



The Ashtead RESIDENT

Autumn 2025
Issue 37

Working for Ashtead since 1945

FROM THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

How green is Mole Valley?

In this 80th anniversary year of the Ashtead Residents' Association, it is timely to recall that over the last 100 years the population has grown from just over 3,000 to about 15,000 – nearly a 400% increase, when the population of England has grown by only 71%. Of that growth, 52% was before 1939 and the other 48% has been in the 80 years since 1945. For most of the post-war period, Ashtead has had the protection of the Metropolitan Green Belt – introduced as a policy aim in 1947 but not defined until 1955 following the advice in Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan of 1944.

Abercrombie went so far as to make specific recommendations to preserve his proposed narrow Green Belt



Ashtead-Leatherhead Green Belt: From England's green and pleasant land to electric energy eyesore BESS

between Ashtead and Leatherhead. Virtually all of the new development in Ashtead since the war has been restricted to the in-filling of the existing built-up area.

However, as early as 1958, Sir Peter Rawlinson, the local MP, warned in a debate in the House of Commons, "Like an ugly rash, there has appeared over all parts of Leatherhead, including parts of Ashtead and the attractive villages

of Bookham and Fetcham, a 'banjo' development which is completely altering the character of one of the most attractive places in England." This 'banjo' (a narrow road, or 'neck', leading into a large circular development, or 'head', thus resembling a banjo from above) was ruining the amenities, and threatening the supply of a wide range of vital services.

This housing was not for locals but those from Greater London, steadily turning our district into a suburb. With the 1955 Green Belt policy definition agreed by all colours of political opinion, Sir Peter could never have imagined that the vast majority of Leatherhead's then-new research institutions, many of Epsom's mental hospitals (which he mentioned in the House) and nearly all of Ashtead's industrial work places would, within a lifetime, be even more housing.

And the pressure continues. Stag Leys is such a 'banjo' and may have particular relevance to two major developments. As a Surrey County Council officer let slip at the first Ermyn Way Development Management Committee meeting, "We are in early pre-discussion as to whether or not an alternative means of access out, maybe via Stag Leys ... can be achieved."

In the first few days of November, residents were invited to an exhibition on the replacement of the former Esso offices in place of which 140 homes were planned by the council. But 345

are described on the developer's proposals for the site.

The battery energy storage system approved to be sited adjacent to Ashtead Woods is the ultimate affront. This, and other planning excesses, are covered in this issue.

Special thanks go to the ARA's planning lead, Roger Bennett. With his experienced and watchful eye Roger has, according to the planning department, had 237 planning applications arrive in his inbox so far this year. Roger's work on those which deserved comment has been exemplary. Thank you, Roger.

Alan Bradley

Lest we forget



Potential development sites in the district are shown on the map below. The numbers show the latest quantity of dwellings proposed

The primary focus of the Ashtead Residents' Association (ARA) for the 80 years since its founding in 1945 has been to preserve the existing village character of Ashtead and to improve the amenities of the area for the general benefit of the residents of Ashtead.

Ashtead was first given the protection of the emerging Metropolitan Green Belt in 1945, reflecting the tripling of the population from some 3,200 in 1921 to 9,300 in 1939. The population is now estimated at 15,000. We have done well to manage this growth and yet still maintain a sense of village identity. But the rate of change is increasing and, while moving with the times, we must preserve our sense of place and belonging, balancing today's needs without losing the spirit that is the heart of Ashtead.

The Green Belt, first formalised in 1955, has protected Ashtead from expansion towards, and from, the adjacent towns, and we are fortunate to have Ashtead Common (a National Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest) and the Rye Meadows Wetlands Site of Nature Conservation Interest to reinforce the value of the adjacent countryside.

Recently, governments have changed their views on the importance of preserving the Green Belt and this has been damaging. Some Green Belt was surrendered reluctantly to the Mole Valley District Council Local Plan (MVDC LP), earmarking beautiful open countryside to meet the demanding, perhaps excessive, housing targets of central government.

It is appalling that non-statutory habitat designations are maintained on wide areas of non-Green Belt land in the south of the district by Mole Valley District Council – land that could make available additional, far more affordable homes for our young families.

A demanding role for the ARA is to review planning applications related to Ashtead submitted to MVDC. This scrutiny is carried out by planning lead Roger Bennett, and in each case Roger considers whether the proposal meets the MVDC LP and its suite of accompanying documents, which includes the Ashtead Neighbourhood Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The ARA planning review doesn't just look at aesthetics, but the impact on the character and amenities within the local area, including the outlook and loss of amenity to neighbours, and the impact on school places, primary healthcare and dental services, the environment, highways and many other factors.

