

# The Resident

The Esher Residents Association Newsletter  
for Esher, Hersham Riverside, West End & Lower Green

No.105 Winter 2022

Esher  
Residents

## Retail expert's vision for improving Esher High Street

New ERA Committee Member, Simon Smith, has consulted for high profile retailers and advocates a bold masterplan for Esher.



Simon Smith

Esher is unique with its proud history of royal connections. Originally a major coaching town on the way between London and Portsmouth, our High Street today is congested with traffic, the majority of which is through traffic (85-90%) heading, in both directions, between Hampton Court Bridge/Kingston and the A3/M25 junction at Wisley.

The main High Street artery is, in reality, a dual carriageway with the feeder roads having multiple lanes to accommodate the through traffic. We have slip roads for limited parking that add to the vista of Esher being a large 'car led escape'.

### What effect does this have on our High Street?

Our High Street retail store offer is not easy to see and is disjointed due to the constant interrupted views of cars and lorries. *It is not a street that encourages 'dwell time' but is more a place where you are targeted in your shopping. A 'get in/get out approach'.*

### What can we do to change this?

1. Change the slip roads from parking to filled in wider paved walking areas, where cafés and restaurants are encouraged to provide outside seating areas. This would encourage consumers to the High Street across the day, increasing expenditure and supporting a return on investment for the retailers. It would allow more spontaneous use of the High Street by retailers/ companies with entrepreneurial ideas.
2. Encourage landlords to be more selective in the tenants to whom they lease.

(continued on page 2)

## Support the ERA

We are run entirely by **volunteers** and rely on **residents' donations**.

Please go to [esher-residents.com/support-us](http://esher-residents.com/support-us) or scan this QR code or pop a donation in the envelope provided and follow the instructions printed on it.



# Improving the High Street

3. The removal of cars from these slip roads immediately improves the eye line vista to those walking the street.
4. Parking would have to be encouraged into available existing parking areas with time allowed to enjoy the town without heavy parking costs. Elmbridge is already undertaking an innovative parking review, to which the ERA has contributed.
5. Reduce 'short journey' car travel encouraging people to walk or cycle.

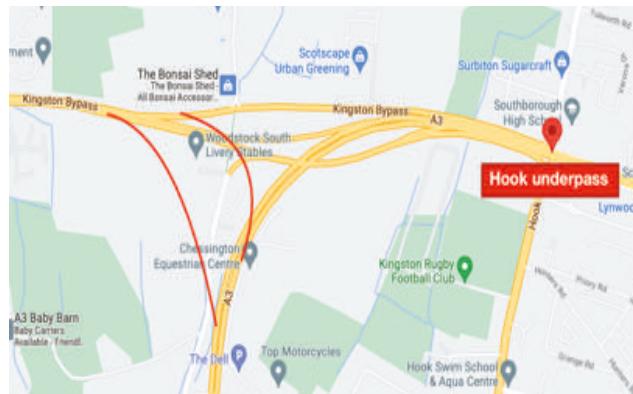
You will note however, that this does not deal with through traffic in the town and for the above to work requires joined up thinking. When the town By-Pass was built in the 1950s the M25 and the levels of traffic using the M25/A3 to get to Hampton Court Bridge or Kingston were not envisaged.

There is, however, the Kingston By-Pass (A309) at Long Ditton/pre the Hook underpass that leads from the A3 North, via Hinchley Wood, down to the Scilly Isles Roundabout as a dual carriageway.

The opportunity would be to build a very short slip road off the A3 North to join the Kingston By-Pass.

For traffic flowing the other way (Hampton Court to the A3 South/M25) a bridge widening/extension to the existing bridge which currently carries traffic from the A3 South at Long Ditton/Hook onto the Kingston By-Pass could be engineered.

If this were to become reality, it would reduce through traffic in Esher allowing the current dual carriageway to become a single carriageway, potentially with a refuge in the middle that is planted with an 'avenue of trees' and allow pedestrians easier crossing facilities.



Google Maps

Through use of road colour demarcation, reduction in road sign furniture, reduction in high kerbs, and the slowing of traffic in the town centre to 20 mph the vision of the High Street could start to take shape.

The final part is encouraging landlords to choose the right tenant for their property, for our High Street, to gain a more consistent 'Brand Esher'.

## What does all this do?

Reduces pollution in our town centre, creates a more visually attractive High Street to visit, attracts great retailers as footfall increases, creates jobs and makes Esher an even more desirable place to live. A virtuous circle of benefits.

