further still at an even more integrated development, as our town regeneration scheme not only envisions re-provisioning health and social care services but will also pay attention to big health determining factors in our area like access to employment, housing, green spaces and a community that works together and looks after all its members.

The future face of physical and mental health and wellbeing will involve everyone not only having more control over their own care but also the opportunities to live their best, healthy life.
OUR GPs AND COVID-19
HOW WORK HAS CHANGED FOR CHURCH STREET AND ROWAN TREE

Like many organisations looking after their own employees and the people they serve, Church Street Practice and Rowan Tree Practice have been overwhelmed by the COVID pandemic this year. Both practices have remained open throughout, however, with their services swiftly evolving to keep patients and staff safe whilst ensuring that patients' most pressing needs have been met.

At the same time as taking on new ways of working, the practices have had to reduce staffing levels, in both clinical and administrative areas, to ensure that social distancing is maintained. The disruptions to services were most acute at the start of the first lockdown, but by September, the practices had reinstated most services and have continued to provide them during the second lockdown and into the tier system.

Both practices manage most GP patients without the need for face-to-face appointments, in order to reduce their risk of contracting any kind of infection. Patients with COVID symptoms requiring an examination may be asked by a GP to attend the Acute Illness Clinic at Walton Community Hospital, which is well-equipped to manage the risk of infection. Patients cannot self-refer to this service and can only attend following a discussion with a practice GP.

DIGITAL CONSULTATIONS
Church Street Practice had been planning to introduce a new interactive website in 2020 to enable patients to contact them quickly and easily and reduce waiting times for phone calls coming in to the practice. This process was sped up to enable the practice to provide a better service for its patients given limitations brought about by the pandemic. As it was quiet back in April, the practice took the opportunity to implement this change.

Many patients have been exploring this website, and generally feedback has been very positive. Church Street continues to encourage patients to look at the website and see what is available. Patients can access reception or a clinician to ask for advice or ask a question, request prescriptions and results, query referrals, self-refer to services for support with bereavement, mental health and smoking cessation. Of course, if patients don't have access to the internet they can still phone in and continue to organise prescriptions from a pharmacy as before.

The change was implemented quickly, and whilst it has had some teething problems, overall a much quicker and more streamlined service is being provided. The practice welcomes any feedback, positive or negative.

Whilst COVID-19 has created significant challenges for the practice, the whole team have risen to that challenge and developed many new ways of working, which we believe provides our patients with a quicker, more efficient service and
so a better experience,’ said Catherine Makepeace, Practice Manager at Church Street Practice.

Meanwhile, Rowan Tree Practice is managing patient requests via a combination of phone and email service, which are managed between 8.30 and 6.30 daily. All requests are acknowledged and then triaged to the admin or clinical teams who manage the footfall appropriately. However, the system for patients requiring a consultation with a GP remains via the telephone triage system.

At Rowan Tree all requests are managed ‘on the day’ by the clinical team, with most patient concerns being treated efficiently via telephone or video consultation. If a GP decides the patient needs a face-to-face appointment, they are invited into the practice for a consultation the very same day. As with Church Street, all patients calling with COVID symptoms are directed to the Acute Illness Clinic based at Walton.

Whilst there have been occasions when the telephone lines are busy, especially during mornings, the new system at Rowan Tree has also generally worked well and is very popular with its patients. Services will be enhanced further in the New Year as Rowan Tree introduces a new interactive website in February 2020.

‘Following the announcement of COVID-19 measures, the Rowan Tree team quickly worked together to introduce revised working schedules and a new administration system to ensure doctors, patients and staff stayed safe,’ said Jill Tallick, Practice Manager at Rowan Tree Practice. ‘Our patients have continued to have access to medical care seamlessly throughout these challenging times.’

Patients of both practices can also access LIVI, a partner of the NHS that works with primary, community and acute providers and provides on-screen consultations.

Dr Caroline Baker, Chief Executive of North West Surrey Integrated Care Services, has highly recommended LIVI in our area, both to patients and GPs, as LIVI teams are very responsive to local needs in terms of working within prescribing frameworks and making referrals to the same standards.

**SITE ISSUES**

One issue when visiting the site is accessing the surgery during COVID restrictions. Many find it frustrating that they can no longer ‘pop in’ as the main doors are locked to keep all staff and patients safe.

At the main entrance, patients are requested to speak to a receptionist via the two intercom systems. Patients are asked to dress appropriately for the weather, as once they’ve arrived on site and are logged into the system, they may need to wait outside to be called in for the consultation. The practices advise people to leave a mobile telephone number, then if the weather is poor, wait in the car or nearby covered area until being called into the building by a clinician.

**DEMAND**

As demand for services is still high, the practices appreciate patients using other services as appropriate, especially out-of-hours.

Church Street assures its patients that once a request has been made via the website, there is no need to phone in. As long as you have received an acknowledgement via email, your query is being processed.

Patients are not encouraged to visit the surgery unless they have an appointment. But both practices are open and ready to help, so people should contact them if they need medical assistance.
TREATMENT ROOM
Earlier this year CSH Surrey, the local community health service provider, decided to stop providing Treatment Room services for local GP practices and left at the end of August.

In September, Rowan Tree and Church Street practices began providing services in-house using a new healthcare assistant and other members of their respective nursing teams. Blood tests, ECGs, blood pressures, simple wound dressings and removal of stitches and clips can now be booked directly with the practices, either via the website or by telephone.

PRIMARY CARE NETWORKS
For the last couple of years GPs have been encouraged to form groups called Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to work together to share ideas. Church Street Practice and Rowan Tree Practice are in a network together with Hersham Surgery and Fort House Surgery in Walton. The practices are very like-minded and enjoy working together, and so far they’ve shared thoughts on managing end-of-life care and various prescribing issues. They share the employment of a clinical pharmacist supporting the GPs on medication issues and now are focussing on cancer care and support for patients with learning difficulties.

NEW HEALTH CENTRE BUILDING
Like patients, the GPs and staff eagerly await further progress. Whilst the process of planning a new building has proved protracted, the practices are very much involved and have recently agreed with the NHS an overall schedule of the accommodation that they anticipate needing. Those requests are being given priority in the broader regeneration project for the town of Weybridge.
LETTER FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

I trust you have continued to remain well since my last letter and have managed to survive not only any cases of COVID but the latest lockdown. Although current death rates are of major concern, the recent announcements on vaccines gives us hope, and maybe some of you will have already received your first jab as you read this letter. We must marvel at the speed with which the world-wide pharmaceutical industry has risen to the challenge, but we must also continue to be vigilant, especially over the Christmas period and holidays well into 2021. We should not undo all the sacrifices we have made to date, especially as the promise of return to some form of normality is only a few months away.

In any case, 2021 will mark a significant year for Weybridge, as we soon hear about detailed plans for our new town centre and community hub and the publication of the draft Local Plan by Elmbridge. No doubt you have read our headline article on the prospects for the regeneration of the town centre. I appreciate that there is a degree of frustration about the time it has taken to get to this stage. At our AGM in 2018 I announced that the Society proposed that the NHS and Surrey County Council should work together to build a community hub, rather than just replace the medical facilities that had burnt down and separately refurbish the library building. Since then we have made several proposals as to how this community hub could be realised. We have also been involved with the new project team discussing the way forward. Since my last letter in the summer, there has also been a dramatic and welcome change in the direction that the project is being taken. More details are given throughout this issue on various aspects of the regeneration project and how it fits in with wider trends, so please give this your attention if you have not already done so. I believe this new direction is a significant and welcome improvement to the outline schemes proposed by the Society in the past. I would also like to congratulate our editor Lesia Scholey for being named Project Champion for the Weybridge regeneration project. In this community liaison and communications role, she will be more than able!

Looking ahead to 2021, we will see the publication of the draft EBC Local Plan which will cover a 15-year period and outline the blueprint of where new housing will be built within Elmbridge borough. It is not known at the time of writing what target building figure will be adopted to form the basis of the draft plan. The original target figures given by the Government and its latest revision have been the subject of much criticism locally and by many MPs. The Government has recently conceded that the algorithm
being used to calculate housing targets was flawed. We will have to wait for the publication of the draft to hear what target figure has been set. After publication there will be a six-week representation period, followed by submission to the Planning Inspector and a public hearing sometime after. The Plan should be adopted in 2022. The Society will of course be making detailed comment on the plan, and all members are encouraged to do the same. We will advise members when the draft is published.

On an issue related to town centre improvements, many of you will be aware of the work being undertaken on the footpaths in the allotments/Churchfields area. This is a welcome initiative which will improve the footpaths and make them suitable for shared use by both pedestrians and cyclists. The Society understands some pedestrians have reservations due to the aggressive behaviour of a few cyclists. No doubt cyclists will have similar views from their perspective. To try and resolve some of these concerns the Society, under the leadership of one of our newest executive board members, Sally Bean, is setting up a Partnership to determine the best solution to address these concerns. More about this in the new year, any comments should be sent to footpaths@weybridgesociety.org.uk

Elsewhere in this issue of the magazine, you will see that we have recruited two ex-Elmbridge councilors to strengthen our Planning Panel. This is highly welcome, and we are always looking for new members to help strengthen all our areas of activity and our voice with local authorities. If you would like to help the Society in any role, then please contact me or any committee member.