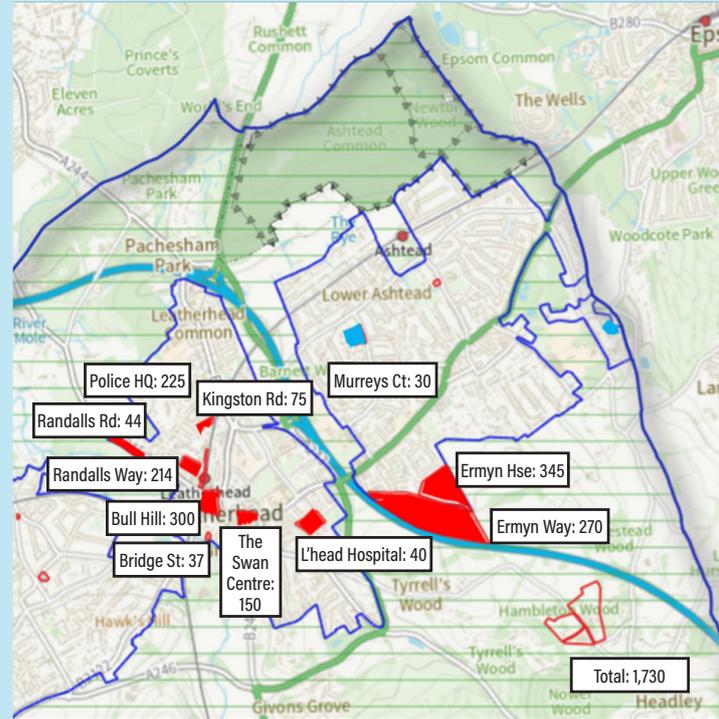
Ashtead Residents' Association has no professional planners on the committee, but the research is done to develop the case to be submitted to MVDC, and residents' submissions are reviewed to inform the association's views.

The ARA is also charged with maintaining a careful watch on any development that affects the district. The MVDC LP has identified a number of sites for development in the nearby area and these are marked in red on the map above. There are proposals for a further 225 homes in the redevelopment of the East Surrey Police HQ on Cleeve Road, Leatherhead.

Just beyond the blue-lined boundary on the map above there are further developments planned in Elmbridge; its local plan was declared "unsound" by a planning inspector, giving developers an 'open goal' for their development proposals.

If all Mole Valley and Elmbridge sites are developed there could be as many as 2,400 new homes within 1.5km of the Kingston Road roundabout.

MVDC has set a challenging target to deliver many new homes in this area of Mole Valley, which is popular with developers as they avoid new infrastructure costs by connecting to existing, but often overloaded, utilities – with the bonus of KT postcodes to increase their margins!



There are about 6,000 existing homes in Ashtead and an increase of 11% is a significant and welcome addition to housing supply, but prices will be beyond the range of young local families looking to set up their first homes. MVDC requires developers to commit to providing 30-40% of new homes at affordable levels – but an affordable level in Ashtead is still very expensive!

The ARA understands the pressure on MVDC for more homes, but is working hard to ensure the balance is right and conditions specified in the Local Plan are fulfilled. We are sharing here a few results of your ARA team's efforts in 2025.

Alan Bradley

POLICY DS2: ERMYN HOUSE, ERMYN WAY, ASHTEAD

Allocated for: RESIDENTIAL AND OFFICE

Site Area (ha): 8.7ha total, approx. 4.5ha developable
 Indicative Capacity: 140 dwellings, at least 3 Gypsy and Traveller pitches, reduced office use on approx. 1ha

Policy Map Designations: Built up Area, Area of High Archaeological Potential (west part of site)
 Relevant Planning History: MO/84/0600 - Permission for construction of existing HQ office building and campus, including car parking, private open space and associated facilities.

Ermyn Way

The proposal: Outline planning application with all matters reserved except means of access for up to 270 dwellings, community building, gypsy and traveller pitches (up to 0.2ha), publicly accessible open space, landscaping and infrastructure.

Pre-planning work and current status

The outline planning application dealing solely with highways issues was debated by MVDC's Development Management Committee (DMC) on 2nd July 2025.

The planning meeting was widely publicised and the ARA worked with Ashtead councillors to ensure a consistent approach to get this scheme refused or reduced in scale. Local residents in the vicinity of Ermyn Way formed an action group and many attended the DMC meeting but, for nothing more than clapping, they were ejected from the public gallery.

Many residents had recorded powerful reservations based on their daily experience that the traffic impact would be considerable as would be the impact on local school capacity, primary and other healthcare provision. The ARA focused on additional traffic on the A24 at Grange Road and the Knoll roundabout and on the existing residents in Ermyn Way, their status seemingly reduced to something approaching second-class by their access to Ermyn Way losing precedence to the new development.

Objectors at the DMC were allowed only a three-minute speaking slot to make any point(s) that they wished to be considered. Despite strong support from the Ashtead Independents councillors who sit on the DMC, our points were largely ignored by the majority group and brushed aside with suspicions of the use of 'the whip' by the majority.

The close proximity of the Ermyn House site meant that this scheme was raised by the ARA questioning the

Developer's Design and Access Statement, Dec 2024



Illustrative masterplan of the proposed Ermyn Way development alongside the M25

cumulative traffic impact that both schemes would create in the local area. Ermyn Way is the only access route and it can be seen that both these developments could generate 850 to 1,325 new cars simply by applying MVDC parking standards.

During the debate, a transport development planning manager let it slip that Surrey County Council was already in discussion with the developer of Ermyn House about an alternative means of access "maybe via Stag Leys". He added that this "will be adding more traffic" and "it's not as large a cul-de-sac as that at the level crossing north of your (Ashtead) station". There are 553 homes north of Ashtead station level crossing; these new proposals could add 600 to the 200 homes already existing at Ermyn Way. The ARA will be very mindful of this when the Ermyn House application is

made and watchful of any proposed increases on the site to the south now approved in principle for development.