Highways England oversees our trunk roads (A3). They need prompting as they are aware of the proposal to redirect through traffic away from the heart of Esher, but do not want to act as there is not a groundswell of support. This has to come from our local MP, Surrey County Council, local councillors and you, the local resident.



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# News...

## Esher Place House developers lose appeal



Birchwood Homes Ltd. proposed the creation of 21 flats in the main building, 8 flats in a modern, inappropriate extension and the building of two pairs of semi-detached houses and a terrace of three two storey houses on land in close proximity to the main house. All proposals were rejected by the Inspector with a forceful commentary

on the potential harm to the listed building. Residents have thanked ERA Cllr. Richard Williams, who fought these proposals at Council on behalf of the residents. "It was an abominable plan and I was overjoyed that the Inspector agreed with the residents, the ERA and me" he says.

### Quiz Scores!

October showed us all that, not only are our residents terribly clever (or maybe the questions were too easy!), they are also very generous as £550 was raised for the Mayor of Elmbridge's Charity: the Brain Tumour Charity.

Over 70 people including the Mayor, Cllr Simon Waugh, attended the Annual ERA Quiz and Fish and Chip Supper and battled with tricky and some local connection questions such as, "What is the world's most used man made material?", "The K3 Hoppa Bus to and fro from Esher High Street to its furthest destination where?" and "Which knight accompanied the chorus on the Carly Simon song 'You're so Vain'?" (answers below).

There were three wonderful Raffle prizes: a Brewery Tour and free beer for 2 donated by the Big Smoke Brew Co and Bar on Mill Road, 2 Big Band Show tickets donated by Esher Theatre and a case of different gins and tonics donated by a local resident. Very many thanks to them for their generous support.

**Next year's Quiz and Fish and Chip Supper is already in the ERA diary, so make a note in yours for Saturday 21st October 2023**

Answers:

Concrete, Asda Supermarket, Roehampton Vale, Putney, Sir Mick Jagger

(2 tables said Gladys or Beverley Knight which was clever - but WRONG)



Quiz set up team/gophers: Paul Fielding, Simon Leifer and Cllr Richard Williams.



The quiz teams racking their brains during the evening.

# ...and more news

## The Mayor leads tributes on Remembrance Sunday



Our Mayor, Cllr. Simon Waugh and Cllr. David Young were at Esher War Memorial to lay tributes to those who served in war.

(Photo:Angela Stockbridge)

## Elmbridge BC online Car park survey

4,600 responses were received to Elmbridge's car park survey put out over the summer and the ERA took the opportunity to research the extent of available short term parking on or around Esher High Street. We sought the views of a number of residents and businesses as to whether more provision of free short term parking would encourage them to visit the High Street more or would help their businesses.

We very much enjoyed the interaction with everyone who engaged with us either in person or online. We submitted our data to the Council together with suggestions about how more free short term parking might be made available as well as low cost parking to help employees who work in Esher. Our contribution was well received and we await the outcome of the Council's analyses of their own survey and the additional data that we have provided as well as our suggestions. Our thanks to all those residents and businesses who helped us with our consultation.

## Farmers Market returns

To the joy of many, Esher Chamber of Commerce has masterminded the return of a Farmers Market to the High Street. The market is open on the third Saturday of every month from 10 til 2pm and the two events run so far have been hailed as great successes. Our special thanks to Lucy Roshier of Killik & Co who has worked so hard to make this happen.



**Green Elmbridge was formed following the declaration of a climate emergency by Elmbridge Borough Council, on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019.**

A 'Small Steps to Sustainability' event was held at The Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre on January 11<sup>th</sup> 2020 and under the Elmbridge Climate Emergency Working Group banner resulted in a meeting between our working group and key borough councillors at the borough council's offices on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2020.

Then came COVID and two years suspended activity. This year we have renamed ourselves 'Green Elmbridge' and relaunched on Saturday October 8<sup>th</sup> 2022 at The Green Elmbridge Sustainability Fair at The Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre, Walton.

So, what is our purpose? We want to act in partnership with the council as a "critical friend" and as an umbrella group for all the environmental and community groups in Elmbridge. We aim to do so with a website to create coherence, an events page to show what is happening and links to allow residents and groups to access what they need to know in one place. We will also endeavour to show how the Council is doing in its declared aim to be carbon zero by 2030 and have the borough carbon zero by 2050.