Recently we found some old editions of the Society’s newsletter going back 40+ years – interesting reading! One of our members, historian Anne Wright, is undertaking a review which will throw some light on how life and issues within Weybridge have changed over the years. I suspect some of the issues that concern residents now were around 40 years ago. One of these is infrastructure (in particular, traffic congestion) which I note is also the second priority of Ben Spencer our local MP. I wondered, why hasn’t it been resolved thus far? Is it in the ‘too difficult’ category? Maybe the current COVID experience will make us more aware that some travel is not needed, for example more working from home. Maybe we can walk or cycle rather than drive to the shops. Will other technology advances reduce the strain on our infrastructure? Is any significant respite achievable for our local infrastructure, on either the demand or supply side? If you have any views, please send them to me.

At this moment we are embarking on a hugely different Christmas and New Year festive period from years past. No doubt many of you, like Lorraine and myself, will miss being with our extended families, especially children and grandchildren with all the excitement that they bring. Despite this may I wish you a merry Christmas and happy and healthy new year.

Keep safe and kind regards,
Dave Arnold
Chairman
chairman@weybridgesociety.org.uk

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Even in the midst of pandemic, or perhaps because sacrifices these days are more poignant than ever, the Weybridge Society rose to the occasion of Remembrance Sunday and commemorated the hardships of war.

A wreath was laid privately by the Chairman and Treasurer of the Society at 2 pm on 8 November, Remembrance Sunday, at the Weybridge War memorial, at Temple Market.

We thank everyone for their support and hope that next year we can hold a more public ceremony. Stay well, stay safe and stay strong!

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WEYBRIDGE KEEPS BLOOMING

It's been an exceptional year for most community groups, but especially one as active and outdoorsy as Weybridge in Bloom. Due to COVID restrictions and guidelines, WiB was unable to host a single public group event in 2020, but that didn't stop the group from making progress on a number of projects!

Continuing its quest to beautify public areas, WiB was fortunate enough to obtain three planters from Coala, the contractors working on improvements to Heath Road. Two planters were placed outside Waitrose and the third outside Morrisons, and now they feature plants managed by the WiB team.

Preparing for spring 2021, WiB also worked hard on the wild flower bed at Churchfields, planting spring bulbs, plug plants, Cowslips, Oxeye Daisies, Teasels, Wild carrots, Fritillaria Muscari and Naricissus Hawera. The group also planted bulbs along the new footpath on Heath Road, which should be a joyful sight in spring for all students from Heathside and Brooklands College, as well as commuters accessing Weybridge station who use the path.

Spring bulbs were also planted at Boundary Park in Oatlands. This park attracted many dog owners and walkers from outside the area during lockdown, and hopefully the 2021 bloom will brighten moods and remind people how communities came together to help each other during the pandemic. A few passers-by and residents even joined team members to help with planting, abiding by social distancing and guidelines.

WiB’s most exciting project for 2020-21 was planning and preparing the beds near the ‘Welcome to Weybridge’ sign on the way in from Addlestone. Just as that task was completed, WiB heard the fantastic news that it won permission and funding from Elmbridge Borough Council and Surrey Highways to enhance and improve the areas surrounding the top of Monument Hill. This will be a major project for the new year, in partnership with the Weybridge Society and the Weybridge Town Business Group.

Before 2020 ends, WiB reminds all of the ‘Best Dressed Christmas Window’ competition for local businesses. It's back again, and the group hopes Weybridge looks and feels extra magical this year. Wishing a very happy and festive season, WiB invites everyone to please follow their Facebook page @weybridgeinbloom. For more information or membership please see allaboutweybridge.co.uk.
Best Dressed Christmas Window 2020

Weybridge in Bloom is once again running its popular ‘Best Dressed Christmas Window” competition!

This competition is open to all Weybridge non-retail and retail businesses – all they need to do is register interest and dress up their shop windows. Entry is free and the competition works according to these steps:

Email competition@weybridgeinbloom.org.uk and express interest in taking part by 16 December.

Decorations must include flowers or plants for it to be eligible for participation in the WiB competition.

Judges are visiting all shop windows on 19 December, with Andy Richardson judging on behalf of the Weybridge Society. Winners are announced the same day. Find out which shop won via the Society’s email newsletter Bulletin, the Society’s website and on the website: allaboutweybridge.co.uk/weybridge-in-bloom

Make Weybridge look and feel extra magical at Christmas!
If you’re a shop owner and missed it for 2020, look out for next year’s competition as WiB hopes to make it an annual event.

Congratulations to last year’s winner, Collections hair and beauty salon on Queen’s Road, with a peek at this year’s window!
REVIVING WEYBRIDGE
BUILDING BACK GREENER

As you’ve read elsewhere in this issue, it will take a team to deliver Weybridge’s town centre regeneration. But it will also take a village – we’ll need all local residents to support the project and get involved!

One of the key areas that will depend on widespread participation to make our regeneration a success is ‘build back greener’ – increasing availability and accessibility of green spaces and making them active spaces where people come to work and play and give back to the community. So ‘build back greener’ is not an empty catch-phrase or something that rests on the authorities to pay for and provide – realising this vision requires interested and dedicated individuals to come to the fore and take part!

Green spaces are undoubtedly a valued source of wellbeing. When individuals seek time and solace in nature, a solitary walk or run in fresh air among beautiful vistas and majestic trees can quickly lift spirits or provide valuable time to think and sort problems. But the benefits of green spaces can be even more powerful and have wider impact on wellbeing when people come together.

And a problem shared can be a problem halved – not to mention that whilst socialising, schemes like outdoor clean-ups, beautifying the neighbourhood with planting and growing fresh food can help make a dent into much bigger problems like pollution and climate change, whilst benefiting the neighbourhood and local environment.

As Daniel Cook, CEO of the Landscape Institute told the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS): ‘For every £1 spent on park maintenance, we get £7 of health, climate and environmental benefits back.’ The Institute’s latest report on delivering a sustainable recovery calls on the Government to invest urgently in public landscapes like parks, with a view to building a more resilient green workforce and to address the sector’s skills shortages. And because employment, education and environment are among the critical factors underpinning mental health, it makes treble sense to invest in sustainable green jobs – that’s joined-up thinking!

Weybridge is already fortunate to have several organisations that work in nature, bringing people together to accomplish valuable tasks from planting in public spaces to providing shared company: Weybridge in Bloom, the Churchfields and Oatlands...
allotments and Men’s Shed. On a mental health note, we can also count the many local groups that take advantage of the great outdoors for sport and friendship, like our bowling, rowing and cricket clubs.

But the success of Weybridge’s town centre regeneration project will depend on even more groups coming to the fore – new organisations, volunteers and initiatives working together.

For example, in future (or even now), could Weybridge see something like the National Citizen Development (NCS) personal development programme for 16-17 year olds taking part in local public gardening or food growing? Already one RHS team has teamed up with the Salford Foundation, a charity offering young people opportunities for a better future, to host young people at RHS Garden Bridgewater. Teenagers made and installed bird and bat boxes, learned about plants and got engaged in a wide variety of activities.

Might there be scope for a similar link up between Weybridge garden and youth groups and our local RHS Wisley?

How about a regular Broadwater path clean-up brigade, engaging nearby schools like St James and St Georges Junior School? Or something similar near our new cycle and pedestrian paths, woods and public greens, with Heathside and Brooklands students involved? What if we can get dedicated groups of younger – or older, or any aged – people running a big food growing project from our allotments that can end up in a weekend fresh produce market? What about a grow-your-own scheme specially aimed at frontline workers who have born the mental health strain of dealing with COVID? What about encouraging GPs and other medical professionals to keep ‘social prescribing’ in mind, advocating gardening and organised walks to aid mental health in our community and pointing people in the right directions to existing local groups?

There are many reasons to dream big, as our town centre regeneration project holds out all kinds of opportunities. The key thing is not to wait for buildings to go up or for fencing to come down, but to start small and start right away to build the links that bring people together and get them to meet in our new public space. We won’t have an integrated health and social care system or a sense of community if we don’t ourselves reach out to others.

Do you have a great idea for building back greener in our community? Want to join an existing group and get involved? The time is NOW. Send your thoughts and suggestions to magazine@weybridgesociety.org.uk or get in touch with any of the groups named in the article above. Happy outdoor outreach everyone!
SOCIETY WELCOMES NEW RECRUITS TO KEY ROLES

Executive Committee
The Society is pleased to announce that Sally Bean has agreed to join the Executive Committee. Sally has been managing the Society’s Twitter account for some time and is currently leading an initiative on shared-use paths in Weybridge. She is also a Neighbourhood Watch Street Coordinator.

Sally has lived with her husband in Weybridge for 30 years and across the river in Sunbury-on-Thames for 15 years before that. Recently retired, Sally has a background in information systems planning and business change design, including 25 years at British Airways and 20 years as a freelance consultant.

Sally has also been active in many professional communities. She enjoys looking at situations from many angles, seeing the bigger picture and thinking round corners. This is coming in very handy when contributing her thoughts and ideas to the town centre regeneration project!

Planning Panel
One of the Society’s key activities is assessing planning applications and other development topics that arise, such as Elmbridge’s Local Plan. The Society has a well-earned, stellar reputation for making detailed assessments in a professional and objective manner. Our output depends on people who are familiar with detailed technical planning matters and who are willing to work on these issues of promoting a better environment, neighbourhood and community.