The DMC voted narrowly to approve the scheme subject to a Section 106 agreement, a legal document between MVDC and the developer, ensuring that the DMC's requirements relating

to the development are met. If no such agreement was forthcoming by 3rd September 2025 planning permission was to be refused, but this date could be extended by the chief planning officer.

The 3rd September date was missed and has been extended two or three times since. The ARA has been in constant contact with MVDC, but the delay may indicate a worrying level of ongoing negotiation over the final terms and, perhaps, concessions by MVDC. The ARA has been assured that this will be made available in due course, but no date has been provided.

It was alarming that despite the best efforts of the ARA, Ashtead councillors and local residents' protestations, MVDC and Surrey County Council Highways did not consider the traffic impact to be severe.

SCC's transport development planning manager did say, "There's no doubt, there's no denying that this will place an increased amount of traffic on Ermyn Way and on the local network."

He continued, "The local network is already pressurized and the junctions that have been tested are at times – and this is something you will know far better than I – at peak times, they are challenged, to say the least. That's possibly an understatement."

Further planning applications setting out the detail of the scheme will follow the approval of the outline application. It is unlikely that the total number of homes will be reduced, but there may well be attempts to increase them.

The ARA continues to monitor the situation but can only wait to see what MVDC and the developer do next.



Ermyn House

The proposal: While MVDC has allocated 140 new dwellings in the Local Plan, the developer applied to MVDC in December 2024 seeking the waiver of a full Environmental Impact Assessment to allow for the provision of up to 360 residential units, some commercial space and land for gypsy and traveller pitches, road, footway and cycleway provision, open space, landscaping, and surface water attenuation and utility connection.

Current status

Just as this issue went to press, and at very short notice, the developer announced plans for a local consultation in the first week of November 2025 with a reduced proposal of 345 homes. The ARA continues to monitor and will make sure residents are made aware when the situation changes.

Marsden Nursery, Pleasure Pit Road

The proposal: 23 dwellings with access, parking and garaging following the demolition of existing buildings. This was not included in the MVDC LP and had already been excluded from consideration for development.

Situation and outcome

For many years, MVDC planners had been quite clear that this site was not suitable for residential development. So it came as something of a shock that

the planning case officer recommended the scheme for approval in 2024. Nothing had seemingly changed except his personal view that 23 homes would after all be acceptable.

Fortunately, the Development Management Committee (acting as the Local Planning Authority) overruled the planning officer and refused the application on the grounds of the key role the land plays in preventing Ashtead and Epsom merging.

The developer took it to appeal, which was heard by a planning inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

The hearing was attended by the developer and its advisors and, opposing them, representatives from MVDC. Also in attendance were Ashtead Independents councillors, ARA representatives and several local residents. The planning inspector made sure the major issues were thoroughly debated.

Without the strong input from the members of the public, our councillors and the ARA, the desired outcome may not have been realised. The planning inspector dismissed the appeal.



The Murreys, Murreys Court

The proposal: Retention and refurbishment of Grade II listed barn for residents' lounge/estate office, demolition of principal building and cottage, and partial demolition and redevelopment of existing stable complex. Construction of new buildings comprising 60 assisted living units and a 66-bed care home with new landscaping and tree planting, new public pedestrian access between The Murreys and Agates Lane, and use of existing bellmouth on The Murreys for vehicular access from and to Barnett Wood Lane.

Situation and outcome

This site was included in the MVDC Local Plan 2020-2039, although the site allocation suggested 30 or so dwellings on the plot. The application was submitted in October 2023 and refused in March 2024. The applicant then took the decision to appeal. The appeal hearing took place on 24th April 2025.

At the hearing the applicants and their 'high-powered' team faced the MVDC planning team, who acquitted themselves in an outstandingly professional manner, providing quick responses to the many probing questions from the inspector. The ARA was also present and contributed

to the discussions, along with a well-organised team of residents from The Murreys' community.

The appeal was dismissed on the basis that it was at variance with several key policies in the Local Plan.

POLICY DS3: MURREYS COURT, AGATES LANE, ASHTEAD	
Allocated for: RESIDENTIAL	
Site Area (ha):	1.9ha
Indicative Capacity:	30 dwellings
Policy Map Designations:	Built up area
Relevant Planning History:	MO/87/0797 - Outline permission for 19 detached 4/5 bedroom houses. MO/2023/1539 - Application for 60 assisted living units and a 66-bed care home.



MVDC Local Plan

HOW SAFE IS ASHTEAD'S GREEN BELT?