For more details about Green Elmbridge please visit our very recently published website [www.greenelmbridge.org.uk](http://www.greenelmbridge.org.uk)



# West End's 'Tin Tabernacle'

The old iron church in West End was a product of the industrial revolution. It was an early version of a flat pack style of building which was erected in 1879 as a temporary measure. It was far from unique as, at that time, there was a substantial demand for churches of various denominations both in this country and abroad as a result of population growth. Built of corrugated iron clad onto a wooden frame, the churches were often known as 'tin tabernacles'.



St. George's Church was erected with permission granted by Queen Victoria who was then the Lord of the Manor. It was built as a daughter church to Christ Church in Esher and has proved to be a valuable asset to the community, particularly to residents of West End, enabling them initially to attend services without the need to make the muddy trek across fields up into Esher.

It has remained in continuous use since it was erected and repairs in the past to the external fabric have mainly consisted of additional coats of paint. However, the old organ at the church was replaced some eight years ago.

Current restoration work has enabled the replacement of part of the roof and a complete repainting of the building. In addition, all of the electrical services have been brought up to current safety standards. These elements have cost some £40,000 and most of this cost has been funded from a legacy left by a local resident.

The next phase involves internal redecoration work, repairs to woodwork, replacement lighting and the possible replacement of the wooden floor (currently subject to further investigation, since the floor has been covered by 60 year old lino tiles). This phase is estimated to cost a further £40,000 and is subject to an appeal.



Anyone wishing to visit the church, once the renovations work has been completed, will be most welcome and children who might be interested may wish to discover the location of carved mice on the furniture which was built by Robert "Mousey" Thompson who left these as a feature of all his work.

*To donate online scan the QR code or go to the fundraising page: [www.collectionpot.com/pot/3022580](http://www.collectionpot.com/pot/3022580). Cash or cheques, made payable to 'Esher PCC (St George's)', can be delivered or posted to Parish Office, Christ Church, Church Street, Esher, Surrey KT10 8QS.*

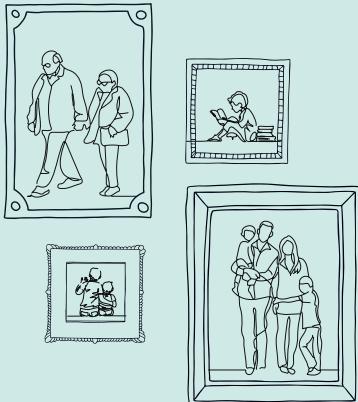


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# Elmbridge and Climate Change



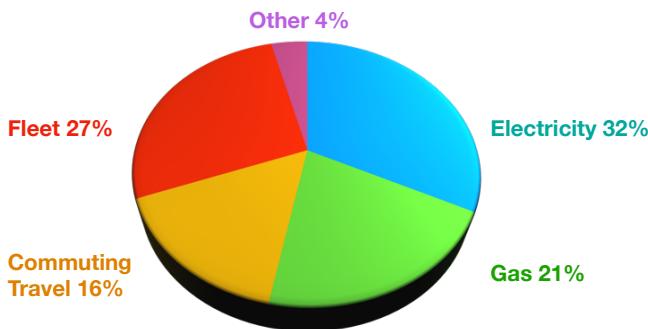
**In June, ERA Councillor David Young was appointed to the new Cabinet portfolio for Climate Change at Elmbridge Borough Council.**

Elmbridge BC declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 setting a goal of achieving net zero for the emissions under our direct control by 2030 and aiming for the whole of Elmbridge to be net zero by 2050 – along with the rest of Surrey.

The first step was to quantify what our baseline carbon footprint was and then come up with an action plan for how to get to net zero by 2030. Our 2018/19 baseline shows EBC generated the equivalent of 1,236 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> in our directly owned assets/activities (Civic Centre, community centres, vehicles, etc) plus a further 5,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e from our leased buildings such as Xcel Leisure and Hurst Pool.

The biggest impact comes from electricity usage in our buildings, then our vehicle fleet, gas usage and employee commuting/travel.

**EBC's Operational Emissions 2018/19**



The pandemic caused a delay in implementing many of the actions, but we are now rectifying this and you may have already seen some of the changes that are occurring:

- Solar panels are being installed on five community centres in Hersham, Claygate, Walton, Cobham and Molesey.
- Solar panels have been installed on the Xcel Leisure Centre in Walton.
- EV Charging points have been installed in the public car parks at the Esher Civic Centre, Cobham, Weybridge and Walton. More will be added as the demand from the public increases.
- Loft insulation has been reviewed at the Community Centres.
- The Mayor's car will be switched to an EV when the current lease expires.