For many years, Raymond Spary has made a massive contribution as Chairman of the Panel, and to help him we’ve recruited others. In our last issue, we announced that Kay Williamson has joined the Panel and agreed to take on the role of co-chair alongside Raymond. The Society is now delighted to announce that two ex Elmbridge Borough Councillors, Brian Fairclough and Michael Freeman, have also joined the panel. Their joint experience of the workings of EBC Planning matters will add a wealth of knowledge and enable the Panel to dig in more detail into the three Weybridge wards: Riverside, Oatlands and St Georges.

The Planning Panel has now been re-organised with Raymond as overall co-ordinating chairman, and Kay Williamson, Michael Freeman and Brian Fairclough acting as co-chairs responsible for the Oatlands, Riverside and St George’s wards, respectively.

Brian Fairclough spent 25 years at The Economist travelling much of the world and is now a Trustee with responsibility for their Pension Fund and a member of the Investment Committee. He also spent 12 years in the City working in Private Client Asset Management.

Retiring early, Brian spent four years as a local councillor representing St George’s Hill ward. He served on all of
the main committees including the main Planning Committee. He has worked for The Officers’ Association (part of the Royal British Legion) for 26 years as an Honorary Representative and has lived in Weybridge for 24 years.

Michael Freeman came to Weybridge in 1994 and soon afterwards got involved with local issues. He served as a Chairman of the Portmore Park and District Residents Association for a number of years, and later became a councillor for Weybridge Riverside, standing down in 2019. Michael brings insight to planning from his time on both the South Area and Full Planning Committees at Elmbridge. He is currently a Trustee of the Weybridge Charity.

Michael’s background was in engineering, business finance and planning and senior management, before going on to a career in management consultancy. Now retired, he knows the rivers around Weybridge very well. If you see a punt or sailing boat go by, it just might be him.

2021 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

WE NEED EVERYONE IN WEYBRIDGE TO JOIN THE SOCIETY NOW!

WHY? Only our registered members get our emails with the latest news!

Be part of the conversation and KNOW WHAT’S REALLY HAPPENING in WEYBRIDGE!

WHEN? Do it NOW! We need everyone on board as soon as possible!

Join and be part of the debate on transforming Weybridge’s town centre!

We’re always on the case helping Surrey and Elmbridge councils set direction for local initiatives. We’ve not only saved key buildings in the past and shaped policies on everything from parking to planning, we’re influential on how Weybridge will look in the future!

ALREADY a member? Then talk to a neighbour, friend or acquaintance – let them know about all the good the Society does and urge them to join!

Joining is as simple as clicking on the Join Us link on our website!

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

See our website, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook!

OUR AIM IS TO BRING WEYBRIDGE TOGETHER AS A REAL COMMUNITY with the Society representing ALL residents, so help us to help you – enrol as a member today!
Over the years there’s been more than a little confusion when visitors – or even residents – try to refer to central parts of Weybridge. There’s ‘town centre’ – which some say doesn’t truly exist, due to lack of amenities and a central meeting place, and anyway, we’re building one now – roughly in the area defined by Church Street, Baker Street and the High Street. Then there’s ‘south’ and ‘north’ Weybridge, terms hardly ever used nowadays but sometimes spotted on a forlorn sign or marking. We’ve even heard ‘downtown Weybridge’ for the shops, and ‘lower Weybridge’ for the whole area not higher up in Oatlands, approximately from the river area around Hamm Court up to the top of Monument Hill.

But there is a reference that works: Weybridge Riverside. It’s the authority-designated area that stretches from the border of Cowey Sale in the north, down to the main station car park in the south. Its other boundaries lie along Hanger Hill and Queen’s Road – down the middle – with the south side of each road in adjacent Weybridge St George’s Hill ward. And those who make Riverside work are its three borough councillors, currently Vicki Macleod, Ashley Tilling and Andrew Davis.

Riverside came into being in 2016 when Elmbridge Borough Council downsized itself from 60 to 48 councillors. For Weybridge, this meant a reduction in the number of wards and a redrawing of ward boundaries, with the former Weybridge South (ah, there it is) being split between the other two wards. As a result, Weybridge Riverside was born and gained its three councillors.

Within Weybridge Riverside are three primary schools, St James’, St Charles Borromeo and St Georges Junior, its main secondary state school Heathside and Brooklands College. It also includes three churches – St James’, Christ Prince of Peace and the Methodist Church, as well the Churchfields Recreation Ground with the allotments beyond.

The ward also houses the two GP practices, the Weybridge library and the town’s two supermarkets Waitrose and Morrisons, along with a host of smaller national chain stores and independent retailers and cafes. Recent independent newcomers include McLaren’s Fine Foods and Maya’s – a coffee shop and baker of superb and popular sourdough bread. The number of hair and beauty salons and estate agents are almost too numerous to count, so it’s a place rich in business and entrepreneurial and social activity.

Riverside, as its name implies, is also the heart of green space along the River Wey in Weybridge, so it’s a key environmental space in town as well. A network of paths leads out from Riverside’s streets and out along the waterways. Favourite paths include those along the Wey Navigation
Canal to Cox’s Lock and Weir, the Broadwater path, the towpath along the Thames from Weybridge Point to Cowey Sale and the towpath along the River Wey from Town Bridge to Whittet’s Ait.

The newest of these, the Broadwater path, opened in 2017 after fourteen years of dedicated work by neighbours of Broadwater Lake and three generations of local councillors, starting with Tim Crowther, followed up by Miles Macleod and brought to conclusion by Councillor Andrew Davis. What many don’t realise is that the path is essential for the future of the lake itself. Without formal public access, the lake would not qualify for the public funding needed to stop it silting up. In 2018, the Broadwater Conservation Society was awarded funding to carry out some dredging and to complete a survey of works needed – a necessary precursor to any bid for the substantial funding needed to preserve the lake. The path ensued, but preservation of the lake is a long-term project. In the meantime Weybridge walkers and off-road cyclists have benefitted from this beautiful path – especially during lockdown!

Another recent Riverside path upgrade is the work along the shared-use path along Heath Road to Brooklands Business Park, as part of the Brooklands Accessibility Project run by Surrey County Council. This path now provides a secure foot and cycle way from the station for those who need to commute and is much used as a lockdown exercise route. This work on shared foot and cycle ways will now be extended to take in a safe route to the town centre via Churchfields Path and will become a critical link in the new town centre regeneration project.

There’s much to love about Weybridge Riverside, and especially to look forward to with the new regeneration project, but there are also challenges. The ward-specific challenges, taken up by its three representative councillors, are transport and parking and planning applications for new developments.

On the transport front, the biggest issue is the A road running right through the heart of our town. Residents suffer the blight of congested streets and poor air quality, and it’s often been suggested that it would be a major transformation for Weybridge town centre if the through-traffic heading for the M25 and the A3 could be rerouted. Many would love to reclaim the High Street and Church Street for more pedestrian-friendly ways of life.

With regard to planning, unfortunately national laws sometimes come up against good local sense. Preserving character of neighbourhoods is an endless battle, but worth it. So too is the struggle for accessible priced housing. A bright hope is that renewed energy for joined-up working and a revival of community spirit inspired by the new regeneration project will help these issues gain traction and maybe even some solutions. Stay tuned for more about Weybridge’s riverside and green spaces in our upcoming spring/summer issue!

**ENJOY WHAT YOU SEE? GOT THIS ISSUE FOR FREE?**

If you find the Society’s information on planning useful and you know of a new application for development in your neighbourhood, do get in touch with our planning panel (see last page for contact details).

We’re happy to help, and even happier if you become a member, so you can receive our monthly email Bulletins updating residents on the latest planning developments. News you can use! Sign up and become a Weybridge Society member today!
PLANNING UPDATE

The following information is summarised from the Weybridge Society’s Planning Panel’s records and actions taken at our regular meetings. Developments are mostly listed in order from the longest running concerns to the most recent applications to Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC). Some are grouped by area, to make it easier to understand what’s happening in a particular neighbourhood.

We endeavour to make this update a true representation of the panel’s opinion and our actions and plans concerning local developments. This list is up to date at the time of writing, but for the latest and most accurate changes to planning, please consult EBC or our website at weybridgesociety.org.uk, where you can also check the Planning Update in previous newsletters for more background and history on individual cases.

2016/1448 - Monument View, Monument Hill. The Society continues to press Surrey County Council (SCC) councillors and officers for a solution to dangers posed to pedestrians crossing this junction at the top of Baker Street and Monument Hill. With the current restrictions on through-traffic in Baker Street, this danger has not been eliminated but is significantly reduced.

2019/3370 - Hillview Nursery, Seven Hills Road. Consent for a 64 unit care facility was approved by EBC’s Planning Committee on 16/07/2020. Subsequently a ‘For Sale’ board appeared on the parcel of land on northern boundary of this site (identified on the site layout plan as an orchard). Although this sale board has now been removed, an application has been submitted for the land on the southern boundary of this site (see below).

2020/2641 - Change of use from Garden Centre to Residential Curtilage (adjacent to Hillview Nursery). This application is for the parcel of land behind the cottage on the southern boundary of the Hillview Nursery land, which currently forms part of the Hillview Nursery. According to a letter submitted with the application, the intention is to simply extend the curtilage to the rear of the cottage land for use as garden land.