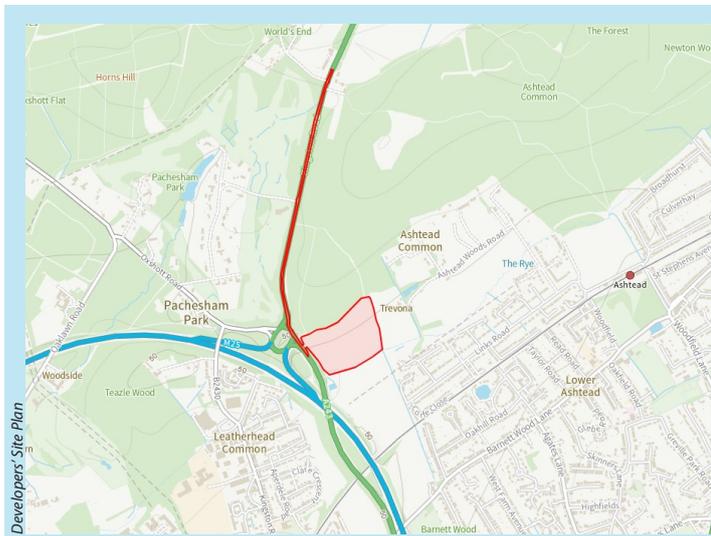
The Green Belt has protected Ashtead's countryside for the last 70 years. It has been vital in maintaining the green gaps between Ashtead and neighbouring towns, but now faces an existential threat due to government policy. The problem is the decision to encourage councils to reclassify 'poorly performing' Green Belt land as 'grey belt'.

Officially, Green Belt has five statutory purposes: (1) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; (2) to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; (3) to assist in safeguarding the countryside

from encroachment; (4) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and (5) to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. But, when deciding which Green Belt sites can be downgraded to 'grey', only purposes 1, 2 and 4 apply. Purposes 3 and 5 no longer count. This makes it much more difficult to establish that a piece of land should be retained within the Green Belt. Difficult, but not impossible.

As you may know, MVDC last year refused permission for a housing

development on the former Marsden Nursery site (see above). The developers appealed, arguing that under the new rules the site should be reclassified as 'grey'. When it came to the appeal, the inspector rejected this argument and said the site continues to make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt between Ashtead and Epsom. And by concluding that Ashtead should be considered a small town, rather than a village, Green Belt purpose 2 (preventing neighbouring towns from merging) still applies, and the land cannot be downgraded to 'grey belt'.



BESS Project, Barnett Wood Lane

Probably the most disappointing planning outcome is the proposed development of a battery energy storage system (BESS) in the first area of open countryside Green Belt accessible to the deprived area of North Leatherhead. This is on agricultural land, which, until the 1960s, was woodland criss-crossed by public footpaths, adjacent to the Ashted & Epsom Common Site of Special Scientific Interest, the Ashted Common National Nature Reserve and even, it seems unknown to the planners, Ashted Gap, which is one of Ashted's open spaces.

The proposal: Installation of a BESS facility, underground cabling, access track, landscaping, biodiversity enhancement and ancillary infrastructure and equipment, security fence and gates. The proposal is for a 40-year temporary permission, after which the development will be decommissioned and the site returned to agricultural use.

Pre-planning work and current status

This application has been extremely difficult as it is located in the Green Belt but the industrial and temporary (40-year)

life of the scheme adds to the complexity of the planning debate. Planning inspectors have said of developments in Dorking that 40 years is a long time and, in respect of the first proposal for a BESS at Chessington, even 27 years was considered, by a planning inspector, a long time to harm the Green Belt.

In principle the planners and the DMC members from elsewhere in Mole Valley seemed to be determined to get this scheme through planning. The ARA, many local residents and local councillors were opposed to it.

Fundamentally, this scheme should have been proposed on land near to the Chessington substation to which the BESS is to be connected. It seems absolute madness to propose this in the Green Belt that separates Ashted from Leatherhead, and adjacent to Ashted Common Nature reserve, and also within a few metres of the Rye Brook site of Special Nature Conservation Interest.

The planners and the majority group of MVDC councillors showed no interest in the value this land contributes to maintaining the Green Belt separation between Ashted and Leatherhead. The ARA is of the opinion that the planning officer was less than balanced in the presentation of the development case.

The outcome of the discussion in the DMC meeting was to permit the Green Belt land to be reclassified as grey belt in a liberal interpretation of the current government guidelines for encouraging development on land of low agricultural or Green Belt value.

Despite our protests, the MVDC planners ignored the very significant comments from the ARA and the many residents who responded. The application had all the appearance of being predetermined, and nothing could deflect the majority group from imposing this outrage on Ashted.

The ARA has considered whether we should implement a judicial review, but this is highly risky and carries a massive cost implication, win or lose. So, the ARA is sorry to say that the battery energy storage system scheme has been approved and is likely to go forward in the near future. The developer's agent indicated at the DMC a connection date of October 2027.

Project updates by Craig Beresford

However, lest we think that all Green Belt land separating Ashted from its neighbouring towns is now safe, the recent decision by MVDC to grant permission for a battery energy storage system (BESS) on Green Belt land between Ashted and Leatherhead, and to accept that the land in question should be reclassified as 'grey', demonstrates all too clearly that our Green Belt is not safe from development. The ARA and Ashted Independents councillors strongly opposed the BESS development on the grounds that it is harmful to the

landscape and to nature, and that it represents unnecessary industrialisation of a large slice of our Green Belt gap that separates Ashted and Leatherhead. However, MVDC's planning officers recommended, and a majority of the planning committee agreed, that the land could be downgraded to 'grey', and the BESS development should go ahead, because, they argued, the land "does not strongly contribute" to keeping the land open between Leatherhead and Ashted. This is a very bad decision, and one that sets a dangerous precedent.