# Net zero by 2030 - is it a dream?

But there is a lot more to do. It is a big challenge. Like everyone else, the energy market turmoil means we are tied to our existing electricity contract. Whilst electric cars are now becoming mainstream, with over 30 models available this year, large vehicles such as minibuses and waste vehicles are still some way behind. The technology will come – whether it is electric or hydrogen fuel cell – and we want to be sure to be ready to take advantage when it does.

Our initial target has been to get our own house in order and hit net zero by 2030. That's an ambitious goal but the carbon footprint of our directly managed assets is less than 0.2 % of Elmbridge's total. Even including our leased buildings such as Xcel and Hurst Pool, we are less than 1%.

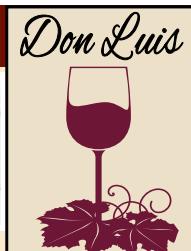
Our next step is to reach out to all the residents and businesses within Elmbridge and help everyone to drive down their carbon footprint. Whether the motivation is to be green, or to improve health by reducing pollution, or economic to reduce energy bills and reduce waste, many of our residents and businesses have the motivation, but lack the information or scale to achieve these changes on their own.

There are lots of good things happening in the community – for example, in West End, Garsons Farm is installing 275 KW of solar panels on its buildings. We want to bring all the good ideas and knowledge together to help our residents and businesses to make the transition.

Looking at Elmbridge as a whole, transport is the biggest contributor to climate change at nearly 40%. Gas (26%) and Electricity (20%) usage by residents and businesses are the next with industry accounting for most of the remainder.

Is net zero by 2030 for EBC a dream? It's certainly a challenge. There are some easy things we can do now, a lot of more difficult things will become easier over the next

few years as technology improves, but there is going to be a residual amount that we will need to address. Carbon “offsets” are contentious as the system is heavily abused by greenwashing, but high quality carbon “removal” options will become more widespread to enable us to tackle the last elements.



## **The indulgent tapas and steak restaurant in the heart of Esher**

The vast selection of Spanish dishes will tantalise the taste buds. Whether you fancy patatas bravas, sizzling gambas or succulent steak, we cater for all. With our authentic ingredients from Spain we only believe in the best quality.

If you would like to discuss Climate Change ideas, please email [dyoung@esher-residents.com](mailto:dyoung@esher-residents.com).

# Sandown Park - Making friends again

Throughout its history, relations have not always been harmonious between the residents of Esher and Sandown Park racecourse. 2019's planning application to build 318 homes around the periphery of the course, together with a 150 bed hotel, which was unanimously rejected by Elmbridge Borough Council and subsequently lost at appeal, was probably the lowest point in recent years. At the appeal hearing Linda Stotesbury spoke vociferously on behalf of Save Esher Green Belt and Esher Residents Association who had both campaigned tirelessly against the proposed Green Belt development by The Jockey Club.

It is refreshing, in these turbulent times, to report that huge strides are being taken to rebuild trust and make Sandown Park an absolutely integral part of Esher life. This is largely due to the appointment of Sarah Drabwell, Sandown's new General Manager.

Sarah is clear that there are no plans for major development saying, "Residents shouldn't worry. There will be planning permission requests from time to time, but they won't be about housing or damage to the Green Belt".

Her love of Sandown is contagious, but she has a huge task ahead of her. There's no doubt that the facilities are not in their prime - some pretty terrible extensions have been built that tend to mar the viewing experience and, for a racecourse that was the first to welcome women and was a favourite of the Queen Mother, it's quite clear that the interior decor and the general customer experience has, perhaps, had rather too strong a male steer over recent years.

Sandown Park and the residents of Esher have a long and fascinating history. In 1870 land came up for sale and local residents were horrified by the idea of a racecourse being set up by some pals of the Prince of Wales. At the time, horse racing was seen as being about as grubby and low life as things could get, being inhabited by crooks and 'welshers' (a swindler/ someone who does not honour their debts). Fearing the worst, residents battled for their preferred option, a lunatic asylum, but eventually lost out to Sir Wilfred Brett and his partner Hwfa Williams, who had revolutionary plans to create a racecourse where the riff raff were

discouraged through the construction of an expensive boundary fence and the unheard of idea of charging an admission fee.

The target audience was society gentlemen and their wives and daughters were also welcome, a real first in horse racing. It was so classy that when Kensington House in Kensington Gore was demolished, Sandown Park acquired the ornamental gates that can still be seen from the Portsmouth Road.