2018/3635 - 18 Springfield Lane, a four storey block of flats – Allowed on appeal. 2020/0848. 18 Springfield Lane. Application approved. This second application pertains to reserved matters in connection with landscaping for planning consent 2016/2803. In the Society’s view, this earlier scheme for seven houses and two flats is much preferred as it is more in keeping with the neighbouring Victorian cottages. Recently there have been signs of limited activity on this site but no sign of which of the two permitted schemes will be implemented. The Society’s view is that either of the consented schemes would be preferable to the current mess of building materials which must aggrieve local residents.

2018/2252 & 2019/2286 - Clive House, 12-18 Queens Road. As reported in our September email Bulletin, after many
anxious months and a lot of effort by members of Weybridge Society and others, we are delighted to confirm that the Planning Inspector dismissed both appeals brought by Pegasus Life.

The reason for dismissal was that the development’s impact on the character and appearance of the area – particularly the views of adjoining Salisbury House – would outweigh the benefit of providing additional specialist housing. Whilst this was a very welcome result, it wasn’t long before two further proposals for this important site were submitted. Both of the following applications seek to convert the existing commercial building into residential accommodation that is substandard. See next two items and read details in What’s in a Storey, p.31.

2020/2173 - Clive House, 12-18 Queens Road. An application seeking Prior Approval to convert from Office to Dwellings to provide 44 flats. The Society sent two objection letters. Our initial letter sent on 16 September highlighted the inadequate size of the proposed flats (each 30 m²) and lack of parking, while our second letter sent on 18 October was prompted by the Government’s announcement on 30 September concerning ‘minimum space standards’. These are now set at 37 m² for a one bedroom dwelling with a shower room, or 39 m² for a one bedroom flat with a bathroom. It is still disappointing that the law regarding ‘minimum space standards’ will not come into effect until 6th April 2021 and cannot be applied in this instance. A further concern is that in an area of severe parking stress, EBC considers that the provision of 22 car parking spaces for 44 dwellings is adequate.

2020/2340 - Clive House, 12-18 Queens Road. This application seeks Prior Approval for an additional storey to the existing commercial premises to create 20 dwellings. The applicants are using the government’s new ruling that two storeys can be added to an office building so long as it already sits three storeys above ground level. The Society sent a letter of objection on 21 October to point out that Clive House is not eligible for Prior Approval under this new ruling because clearly Clive House is a two storey building above ground. We requested that both 2020/2173 and 2020/2340 be linked because although the applicants are listed as separate developers, they share premises and directors and so clearly they are one and the same. Read our article ‘What’s in a Storey’ on page 31 to learn more about the outcome of the above Clive House applications. As we were about to go to press, three further applications were submitted as follows:

2020/2438 - Clive House, 12 – 18 Queens Road. This application seeks to increase the roof ridge height by 3.15 m to create an additional storey to accommodate nine flats. The applicant’s Design and Access statement suggests that the current office use for the existing two floors will remain. However, as can be seen from the following, this is probably not the case.

2020/3280 - Clive House, 12 – 18 Queens Road. This application is basically the same as the earlier refused application,
the key difference being that the number of flats in the basement has been reduced from five to three. Measuring at just 30m² all except one of the proposed 42 flats are well below the government’s ‘minimum space’ standard of 37m².

2020/3256 - Clive House, 12 – 18 Queens Road. A further Prior Approval application for 39 one bedroom 30m² flats. In this application the whole of the basement is designated as an amenity space.

2018/3023 and 2019/0657 - Wessex South Road. In support of local residents as well as the Triangle Residents Group (TRG), the Society provided a detailed objection to the three-storey block of nine flats as being unacceptable in scale, height and mass, as all of them were intrusive and out of character. The Society also expressed considerable concerns about the total inadequacy of parking as none was provided within the scheme. Application 2019/0657 was refused consent by EBC and was taken to appeal. Unfortunately, the Appeals Inspector sided with the developer and granted consent on appeal.

2020/2291 - Wessex, South Road. This is a Variation of Condition application in respect of planning permission 2019/0657 (nine flats) to increase the footprint of the permitted scheme so as to increase the floorspace of the flats. The developer is now seeking to further enlarge this overbearing and incongruous building. There are currently five objections, including one from Weybridge Society. Unfortunately EBC has recently granted consent for this variation. Further information on the many problems associated with this site can be found in previous issues of this magazine.

2019/0386 - St Catherine’s House, Beales Lane. In this case the developer proposes a very large three-storey block containing 20 maisonettes and eight units of social housing to replace a modest size care home building just opposite St Georges Junior School. This application was refused consent by EBC on 20/06/2019 and was then taken to appeal. Unfortunately, the Appeals Inspector sided with the developer and granted consent on 22/06/2020. Some work had been started on the site but has now been halted for quite some time.

2019/1576 and 2019/2670 - Land to rear of 41 Oatlands Chase. This application is linked to several items that follow, part of a long-standing effort by developers to build housing that will massively increase density at a particularly tricky junction (school area and lack of visibility). The Society objected to both applications for a terrace of three houses in the rear garden of 41 Oatlands Chase in the hope of preventing a slippery slope of destruction and development. Elmbridge’s planning subcommittee unfortunately decided to permit the second application.

2020/0090 - Variation of condition to Planning Consent 2019/2670 (see above - terrace of three houses) for the addition of a single-storey rear extension to each of the three dwellings was granted permission on 25/03/2020.

2020/0461 - 41 Oatlands Chase. This application to demolish the single detached house at 41 Oatlands Chase and replace
it with two detached properties, one three bedroom and one five bedroom each with rooms in the roof space was granted consent on 04/08/2020.

If a further application for a terrace of three dwellings in the garden of the neighbouring house at 43 Oatlands Drive (see below) is permitted, then, when coupled with these two schemes for 41 Oatlands Chase, the Society’s view is that these potentially seven additional properties will have a detrimental impact on the very busy Oatlands Chase/Oatlands Avenue junction at Cleves School. This is particularly the case, as two new access road off Oatlands Chase will be created to serve these back garden land developments.

In addition as previously argued, the character of the area which until now has featured spacious homes on sizeable plots with large ancient trees will be immeasurably changed. Whilst an earlier application for 41 Oatlands Chase, which also involved 39 Oatlands Chase (2018/2147) and included a block of 5 x 2 bedroom flats was dismissed on appeal, the Society maintains strong concerns with regard to similar ‘garden grab’ applications being submitted in the future.

2020/1524 - 43 Oatlands Chase. Currently under consideration by EBC, this proposal is for a terrace of three 3-bedroom houses with a separate access from Oatlands Chase following demolition of the garage serving 43 Oatlands Chase. This application reinforces the Society’s concerns expressed above.

The cases in Oatlands Chase demonstrate the dangers of overlooking any single application without tying it to wider developments. There is a repeated willingness by developers to chop and change a single plot in many ways, such that even though they were clearly prevented from building one large development, they nonetheless leave an objecting neighbourhood with a dense and inappropriate set of buildings, accomplished via piecemeal approach of many smaller applications.

2020/2971 - Land to the rear of 1 Oatlands Close. Multiple applications to turn part of the rear garden of 1 Oatlands Close into a building plot for an additional dwelling have rumbled on since 1965. While most of the applications sought to slice off half of the rear garden, one application proposed the demolition of the property at 1 Oatlands Close to be replaced with a block of ten flats. This, like all the others, received short shrift from EBC and whenever a refused application was taken to appeal, the Inspector sided with EBC by dismissing them.

After a lapse of many years and the removal of several mature trees from this garden, a new application has recently been submitted. In this instance the proposal is to construct what appears to be a detached house but is in fact a block of three flats, including one in the roof space, with access and paved parking areas from Oatlands Avenue. Local residents objected strongly to the previous proposals, and it is anticipated that the reaction to this latest scheme will be no different.

2019/1575 - St Marys Road, Working Men’s Club. Permission for a new three bedroom detached property with garage
located to the rear of the Working Men’s Club was granted planning consent on 17/08/2020.

2019/1781 - Petrol Station Brooklands Rd. The Society objected to this scheme in support of the 70 public objections on issues such as bright lighting, density and proximity to nearby houses. The officer’s report recommended that the application be permitted as ‘the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the development plan’.

The application was referred to the planning subcommittee by Councillor Peter Harman in the event that recommendation was to permit. We are pleased to report that while two Councillors abstained, the remainder voted unanimously to refuse this application at the recent Elmbridge planning meeting on the grounds that the ‘intensification of use, increase in scale and spread of development and siting of plant on the site would have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of the adjoining properties’ and that ‘the proposed development would result in an incongruous form of development by virtue of its scale and design’ which would be harmful on the character of the area and street scene’.

This is a very welcome result and a relief for the residents whose homes border this facility. However, we are now expecting the applicant to take this to appeal and/or to start a new modified application.

2019/2722 and 2020/0224 - Silvermere – Crematorium. The Society supported the views of more than 70 objectors in objecting to the original consultation from Surrey County Council (SCC). A considerable expansion to the existing business was sought by its owners. In a satisfactory conclusion, the development was refused, and the officer’s report, refusing the application, actually summarised the objection of the Society’s planning panel as follows: ‘The proposal would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. This would be contrary to the Framework where it states an essential characteristic of Green Belts are their openness.’ Elmbridge also refused the further consultation from SCC (2020/0224) on the same grounds.