Sadly, there is no third-party right of appeal, so, when residents' views are disregarded and an unwanted development is pushed through, as happened in this case, we have no way to overturn a council decision. Your independent councillors will continue to fight to defend the Green Belt, but there is no doubt that the goalposts have moved, and the government (and some in MVDC) are determined to redesignate large areas of our Green Belt as 'grey' to allow these green fields to be built on.

Cllr Andy Smith

Ashted Lanes and Common Ward

MOLE VALLEY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Autumn begins that time of nature's rest before blooming again in spring, and in many ways the District Council and its impact on Ashtead is at a similar point of dual change.

The government has finally announced that Surrey will comprise two unitary councils. Ashtead will be included within the new East Surrey Council, comprising what is now Mole Valley District Council (MVDC), Epsom & Ewell, Reigate & Banstead, Elmbridge and Tandridge. From May 2026 there will be a year of transition before the new authority takes over local government.

It is sad that the rural character of the land around Ashtead is under threat like never before. The government's introduction of 'grey belt' land appears to be a way of eroding the Green Belt.

Although the planning inspector agreed with local sentiment on the appeal into Ashtead Garden Centre, we remain vigilant and face an uphill battle.

Indeed residents have been aghast that councillors from the majority party on MVDC voted for a battery storage facility on Green Belt land near Ashtead Common – particularly when there is planning permission for a similar facility much closer to the substation at Chessington. Experts say this is a much better option for energy efficiency.

Residents who travelled to Dorking for the July meeting of the planning

committee were shocked to hear that the doubling of traffic on Ermyrn Way is somehow acceptable. When they applauded an Ashtead councillor, speaking for them, the entire public gallery was cleared! The approved Ermyrn Way development shows a community building but no details on its intended use and no space for parking. There is no provision for education funding – and two cars in a car club will be shared by about 500 residents!

Very recently a proposal for more housing at the Ermyrn House brownfield site has become public. What the local plan had allocated for 140 homes has come in with a proposal for 345 homes!

There is clearly a need for more housing in the area, but it needs policy changes and an effective planning system, properly used, to deliver the right homes in the right locations. The need for new affordable housing is supported for local people to live locally, but new housing must be affordable and the implications on all services must be addressed, not ignored.

MVDC has broadcast the adoption of a 40% Affordable Housing requirement on new development, but the sad reality is that much lower affordable housing provision is now being accepted. A council report has exposed that in the last five years, MVDC delivered just 92 affordable homes when it should have

delivered 330, missing their own policy by 238 units, despite granting planning permissions for many hundreds of homes.

In other news... Lobbying by residents and councillors for Ashtead playground to be renewed has borne success. MVDC will use a substantial amount of money held for such purposes to upgrade and expand the playground area with new items. There should be a consultation period, but expect it to be short; MVDC is likely to try to commit to the expenditure before the unitary council is formed. Councillors have also supported extra funding for the Scout Hall.

We continue to support residents in trying to protect Rye Brook from pollution.

Congratulations go out to Ashtead Horticultural Society on their 150-year anniversary, and we thank them for planting bulbs along the A24. The flowers will brighten our days next spring.

Your local councillors are here to help all Ashtead residents.

Please do contact us if you have any questions or issues you'd like to raise.

Cllr Chris Hunt
Leader, Ashtead
Independents



SURREY COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT



At the end of October the government announced that there will be two new unitary authorities for Surrey: East Surrey and West Surrey (as illustrated on the map to the right). Ashtead will be in East Surrey and it looks as though we will have

only two unitary councillors from April 2027. There is a vast amount of work to do to meet this timeline, and much more information and fuller details will be provided over the coming months.

I was pleased to arrange a grant from the Your Fund Surrey for Barnett Wood Infant School to replace the rather forlorn galleon in the playground, which had been a great focus for

the imagination of the children for so many years but had fallen into such a state of disrepair that it had been condemned. Hopefully the replacement fort, selected by the Pupils' Council, will be delivered and put in place in the very near future and it, too, will give long service to the children.

I am hoping that the yellow lines requested in last year's review of parking will be provided soon, but with winter approaching this may be delayed. It is very poor that Surrey has taken so long in the process.

Residents are now asking for more potential parking issues to be addressed for 2026 and these

will be put into the system as soon as I know specifics.

The coming reorganisation of councils, i.e. to unitary status, may affect this, but I will monitor the situation.

Cllr Chris Townsend, Ashtead Division, Surrey County Council
(Map courtesy of Surrey Heath Borough Council)





CRY celebrates three decades of life-saving work

Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY) was founded in May 1995 by Ashtead resident Alison Cox MBE. Since then, the charity – now headed up by Dr Steven Cox, Alison’s son – has become an influential research organisation that advises on national policy, and is internationally recognised as leading the way in the prevention of young sudden cardiac death (YSCD).

Every week in the UK, around 12 apparently fit young people (aged 35 and under) die suddenly from a hidden heart condition. Around 80% of these deaths occur with no prior symptoms, which is why CRY believes screening is so vitally important and now tests around 30,000 young people (aged 14-35) every year using a simple, non-invasive ECG – for free.

The charity also provides support for families affected by YSCD. Its bereavement network connects specially trained individuals (parents, siblings or partners who have suffered a similar loss) with anyone seeking support and solace.