In 1948 Sandown enjoyed a world first when the BBC broadcast live racing on TV, but by the 1960s the course was under threat. This time it was as a potential route for a by-pass, or as a



Former Kensington House ornamental gates. Image Peter Reed Flickr

housing estate for 5000 houses. In a show of support for the racecourse, residents joined forces with the racing world and neither proposal succeeded.

With this long history of mostly good relations between the residents and the racecourse,



Sarah Drabwell, Sandown's General Manager

by closing the door on housing developments, Sarah intends to focus on restoring the local reputation of Sandown. She wants to build much closer links to her neighbours saying, "Sandown Park has been described as being as much a part of British life as the Oval and Wembley and I don't think people realise that, to use football parlance, what goes on here is not Saturday League - Sandown is one of the most important race tracks in the country - it's Premier League. We host the sport's premier fixtures here - the three main ones being Bet365 Gold Cup (first run on 24 April 1875), Coral Eclipse - our summer fixture and the Tingle Creek fixture that kicks off Christmas".

It may come as surprise to residents, but Sandown is quietly working in the background with local charities.

#### **A regifting programme is about to start with the Lower Green Community Centre. Racegoers to the Tingle Creek**

**Festival will be encouraged to bring gifts such as children's games, sports accessories and Christmas goodies which will then be distributed to the Community Centre as Christmas or birthday presents. Sarah says, 'Our aim is to help every family enjoy the festive season'.**

Sandown also gifts free race tickets to schools as raffle prizes and will be leafletting local residents with discount tickets for some race days. They are also using their buying muscle to support the Esher Chamber of Commerce's 'Esher in Bloom' programme.

Looking in the not too distant future, there's talk of a Christmas market and ice rink as well as a Wellness Garden, but most of all, she wants people to see Sandown as a huge locally connected asset, with its 340 non-race days, bringing in local residents for birthday parties, weddings, antiques and trade fairs as well as summer concerts.

People have complained that there are no facilities for entertaining children in Esher but, along with the grown up golfing range and Daytona karting track, there's pitch and putt, adventure golf, high ropes, toddler soft play and café and summer camps - the trouble is, residents are, to some extent, in the dark about these things. **There is a plan to change the static advertising for digital advertising panels which can promote racing, conferences and shows and community ads in 20 second bursts. This should help raise awareness.**

Summarising her thoughts, Sarah says, "I want the residents of Esher to know how fabulous the history of this site is. It was the first to welcome women, first to raise standards of behaviour on racecourses, first to be a royal haunt, and the first to disqualify a Prince from a race (it was a military race and he wasn't a serving officer). It's integral to the history of Esher and I would like all our local residents and families to love this course as much as I do."

Simon Leifer, Chairman of Esher Residents Association, said, "Sandown Park racecourse is a great asset to Esher, it is an iconic landmark site as one enters Esher from the East and Sarah's plans are very exciting. It is a massively refreshing approach and we welcome with open arms the reintegration of Sandown Park into Esher".



The late Queen Mother statue at Sandown Park

# Hersham Green Shopping Centre

There is considerable local debate about developers Quadrant Repurpose and La Salle's scheme that includes the current Waitrose store, smaller independent shops and the car park. The proposals will include new retail space and new homes. The developers say it will deliver:

- An improved Waitrose (approx. 29,000 sqft), with 110 basement car parking spaces and 10 car parking spaces at ground level.
- 9,292 sq.ft of additional retail space, including space for smaller independent shops.
- 211 residential units, with car parking to suit.
- Four buildings across the site ranging from two to seven storeys, arranged around a new public square and two podium gardens.
- Enhanced pedestrian routes through the site from New Berry Lane to Burwood Road and Molesey Road.
- A car-free centre of the site with parking concealed from view.

There is no question that Elmbridge has to meet the new housing targets in the Local Plan, but Hersham Residents Association (HRA) has stated that the proposals would increase the already heavy road congestion in the area and that Hersham Centre would be left with less parking and consequently local roads would suffer considerable parking overspill.

HRA also objects to the size, height and over-massing of the development, saying it would be an unattractive blot on the landscape. They also feel that the already stretched local facilities and infrastructure would not cope with the addition of so many new residents. For their in-depth views go to: <http://www.hershamresidents.info/blog/>

Having held a number of consultations with residents and councillors, the developer has yet to submit a planning application, so there is time to modify the plans, if they wish.