2020/2215 - Silvermere Haven Pet Cemetery and Crematorium, Byfleet Road. The Society objected to this revised scheme which reduced the amount of land covered by the proposed buildings. On 29/09/2020 EBC also objected.

2019/1868 - 34 Marlborough Drive. This application sought to add a single house at the rear of the applicant’s garden on land that is part of common land and used by all neighbouring residents. This application also envisioned access to be provided by a private road owned by another group of houses.

The Society’s Planning Panel and many neighbouring residents in Marlborough Drive, as well as residents of Lakeside Grange, raised substantial objections. Fortunately, the application was refused, although the Society anticipates that a new application or appeal will be submitted.

The Society is concerned with some of the detail of how this application was treated by Elmbridge Borough Council’s planning department and is seeking to discuss this with Elmbridge in advance of another application or an appeal. Unfortunately, probably due to the current pandemic crisis, we have not received a reply from Elmbridge. If the application
is revised we will then consider the matter urgent.

**2020/0265, 0473, 1288 & 1333 - Former Café Rouge, 85 Queens Road.** The above applications were debated together by EBC sub-committee meeting held on 20/08/2020 with the following decisions:

- **2020/0265.** Application for 5 flats refused unanimously on grounds of the impact on street parking.
- **2020/0473.** Addition of a mansard roof to create an additional flat refused on grounds of the addition being detrimental to the host building.
- **2020/1288.** Three additional flats. Refused on grounds of impact on street parking.
- **2020/1333.** Extension to existing restaurant. Permitted unanimously.

The applicant has now taken the three refused applications listed above to appeal.

**2020/1492 - Land to the rear of 85 Queens Road.** The application to erect a two storey office building on the parcel of land behind the former Café Rouge was withdrawn on 28/07/2020.

**2020/2179 and 2020/2174 - Land to the rear of 85 Queens Road.** These two very similar applications for outline permission to erect a two storey office block on this parcel of land, which once served as a car park for Café Rouge, were both refused permission on 23/10/2020 on the grounds that the visual appearance would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. In addition, the zero parking provision would result in an increase in on-street parking stress detrimental to the amenities of local residents.

**2019/2892 - 15 Monument Hill (Morrisons).** This application for an extension to permitted delivery times received 37 letters of objection from the public. The application was withdrawn on 6/10/2020.

**2020/0691 - 8/14 Oatlands Drive.** This application is significant for Weybridge as it envisions the construction of three blocks containing 51 flats following demolition of four bungalows close to the very busy Walton Bridge/Oatlands Drive junction with a new access road adjacent to no. 16 Oatlands Drive.

Weybridge Society objected in support of 209 objectors to this scheme which was refused permission by the Planning Committee on 10/09/2020 on the grounds that the overall design, scale, appearance and form would result in a dominant form of development which would adversely impact the character of the area, as well as the lack of a completed legal agreement in respect of a contribution towards affordable housing. Although the Planning Officer’s recommendation was for refusal, several councillors voted to approve the scheme. Fortunately they were outnumbered.

**2020/1540 - 15A Castleview Road.** Two storey side extension to create three
dwellings following demolition of existing outbuildings. There were 34 objections to this scheme, which would create a terrace of dwellings not in keeping with the existing street scene of semi-detached properties. Any additional dwellings in this narrow residential road would create further parking stress. The application was refused at EBC’s sub-committee meeting on 11/11/2020.

2020/1560 - 1 Cranmer Close. This audacious application seeks to demolish a small bungalow and erect a two storey building with rooms in the roof space and basement to provide six flats. There were 101 objections to this scheme, including one from the Weybridge Society. Although submitted as a two-storey building, the accompanying documents show the building to be four storeys at the rear, including three flats at basement level.

A concerning aspect of this application was that the applicants sought pre-application advice from EBC and met a planning officer on site and at the Council’s offices. According to the applicants, the planning officer noted that a flatted scheme of six units may be possible! Fortunately, the officer who decided the outcome refused consent on 08/09/2020 because the overall design, scale, and appearance would result in a cramped, dominant and incongruous form of development. Also cited was the poorly designed parking layout.

2020/3052 - 1 Cranmer Close. As we went to press, another application for this site was received. The developer’s response to the previous refusal is to reduce the number of dwellings from six flats to four flats, plus one townhouse. Rooms in the roof space and a basement mean that that building will still be four storeys.

2020/1994 - Oatlands Park Hotel, Oatlands Drive. This application is for a two-storey building to provide a Conference Centre and Spa Facility together with an additional 36 bedrooms following demolition of Vale Cottages, the existing stable block and garages. Ten objections received to date mostly from residents of Vale Close, which abuts the site and sits at a significantly lower level. The Society has submitted a letter, which although objecting to the submitted scheme, does provide suggestions for overcoming some of the concerns expressed by the residents of Vale Close.

2020/2493 - Weybridge Allotments, Curzon Road, Weybridge. A feature article in the Spring/Summer 2020 edition of the Society’s magazine highlighted this proposal to construct a Men’s Shed on the Churchfields allotments. Put on hold due to the pandemic lockdown, the application is now live and is being considered by planners.

2020/0854 - St James Church Hall extension. With some regret, the Society’s Planning Panel lodged an objection, with the principal concern being the potential impact on safety due to the narrow width of the adjacent path (soon to become a shared cycle and pedestrian route) and sight lines. Guidance from the SCC consultee to planners explicitly does not take account of the change in designation from a mere footpath, but the extension itself is close to the edge of the shared path and risks making the path entrance at the end of Church Lane appear a bit ‘tunnel-like’ by removing some of the openness.

In the Society’s view, when seen by the public from the path, the extension also unfortunately gives an impression
of a featureless box ‘planted’ on the side of the Hall. Because of the points raised, the consultation period has been extended. In any case, with a broader town centre regeneration in the works, this area will likely be in or adjacent to future construction which may impact on it. The town centre regeneration project is in contact with the church to address these issues.

2020/2436 - Warehouse, 47 Thames Street. Low roof amendment refused.

2020/2821 - Warehouse, 47 Thames Street. This latest application seeks a Variation of Condition to planning permission 2015/4593, which was allowed on appeal.

The proposals for this site have a long history. Permission was originally refused and an appeal in 2014 was dismissed. Subsequently, the rules changed, and permission was granted under ‘permitted development’. The construction is ongoing, and the same arguments always resurface with each new proposed variation regarding impact on neighbours. The planning panel will be considering its response to this latest application, which seems to retain the features of previously rejected applications.

2020/2471 and 2020/2848 - Units 11 & 12 Wintersells Road, West Byfleet. Elmbridge is a statutory consultee for these latest applications with respect to a change of use to a Waste Transfer Station. There have been multiple applications for this facility in the past to which EBC has objected. EBC has also objected to the current applications, but the outcome will be decided by SCC.

2020/3204 - Benchmark House, 202 Brooklands Road. Earlier this year Prior Approval for a change of use from Offices to Residential for the two buildings known as Benchmark House was granted (2019/2606 and 2019/2567). That proposal was to create 90 dwellings in total. This subsequent application seeks to utilise the roof space to create a further 24 one and two bedroom dwellings. Existing parking bays and cycle stores will be retained, but no amenity space is provided.

2020/2483 - Abbey House, Wellington Way. This application for Prior Approval for a Change of Use from Offices to Residential to provide 52 one bed/studio apartments was recently refused consent because it could not be demonstrated that the proposal would provide an adequate provision of natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwelling houses. However, an earlier application for Abbey House (2020/1502) to provide 26 two and three bedroom apartments was granted Prior Approval for a Change of Use from Offices to Residential.

2020/3278 - Abbey House, Wellington Way. Following refusal of the above application, this one was submitted in December. It reduces the number of apartments from 52 to 48 in an effort to overcome EBC’s reasons for refusing 2020/2483.

Abbey House is in a prominent position on the Brooklands Road/Wellington Way corner close to the two office buildings known as Benchmark House. If the developers proceed to implement the consented schemes at Abbey House and Benchmark House, the combined number of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments created in this area of Brooklands would be 116.
Last summer, as many of us staggered out of first lockdown and tried for a while to focus on other things, a set of regulations was approved that may have serious implications for development in our communities.

The boringly titled but mightily dangerous Town and Country (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (England) Order 2015 came into effect on 31 August and increased the scope for developments that previously required full planning permission.

Developers were not slow to catch on. Clive House on Queens Road was one of their first targets. Two fresh applications for the site (2020/2173 and 2020/2340) emerged, seeking to circumvent the usual planning process by using the newly permitted development rights. How? Create tiny substandard flats.

WHAT’S IN A STOREY?

Clive House has already been the subject of several problematic planning applications over the last four years. All have been rejected after strong campaigns by local residents and appeals to the Planning Inspectorate.

The two new applications sought to create 44 and 20 flats respectively at 30 m² each. This came despite the Government’s announcement on 30 September 2020 that it intends to clamp down on proposed developments that offer dwellings below the Nationally Described Space Standard. That standard begins at a minimum of 37 m² of floor space for a new one bed flat, with a shower room, and 39 m² for one with a bathroom.

If creating shoebox dwellings were not enough, the second application (2020/2340) sought to build an additional storey on top of Clive House. This stretches the flexibility allowed by these new regulations beyond belief. Those regulations do not permit development on detached business or office premises if the building above ground level is less than three storeys in height.