Dr Steven Cox (left) told TAR, “As our charity marks its 30th anniversary, we not only look back at all that’s been achieved over the past three decades, but also embrace the exciting developments ahead. Advanced technology and new research look set to revolutionise the way we

screen young hearts, as well as significantly increasing access to specialist cardiac testing for young people across the UK.

He added, “It’s also a timely opportunity to recognise that thanks to CRY’s unwavering mission to prevent the tragedy of young sudden cardiac death, there are now more cases than ever of young people being diagnosed with ‘hidden’ cardiac abnormalities and, moreover, being successfully treated.”

I became aware of CRY in 1998, when a magazine colleague passed away from a cardiac arrest at the age of 26. The mag’s editor lived in Ashtead and had gone to school with Steven, so we visited Alison at her home to find out more about the charity and the support it offered, so we could spread the word.

Soon after our interview, CRY moved out of Alison’s spare room into an office in Tadworth and then, in 2015, into its space in Leatherhead, which now houses CRY’s National Screening Centre – run in tandem with a UK-wide mobile screening team.

I recently took my children (15 and 19) to be screened. Having booked a slot online, we turned up at the centre on Cleeve Road, the kids had their height and weight recorded, then went into separate side rooms for the ECG. The test took a few minutes, then we waited a short while to see the doctor for the results (all clear!). The whole thing was so well organised and the staff really put the kids at ease – and I can relax knowing that their tests showed no abnormalities. What an incredible initiative.

Alex Bradley

For more info and to book a free screening, visit: www.testmyheart.org.uk

ASHTEAD LEVEL CROSSING

Emergency measures explained

Residents may recall that ARA committee members met with senior staff from Network Rail and representatives from the Ambulance Service, the Surrey Fire & Rescue Service and Surrey Police to discuss the procedures for unplanned closures at the level crossing. Also present were local councillors from MVDC and SCC, and our MP, Helen Maguire.

Network Rail outlined its procedures for dealing with a breakdown of the crossing mechanisms (barriers), and suggestions to minimise disruption and risk were put forward. As has already been announced, Ashtead Common has agreed that an ambulance will be able to access the north side of the level crossing via its tracks from The Wells. In addition, the Air Ambulance has agreed to land on the north side should they be required to attend a patient

during a level-crossing breakdown/closure. The Fire Service cannot use the Ashtead Common tracks as their vehicles are too heavy, so in the event of a fire and risk to life, they will liaise



with Network Rail to open the level crossing as soon as possible.

In turn, Network Rail has agreed to store extra materials at Ashtead, and in the event of a failure will despatch two managers to oversee the situation and manually open the barriers. NR also

advised that should a piece of equipment fail, it will be replaced on all four mechanisms to try to prevent another failure. We have also requested that should equipment fail elsewhere on the

network, the same equipment is rigorously tested and checked at Ashtead.

ARA has been striving to obtain a written protocol of agreed procedures, but Network Rail has yet to provide this. We continue to press for written confirmation so that it may be published for all to read.

These procedures have not had to be tested yet as the

mechanisms have operated successfully of late, but as the barriers are subjected to more than 300,000 movements a year (6 times an hour x 18 hours a day x 363 days x 4 mechanisms x 2 (open/close)), a failure is inevitable at some point.

David Baker

ASHTEAD COMMON

Ashtead Common is managed by the City of London Corporation: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/ashtead-common

A new season, a new task

In spring and summer, the Ashtead Common Ranger team, often supported by volunteers, busy themselves tidying up from the previous season's activities, mowing the rides and firebreaks, snipping paths to enable thorn-free access along the footpaths, and replacing/repairing infrastructure. This light touch minimises any disturbance to flora and fauna, to provide a space for nature to thrive.

Come September, once the chicks have fledged, the days are getting cooler and shorter, and the migrant birds are thinking of warmer climes, focus turns to practical habitat management. This year, much of the efforts will focus on the scrub grassland slopes, with the goal of maintaining the mosaic of young and old scrub with grassland areas and a few larger canopy trees. This often means wrestling with blackthorn, brambles and hawthorn, and the odd wild rose thrown in for good measure! The cows have done an excellent job of grazing between the scrub blocks, which provides easier access and reduces the risk of ticks.

Usually at this time of year, our specialist ancient-tree contractors would be gearing up to come and work on our ancient pollarded oaks. However, due to the very dry spring and summer (the Southeast received around 30% of its annual average rain), the trees are stressed.

For this reason, the ancient trees will not be cut this year as this would do more harm than good. Work will still be undertaken around the base of the trees, to reduce



Ashtead Common is home to more than 1,000 ancient oak pollard trees, an unusually large population of international significance

competition for water and nutrients, and on the canopy trees surrounding them to provide more light.

There is a fine balance when undertaking this kind of work: remove too much and the trees become susceptible to wind damage or stress from too much sunlight; remove too little and they cannot get sufficient light to photosynthesize, and weaken. For this reason, the work is planned and overseen by our in-house veteran tree expert and ranger, Zuzi Featherstone.

Louise Fletcher, Ranger

ASHTEAD STATION & WOOD FIELD FOOTPATH

A solution is needed for footpath flooding

Residents will be aware that after periods of persistent rainfall, Ashtead's second 'pond' appears on the Wood Field between Woodfield Lane and the footpath from the station car park. This pond causes no one any problem and dries up come the spring.