So, Clive House’s developers argued that a small basement at one end of the building, which occupies less than a quarter of its footprint, constituted a third storey. This would come as a huge surprise to previous applicants, councillors, planning officials and the Inspectorate alike, who have been considering planning proposals for this site since the 1970s. It would also be a shock to residents and passers-by, who can clearly see the site’s principal elevations on Queens Road and York Road. By any plausible definition, Clive House is a two-storey building, and the application would therefore not fall within the permitted flexibilities.

Had Elmbridge allowed either of these developments to go ahead, the precedent that would be set would raise the prospect of overdevelopment that would forever undermine Weybridge’s local character. And the character of Queen’s Road would have been lost without this development ever contributing any significant affordable
housing or accommodation of an acceptable minimum standard.

The good news is that both applications were rejected. But it remains disturbing that the additional storey application was registered for consideration in the first place. Even more disturbing is that the official report did not take a strong stand over potentially sub-standard development, despite the Government’s clear expressed intentions. The key reason given for objection was basically the lack of light in the basement flats!

The Society believes developers should be left in no doubt that when the inevitable full planning application emerges, they will be in for a tough fight. More importantly, local planners should be clear with developers that ‘trying it on’ is not only a waste of their time and money but also a drain on the public purse. Weybridge does need good affordable accommodation, and therefore developers should be clearly steered towards keeping to rules, adding to quality housing stock and designing buildings sympathetic to the town.

As for the continuing story of the third storey, be very wary of detached buildings near you with tiny basement windows peeping above ground level. Seemingly if developers are left to their own devices, these sub-ground dwellings might become the slums of tomorrow.

THE NO.1 ESTATE AGENT IN WEYBRIDGE
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
DR BEN SPENCER MP

Former NHS mental health consultant Dr Ben Spencer was elected in December 2019 to represent the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency as a member of the Conservative Party. In Parliament, he is a member of the Work and Pensions Select Committee.

Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, most meetings now take place online, but I am still available if anyone should need to get in touch.

Wey Soc: So what brought you into politics generally and to run for Weybridge’s seat specifically?

Ben: One of the big frustrations of working as a doctor is being able to help people individually but not having the power to change issues with the system that drive some of the problems that people face. I realised that if, as an MP, I could improve issues around housing, opportunities for a great education and getting a job, it could make a real difference.

Regarding the selection, given the circumstances last year it was all a bit of a whirlwind, but who wouldn’t want to represent the constituency of Runnymede and Weybridge? It’s a fantastic place with wonderful and vibrant local communities, and I am delighted to live locally and represent the area.

Wey Soc: It’s fascinating that you mention straightaway that systemic issues like education, housing and employment have such a large bearing on health. This is something we’re working on as a Society – trying to get authorities to address the rep rovision of medical care in Weybridge with a broader integrated community approach. We’ll talk more about that in a bit, but just to follow up on your first days on the job. Were you at all daunted by following in Philip Hammond’s footsteps?

Wey Soc: Thanks for taking time to meet with us at this busy time, and apologies for not being able to do this over a cup of coffee at a local Weybridge café! Also thank you for coming to Weybridge back in August to attend our commemoration of the anniversary of the Duchess of York, are you in town often?

Ben: I was delighted to attend the commemoration, and yes, I am in Weybridge regularly, meeting residents, businesses and community groups, or just to pick up something from the high street. I was last here ‘officially’ to speak to local business owners in October.
Ben: Who could not be? They’re big shoes to fill! Philip was MP for 22 years and held key offices and did much for the constituency and the country. Following on from him, though, I was equally daunted just by being an MP. It’s a huge honour, privilege and responsibility. A lot of people contact me about all sorts of things and especially now in a crisis, many people are hurting. We have restrictions and impacts on businesses and families. It’s a difficult time for the country, which focuses me even more on the role of being an MP locally and nationally.

Wey Soc: What were your aims when you took office in 2019 as opposed to now? Has much moved on, or have priorities stayed the same, even with, or despite COVID? Can you talk about your work on the mental health admissions data bill – what’s the thinking behind it?

Ben: In December 2019, my priorities were to improve mental health, both locally and the national framework, to increase education funding, get the River Thames Scheme built and improve our infrastructure to support communities and businesses. These are still priorities, but obviously the pandemic has also changed our views, and helping residents and businesses through the pandemic has been absolutely the key issue for me this year.

For example, my aviation campaign has sought to bring in support and stability for the aviation sector and the thousands of jobs and businesses that rely on it. On the pandemic itself I am also calling for transparency on the science and data, so we can ensure we know the full impacts of proposed measures and make the best long-term decisions.

I have also continued to push for progress on the River Thames Scheme, which is now awaiting final approval from the Treasury. I am heavily involved in the Mental Health Act Review in Parliament, as well, and am working closely with Surrey County Councillor Tim Oliver to bring about local improvements to mental health services.

My Private Members Bill seeks to support this by requiring the publication of mental health admissions waiting time data. Until we have the detailed information about the scale of the problem, we cannot make informed decisions about the best way to deliver tailored support.

Wey Soc: On improving mental health, at a local level what are some of the things you’d like to see?

Ben: There are two main challenges when looking to improve mental health services. One is much needed improvements to inpatient facilities and services for those with mental illness. I am pleased that plans are already underway to address this, but we need to make sure this can be delivered as soon as possible.

The second area is improving joined-up working across the community. We need to see mental health services, community and voluntary groups and schools working in partnership to support those in need, boost their mental wellbeing and work to prevent issues developing into more complicated problems. This is not easy but being able to provide tailored support to those in need, when they need it, is the goal of everyone who has worked in or around mental health.

Wey Soc: Going back to COVID and aviation for a moment – trying to get travel
moving again, along with local jobs – what is the latest? What are the complex issues preventing resolution and getting people traveling again?

**Ben:** The key issues affecting aviation, and many businesses, is a lack of consumer confidence and ability of companies to plan for the future, given the uncertainties we all face from COVID. Introducing air corridors has helped, but the changing rates of COVID infections have meant frequent rule changes. I have been calling for testing air passengers to reduce quarantine times, as well as internationally agreed standards which can restore confidence in the safety of air travel and what passengers can expect when they return.

More broadly, I feel we need to support sectors which have been particularly affected by the pandemic, such as aviation, but also including events, like weddings, etc. I have also been calling for aviation support to be linked to sustainable development, in the hope that as the sector rebuilds, it is greener, cleaner and even better than before.

**Wey Soc:** Pandemic aside – if we can even say that – what do you see as Weybridge’s biggest need and what would you most like to fix?

**Ben:** I believe there are two priorities for Weybridge. First, we need to get the Weybridge Hospital rebuilt. I know there have been consultations, but frankly three years with still no firm plan is not good enough. I am now working with Councillor Tim Oliver and others on the project to push this forward and ensure health services are the priority of any new build and regeneration of Weybridge.

The second issue is infrastructure. We all know the limitations and frustrations of our local road network, and the delays we experience any time there are issues on the M25 leading to people taking diversions through Weybridge. I am speaking to Surrey Council and Highways England about what improvements can be made and pushing to ensure joined up working across all local infrastructure needs.

**Wey Soc:** You won’t get much argument from Weybridge residents that those should be local priorities! Let’s tackle the rebuild and reprovisioning of health services first. Going back to your first response, as you know the Society has been at the forefront of trying to get ‘joined up thinking’ among various authorities. We feel we have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build back better and greener, right in the centre of Weybridge. It’s for this reason that the Society initiated the Weybridge Rebuild and Advance Project (WRAP) and we’re keen to get everyone on board with the broader regeneration project that has emerged. What would you say to our community about that?

**Ben:** It’s been three years since the building burned down, so we need to put it in place quickly, and the health provision should be prioritised. That’s what constituents say to me all the time. Also it’s about the kind of service they want – that you could walk in and see a practitioner and get access to treatments. It’s really important that that level of service continues. In a post COVID sense, waiting rooms are out, but we still need the immediacy of access on the same day.

So that’s what this rebuild has to deliver. We need to be able to guarantee that you can get a health care intervention
on the day, whether that’s by phone or via pharmacy or A&E or being seen by a GP live, if necessary. It’s the reactivity that people want and not a wait. So I’m pushing for the site to deliver that. So yes this is a huge opportunity, but it’s been talked about for years and now we need a plan to deliver.

**Wey Soc:** Representing residents as we do, the Society totally agrees. There’s no contradiction between re-providing health care services and the larger town regeneration, it must fit together and make sense. Which gets us back to your second priority for Weybridge: local infrastructure.

At the moment, new national planning laws are trying to streamline the system. In principle, the government is trying to improve the process, but of course, if controls aren’t in place, abuse can occur. For example, new minimum standards create a loophole in regulations that allow developers to go for much smaller flats. How will you ensure new laws don’t destroy the fabric of towns like Weybridge? How do we ensure that when boroughs like Elmbridge are asked to put in more housing that infrastructure will match it? Equally, how is building up housing in the South East consistent with levelling up? A major concern of our residents is overcrowding . . .