There is, however, another pond that appears and covers the footpath, starting at the iron footbridge and



Commuters and locals shouldn't have to wade across – or avoid – a flooded station car park (blocked drains pictured above) and footpath

running alongside the station car park. This causes huge inconvenience to residents walking to the station from Woodfield (the road), Woodfield Close and Elmwood Close, and those crossing the footbridge. This 'pond' bridges even the raised tarmac footpath sometimes to a depth of over 12 inches, making the path impassable.

The Residents' Association believes this flood emanates from the extended station car park. Plans we have examined at Mole Valley District Council, which gave planning permission for the extension, indicate that drainage for the car park is via gaps in the kerbstones on the southern side, allowing water to drain into the Wood Field, exacerbating the flooding problem. Examination of the area does not reveal any gaps, but we have discovered equipment in the car park that seems to indicate that a sump has been installed with solar-powered monitoring equipment.

Although the station is run by GTR/Southern and the car park is managed by APCOA, the land is owned by Network Rail. We are therefore seeking a site visit by engineers from the Network Rail Property department to ascertain what flood alleviation measures were installed and whether they need more maintenance and perhaps clearance of accumulated debris. We will update residents with the outcome of this via the ARA website.

David Baker

RYE MEADOWS WETLANDS



Recognition for Rye Meadows

We are pleased to announce that Rye Meadows was shortlisted for a Mole Valley Sustainability Award under the category of Nature & Biodiversity. Although we were unsuccessful this year, it was a feather in our cap to be in the final list of those nominated for the Award. It is well-deserved recognition for the hard work and dedication of a small number of volunteers who turn out twice a month to maintain the Meadows.

Heritage Open Day on Sunday 14th September was a little disappointing, probably due to the worrying weather forecast of high winds and very heavy rain. Fortunately, these did not materialise, but many people would have understandably been put off by the warnings. If you missed walking through the fields, you can now enjoy some digital fresh air by viewing the video of the walk at the Rye Meadows website: www.ryemeadows.org.uk/gallery

As we draw into autumn and winter, we have ahead of us a work schedule that includes scrub clearance and the laying of some hedges. We all enjoyed learning the skills



This blackthorn hedge alongside Ashtead Woods Road is double thickness and crosses an old ditch. The work carried out by Rye Meadows volunteers involved coppicing the inner hedge to ground level and laying the outer hedge

last winter when we laid the hedges in Jack Adams field and alongside Ashtead Woods Road (pictured below), and we will continue to learn as we set about laying some more hedges in Rye Meadows and adjoining fields.

Tasks coming up include the installation of a wider gate from FP596 into Lower Tomletts field. This will enable a full-sized tractor to access the field more easily for mowing.

While some scrub needs to be left for wildlife and bird habitat, the ever-encroaching dreaded blackthorn needs to be kept in check, especially around the newly laid hedges so that the laid plants are not choked.

New volunteers are always welcome, so if you feel like working in fresh air with a friendly group of people, you are invited to come along and see what's involved. Contact David at rmadmin@ryemeadows.org.uk.

If you just wish to be kept informed by newsletter, please email and ask to be added to the 'Friends' list. Your email address will be used only for that purpose.

David Baker

WILDLIFE AID

Christmas shop is now open!

Wildlife Aid's online Christmas shop features wildlife-inspired gifts, such as splash art and line art collections (including mugs at £8), jewellery, accessories and Christmas gift bags. A wider selection of home and garden gifts, plush toys, stationery and more is available in the main shop.

The charity's 2026 calendar and Christmas cards are also now on sale – but stock is limited, so don't miss out! The calendar is filled with photos taken by WAF supporters and volunteers of animals in the wild, and there are two styles of cards – illustrations (right) and photographs.

Every purchase helps raise vital funds for wildlife in need. Shop here: www.wildlifeaid.org.uk/shop

The Christmas shop includes cards, £3.50, and Wrendale scarves, £32 (three designs available)



The Leatherhead-based Wildlife Aid Foundation is one of the UK's leading animal conservation charities. It rescues, treats, rehabilitates and releases thousands of British wildlife every year. Visit the website to find out more about the charity and its winter 2025 appeal: www.wildlifeaid.org.uk



REDUCE, RECYCLE, REPAIR, REUSE

Find out more about Transition Ashtead at the ARA website: www.ashteadresidents.org.uk/transition-ashtead

Recycling in Mole Valley is easier than ever. Recyclable materials (see right for a reminder) are collected at the kerbside for sorting, reprocessing and redistributing to our local recycling centre. This includes garden waste, for which there is a separate, chargeable bin, and food.

Did you know that small electrical items and batteries will be collected if left in a separate bag next to your bin, and that since 2021, when the Electrical Retailer Take-back rules came into force in the UK, retailers have had a responsibility to receive and recycle used electrical items? Always ask the retailer when buying new goods. Electricals are full of valuable materials and can be shredded and separated into their different constituents for reuse.