**Ben:** Firstly, it’s important to bear in mind that planning reforms aren’t yet laws but a consultation on changing the planning system. I’ve put in two responses on current planning rules, including housing targets and planning reform. About the focus on more housing and the South East, that’s a good question. We should be building housing where we want the economic engine to be, and I am really pleased the Government is listening to feedback on this and looking again at how planning supports our levelling up agenda. We also do need more housing locally, and more affordable housing especially, so the question is how to deliver that. We also need to account for the fact that much of Weybridge and Runnymede is on the floodplain. And we don’t want to touch the green belt, so we need strong input from communities.

As the consultation on planning is now closed, we’ll see a response soon. We will need targets that look at local needs and housing that’s not just big expensive houses. We also need to make sure that we have a sustainable program of building for our communities, in which local residents continue to have a strong voice.

On infrastructure, its improvement was one of my election pledges. Soon there will be improvements on the A320, A3 and M25 that will have knock-on effects on improving traffic flow in Weybridge. I’m talking to Surrey Highways, working on addressing the issues of HGVs on Brooklands Road. We often focus on roads, but we’re also looking at public transport and sustainability, South Western Railways and links to Heathrow.

**Wey Soc:** With so much to do, you probably wish you had a magic wand. If you had one wish as a politician, either to fulfil or to make the job easier, what would it be?

**Ben:** Getting rid of organisations working in silos would definitely be on my wish list! I see one of the many roles of an MP as working to bring different people and organisations together to solve a
problem, and I get very frustrated when I see a siloed approach to working and helping people.

A good example of this is the arbitrary split between health and social care, or limited focus and investment in prevention programmes. Often complex problems cross-cut departments and organisations. For example, in a national public health strategy on childhood obesity, one of its measures should work with Local Authorities’ focus on ensuring children have access to safe, accessible and well maintained green spaces.

**Wey Soc:** Well, your wish fits amazingly well with what we proposed with WRAP and what we’re now doing in Weybridge with the broader regeneration scheme, so we hope you’ll stay involved! It’s fortunate for us to have someone like you who understands health care in such detail, especially as we’ll be having to move this forward during the COVID pandemic. Do you have anything more to say about that?

**Ben:** We’re all in it together. The national rules are difficult, as is the impact of restrictions, but it’s important that we follow them. Sticking to it is how we get through it. We can’t overwhelm the NHS.

But while people are being asked to keep their distance, that doesn’t mean suffer alone. If anyone needs assistance, the NHS and a huge range of other support services are still available to help. If you are unwell, our NHS is open and here to assist. So please do call 111 or 999 if you need. The NHS is ready.

**Wey Soc:** Your message of ‘we’re all in it together’ is exactly the phrase Dr. Fauci uses as his parting message to audiences.

Dr. Fauci of course is now famous as head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in the United States for the last 36 years. He keeps stressing that there’s a real need for global cooperation and consistent messaging on what to do -- masks, handwashing and social distancing as the most effective measures, even as we wait for a vaccine roll out. And beyond too because a vaccine isn’t a panacea. Is there anything else you want to add?

**Ben:** The vaccine is very good news, and a ray of hope for the return to a different way of living without restrictions next year. But that’s going to take time. Keep following the rules.

I really want to thank people for having the resolve to get through this. I also want to thank all our residents for the fantastic community support witnessed throughout the year, especially to the hundreds of volunteers who have gone out of their way to support friends, neighbours and strangers in need. I truly hope this will be the legacy of the pandemic.

I also want to stress that the first job of an MP is to listen. Only then do you really know what’s going on, and only then can we make things better. So do get in touch!

**WeySoc:** Thanks so much, best of luck and we’ll speak soon!

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Get in touch with Ben at ben.spencer.mp@parliament.uk, or follow him on Facebook or Twitter. You can also sign up to his monthly newsletter at: drbenspencer.org.uk

To write, please send letters to: Dr Ben Spencer MP, House of Commons, Westminster SW1A 0AA
You’ve lived here for some years, but how much do you really know about Weybridge and its past? Over the holidays, test your mettle on local knowledge and history but no cheating – put away those smart phones and stay away from Google. (We admit, that does give advantage to old-timers, but asking grandpa is most certainly allowed – especially if you are grandpa.) Answers on page 44.

1. a) Which prominent former Coaching Inn was known as the Anchor prior to 1793?
   b) What was the former name of the Minnow?

2. Which Church Street shop, which closed in 1973, had a mosaic floral patterned floor and green and cream art nouveau wall tiles?

3. In which year in the 1860s was the bridge over the Wey on Bridge Road opened by a passing costermonger?

4. What is the name of the channel excavated in the 1930s to bypass the most northerly loop of the Thames?

5. a) Who built the house on the island in the Thames known as the Eyot? His Opera Company would rehearse there at weekends in the 1890s.
   b) Which composer, working on The Gondoliers and Ivanhoe, frequently visited the house in the same period?

6. a) To whom is the Monument dedicated?
   b) In which year was it erected?

7. a) Who was responsible for the building of the original church of St Charles Borromeo in 1835?
   b) Which member of the French Royal Family was the last to have her remains transferred from St Charles church to Dreux in 1979?

8. a) In which year in the 1830s was the railway station opened?
   b) In which year in the 1960s did the last steam hauled express train run through the station?

9. a) Prior to 1914, upon the junction of which two roads was the Post Office situated?
   b) Close to which pub was the Police Station located?
   c) On which road did the Fire Station stand?

10. What is the name of the lake in Oatlands upon which people used to skate when it froze in winter?

11. Which structure containing shells, stalactites and a statue of Venus de Medici, was completed on the Oatlands estate about 1770 and demolished in 1948?

12. a) What was the name of the cinema converted into a public hall in 1956?
   b) Weybridge’s other cinema on Queens Road became a Catholic church in the 1960s. To which saint was "St Odeons" (more correctly) dedicated?
13. a) St James church replaced an earlier church which had become too small in 1848. To which saint was the earlier church dedicated?  

b) When St James church too became too small, St Michaels was built in 1874, but was demolished in 1973. On which road did it stand?  

14. Which church, under construction in 1864, suffered an almost total collapse when the spire was nearing completion? Fortunately no one was killed and the church was rebuilt and completed the following year.  

15. Vigo House in Church Street was demolished to make an entrance for which new building, opened in 1928?  

16. In 1919, which pair of aviators made the first successful transatlantic flight in a Vickers Vimy built in Weybridge? (One of them lived in Weybridge before the war).  

17. Prior to 1967, the Library was located in Aberdeen House, since demolished. Which Bank now stands on this site?  

18. a) Which school in Baker Street closed in 1974, the site now being occupied by the Hillcrest housing estate?  

b) Which school with playing fields on Churchfields Avenue closed in 1999?  

19. a) Which Belgian teaching order founded St Georges College in 1876?  

b) Which order of nuns founded St Maurs Convent in 1898?  

20. Identify each of the following former pubs:  

a) At the junction of Monument Hill and Baker Street.  

b) On Heath Road, halfway between the British Volunteer and St Charles Borromeo church.  

c) On Princes Road next to the Jolly Farmer.  

d) Overlooking the cricket common, latterly converted to Caffe Uno.  

e) On Thames Street, originally called the Kings Arms, but renamed in 1981 and demolished in 1997.  

f) On Church Street, adjacent to Sainsburys and opposite Barclays Bank, demolished in 1962.  

21. a) Who financed the construction of the Brooklands motor racing track?  

b) In which year did it open?  

c) What was the length of the banked oval circuit ie excluding the finishing straight?  

22. What was the christian name of the prominent suffragette who addressed a meeting in Holstein Hall in 1910?  

23. Which nation’s soldiers were treated at the military hospital set up in the Oatlands Park Hotel in the First World War?  

24. The first motor bus service through Weybridge commenced in May 1914 and ran between Walton and ________. The journey time was 2 hours. Fill in the blank.  

25. Identify the following famous Weybridge residents, past and present:  

a) TV presenter married to Ruth Langsford.  

b) Scriptwriter and comic actor whose sister in his TV series was played by Hattie Jacques.
c) Harry Webb.
d) Small curly haired comic actor whose catchphrase was "Hello my darlings".
e) One of the Dragons from Dragons Den.
f) Lanky former England footballer famous for his podcasts.

26. a) Where was the drinking fountain at the Hanger Hill end of Princes Road originally situated?

b) To whose memory is this fountain dedicated?

27. a) In which year was the War Memorial by the cricket common unveiled?

b) In which way did the view of the cricket common from Hanger Hill change in 1953?

28. What was sold at each of the following Church Street shops?

a) Peters

b) Hasletts

29. a) In 1908 John Lyle, of the Tate and Lyle company, donated the ground and gates for which facility, still enjoyed by many, especially the young?

b) John Lyle lived in Finnart House, well set back from the road on which its entrance stood. Which road?

c) What type of school occupied Finnart House from 1936 to the 1980s?

30. What is the name of the grade II listed building in Church Street believed to be a dower house dating from 1680?

31. It was first introduced in 1890 but was not well received and therefore abandoned in 1895. It finally happened in 1932. What is it?

32. Which road was formerly known at various times as Loampit Lane, Shelton Lane, Back Street and School Hill?

33. a) Which builder commenced the development of St Georges Hill in 1912?

b) What was the role of Mr Harry S Colt in the development?

34. Identify each of the following authors who have spent time in Weybridge:

a) He corrected his proofs for Treasure Island at the Hand and Spear hotel in 1881.

b) He lived for 21 years at 'Harnham', 19 Monument Green, during which time he published A Room with a View amongst other works.

c) A French novelist who fled France in 1898, having defended the Jewish army officer Dreyfus against a charge of spying in his famous article 'J'accuse'.

d) He lived at Eastlands for over 30 years, his best selling novel being "Sorrell and Son" published in 1925.

35. In 1911, what did the Weybridge Council allow in the Thames which caused a national sensation?

36. Which of Henry VIII's wives did he marry in the chapel of Oatlands Palace?
THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF SURREY’S TRAVELLING PEOPLE

A new book by local author and historian Dr Alan Wright sheds fresh light on the county’s travelling communities on the eve of the First World War and on the attitudes of local residents towards those passing through their towns and villages.

Surrey Census of Nomads 1913, published by the Surrey Record Society, includes transcripts drawn from records held at the Surrey History Centre. These are remarkably detailed censuses carried out by Surrey Constabulary of Gypsies, showmen, tramps, seasonal workers and others who made up the varied itinerant population of the county. The book also includes correspondence revealing the surprising variety of responses to travellers and how they were viewed by landowners, authorities and the settled population. A detailed introduction and supporting footnotes set out the context, background to and outcome of the survey.

Alan is a member of Weybridge Society, and some colleagues may recall his talk to the Society a couple of years ago based on his ground-breaking history of Gypsies in the Edwardian and Victorian eras, Their Day Has Passed. Apart from his time spent exploring the history of the travelling communities, Alan has not lost sight of the local settled community in Weybridge. He also researches and presents on planning, parking and related issues on behalf of the Triangle Residents’ Group (TRG).

Surrey Census of Nomads 1913 can be ordered from the Secretary, Surrey Record Society, Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, GU21 6ND (email: mpage@surreycc.gov.uk). It is free to members of SRS; for non-members it retails at £20 (plus p&p). Their Day Has Passed (£9.99 paperback) is still available on order from all good booksellers and from Amazon.
GOODBYE GEMINERA

Weybridge bid farewell to Baker Street gift store Geminera after six years of trading, as owner Sharon Ferrari shuttered Geminera’s doors in early November for the last time. The shop specialised in ladies’ lingerie, accessories and jewellery, some of which were unique pieces that Sharon had sourced from exotic locales.

Sharon, who is also an active member of the Weybridge Town Business Group (WTBG) which annually runs town fayres and puts up Christmas trees and lights, said she would really miss her work colleagues and regular chats with her customers, many of whom would just pop in to say hello.

Among the highlights of being a shopkeeper was Christmas Eve in store. ‘It became a bit of a family tradition for my daughter, sister and niece. We always served glasses of bubbly and mince pies and dressed in silly Christmas jumpers and hats – it was such fun!’

In those times, pre-holiday customers were in greater abundance and in a great mood, ‘especially dads bringing their children in to buy mum that last minute present,’ Sharon recalled.

Another memorable moment was when ‘a very polite gypsy lady came into the shop to read my fortune – though she forgot to mention COVID,’ Sharon noted, adding that she’d ‘never forget the little school children making their crowns for the Queen’s Jubilee celebrations and lanterns that we proudly showcased at Christmas.’

Unfortunately, the demise of Geminera was another case of internet shopping toppling an independent retailer. Over the past years, more people have been choosing online transactions over popping into local shops, resulting in a dramatic drop in footfall on the high street. In recent months, this trend accelerated and worsened for many local retailers, as lockdown lured ever more people to buy online.

Another major change negatively affecting trade over time has been suppliers themselves going direct to customers via the internet. Sharon noted that this was a major blow for her business, especially when it came to lingerie sales. Having invested a lot of time and money diversifying into new lines, she suddenly found suppliers competing online with small stores like hers. A manufacturer could often decide to run a huge 50-70% discount sale on their website but offer no price protection to their retailers.

Paul Povey, head of Weybridge
Town Business Group (WTBG), said high streets would be battling these trends for some time to come, and that local shopping was in the midst of a huge transition. He bid a warm but sad farewell to ‘a fabulous place to buy gifts, particularly for a bloke,’ as Geminera had ‘a wonderful array of gifts that immediately tempted you when you entered the shop. A brilliant place and a great loss.’

‘Sharon has a brilliant eye for style,’ he added. ‘I am not quite sure Christmas and birthdays will be as special for me and our family, with all the gifts were wrapped in such a special way.’

Paul also noted that Sharon contributed massively to the community, always imaginative with ideas and supportive with her time and personal contribution. ‘Our WTBG market events are organised with her help, and they are such special events for Weybridge,’ he said.

A bright spot is that Sharon said she intends to stay active with the town business group, and WTBG is working with the Society on the Weybridge regeneration project, which is also looking at ways to revive the high street. We all wish Sharon luck in her new endeavours and hope to tempt her to open a shop again in the future!

As we went to press, Teddy’s Pet Boutique & Spa opened on the same premises, so we will report more about this new business in our next issue. Meanwhile, please support our local shops!
1. a) Ship hotel  
   b) Lincoln Arms  
2. Sainsburys  
3. 1865  
4. Desborough Cut  
5. a) Richard d'Oyly Carte  
   b) Sir Arthur Sullivan  
6. a) Duchess of York  
   b) 1822  
   c) Seven Dials  
   d) Bull Ring Square  
7. a) James Taylor  
   b) Duchess of Nemours  
8. a) 1838  
   b) 1967  
9. a) Heath Road and Elgin Road  
   b) British Volunteer  
   c) Balfour Road  
10. Broadwater  
11. Grotto  
12. a) County  
   b) St Martin de Porres  
13. a) St Nicholas  
   b) Princes Road  
14. Congregational  
15. The hospital  
16. Alcock and Brown  
17. Lloyds  
18. a) Royal Masonic  
   b) Wallop  
19. a) Josephites  
   b) Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus  
20. a) Grotto  
   b) Mitre  
   c) Greyhound  
   d) Stag and Hounds  
   e) Farnell Arms  
   f) Newcastle Arms  
21. a) Hugh Locke King  
   b) 1907  
   c) 2.75 miles  
22. Christabel  
23. New Zealand  
24. Guildford  
25. a) Eamon Holmes  
   b) Eric Sykes  
   c) Sir Cliff Richard  
   d) Charlie Drake  
   e) Theo Paphitis  
   f) Peter Crouch  
26. a) Temple Market end of Oatlands Drive  
   b) Henry Yool  
27. a) 1923  
   b) Cricket Pavilion opened  
28. a) Cake and pastries  
   b) Ladies apparel  
29. a) Churchfields Recreation Ground  
   b) Oatlands Drive  
   c) Approved school for Jewish boys  
30. Portmore House  
31. Electric Street Lighting  
32. Baker Street  
33. a) W G Tarrant  
   b) He designed the golf course  
34. a) Robert Louis Stevenson  
   b) E M Forster  
   c) Emile Zola  
   d) Warwick Deeping  
35. Mixed bathing  
36. Catherine Howard
TRIDENT HONDA, WORKING IN AND SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY FOR THE LAST 57 YEARS

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Honda Crosstar

Honda Civic

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THE WEYBRIDGE SOCIETY IS LOOKING FOR
ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS!

We do a lot but want to do more – can you help the Society expand its work in 2021 and beyond? In addition to tracking planning developments, working on the all-important rebuild of town centre public and health services and the many other projects and events we already do, the Society would especially like to reach out in three areas:

• **Youth projects** – engaging young people to be interested in Weybridge and public service. We could use a volunteer to work as point person/schools liaison so we can better communicate with students and teachers and strengthen community ties. Are you a local parent, community-oriented person, good communicator and/or someone keen to shape the next generation to love and work for Weybridge? We’d love to hear from you!

• **Environmental projects** – making Weybridge environmentally-friendly, sustainable and resilient for the future. Have you got knowledge/interest in technologies/climate change issues that can help us shape future projects? We’ve got a variety of issues that can use the environmental perspective, from parking and traffic to large scale developments like the town centre regeneration and our Planning Panel work.

• **Social media outreach** – we’ve got a social media coordinator in place, and some people to do the work but can you help us to grow our presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram? All hands on deck and don’t be shy – the younger you are, the better! We’re looking for a whole new generation to get involved with making Weybridge great for the future!

Our current active volunteers (from planning panel to comms team, treasurer and admin and the rest) all work flexibly as many or few hours as they choose. Even the smallest efforts can produce big results, and we’ve got experienced members on hand to help you get started!

All you need is interest and a bit of free time to lend us a hand. Are you keen to help in any of these areas mentioned or have suggestions for other community projects? If so, please get in touch with Dave Arnold at chairman@weybridgesociety.org.uk
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Magazine comments - Did anything catch your eye in this newsletter, or would you like to make a comment to the editor? Your feedback would be appreciated. Please let us know through magazine@weybridgesociety.org.uk
2021 WILL BRING MORE CHANGE
ARE YOU READY?

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”
- Barack Obama

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”
- Wayne Dye

“We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next ten. Don’t let yourself be lulled into inaction.”
- Bill Gates

“I cannot say whether things will get better if we change; what I can say is they must change if they are to get better.”
- Georg C. Lichtenberg

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”
- Reinhold Niebuhr

With thanks to the website, BrainyQuote. Get in touch with us at the Weybridge Society about anything that impacts us as a community. We’re here to help solve problems, join us – we’re working for Weybridge!

Weybridge Society