For items not recycled via our kerbside collections, look for special collection points in supermarkets and chemists where you can recycle blister packs, soft plastics (e.g. bags, film lids, wrappers and pouches) and makeup containers. Or why not give pre-used items a new lease of life by buying/selling online, donating via the numerous 'freecycle' options, or mending them? Repair cafés, such as Epsom Repair Café (www.epsomrepaircafe.org), are springing up all over, repairing electrical items, clothing, electronics, clocks, etc.

Helen Hore

One way to reduce plastic packaging – and save money at the same time – is to join Transition Ashtead's food-buying group. We buy in bulk from an ethical wholesaler, and when the order arrives it is weighed out into members' empty containers. There's no minimum order and orders can be made online by 5pm on Wednesday 10th December.

For details on how to take part, see Transition Ashtead's page under Community Pages on the ARA website, our Facebook page, or email transitionashtead23@gmail.com.

Becky Wood

RECYCLING BIN

Collected fortnightly.



TEXTILES

Collected weekly. Can also be recycled at community recycling centres.

YES PLEASE



SMALL ELECTRICALS

Collected weekly. Can also be recycled at community recycling centres.

YES PLEASE



See the Bin Collections and Recycling Guide in full at www.molevalley.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/molevalley_serviceguide_2025_PDF.pdf, or request a printed copy by calling MVDC on 01306 885001. **Not sure how or where to recycle an item?** Visit this website to find out: www.jointwastesolutions.org/search-by-item/what-do-i-do-with-2/

ARA DIGITAL MEMBERSHIP

One of the primary purposes of your association is to lobby on behalf of the residents of Ashtead. To lobby effectively we need to interact with residents as soon as any new concern, such as a major planning application, raises its head. In past years the ARA has had to rely on half-yearly general meetings and the insights collected by our wonderful Road Stewards.

Last November your newly elected committee decided to start focusing on enabling online opinion gathering. We settled on email because it is easy to use and manage, and we are pleased to report that we have already gone from zero to nearly 1,200 email-using members. Each of these members has an individual vote at our meetings and has login access to a private area of our website.

Our members area has a great lobbying advantage in that we know its users are confirmed voting age residents of Ashtead. Now that we have proof that the system works, we can consult you on what form of online voting would be regarded as fair and safe, with a view to members voting for a motion that adds this to the ARA constitution at the AGM.

We have not forgotten those former members who have always paid their annual household contribution when a Road Steward came to their door and so we will be proposing a major new 'knocking on doors' campaign in the lead-up to the April 2026 AGM.

This year we have been experimenting with developing the infrastructure for running online surveys (such as the ones about Ermyn Way and the children's playground) and have allowed anyone who claims to be a voting age resident of Ashtead to take part. These have had a good number of responses from those who are not yet members, but it is not financially sustainable to continue to allow free access to our surveys. To make sure everyone can afford to take part we are trying to keep the household annual contribution to the current nominal sum of £2.50. **Do please join us.**

Perhaps you will be our 2,000th email subscriber!

Scan the QR code or visit our website to become a member: www.ashteadresidents.org.uk/membership-and-members/

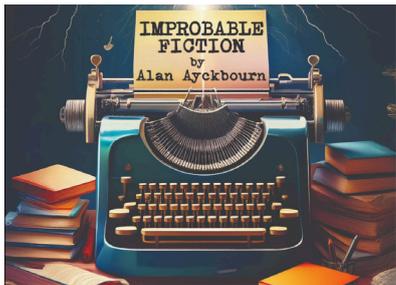


ASHTEAD PEACE MEMORIAL HALL

As always, there is so much going on at APMH – see www.apmh.org.uk for details. Here are some highlights...

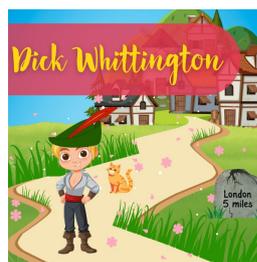
Ashtead Players present *Improbable Fiction*, an Alan Ayckbourn comedy

Six aspiring authors meet on a winter's evening to discuss their work. The chairman, Arnold, attempts to persuade the group to collaborate on a piece of writing, an idea that is quickly dismissed. As Arnold is clearing up after the meeting there is a clap of thunder, a blackout – and then the story that would have resulted from the collaboration takes place before his very eyes. Sharp comedy and affectionate satire characterise this zany, imaginative play.



Tickets and timings

- 19th to 22nd November
- Evenings 7:45pm; Saturday matinee 2:30pm
- £15 on the door, £12 in advance
- Tickets: www.ashteadplayers.co.uk/07598121477



Woodfield Entertainers present *Dick Whittington*

Join Dick Whittington and his clever cat on a rags-to-riches rollercoaster packed with laughs, magic and toe-tapping tunes! From the cobbled streets of London to the high seas and back again, this family classic is bursting

with villainous plots, larger-than-life characters and more cheesy jokes than a fondue fountain. Will Dick become Lord Mayor? Will the cat save the day? And will the audience ever stop singing the finale in the car park? There's only one way to find out – book your tickets and be part of the festive fun!

Tickets and timings

- Thursday 11th & Friday 12th Dec, 7.30pm; Saturday 13th, 1pm & 6:30pm
- Adults £14, children £7 • Tickets: www.ticketsource.co.uk/woodfieldentertainers/dick-whittington/e-jqergv

Penny Weaver



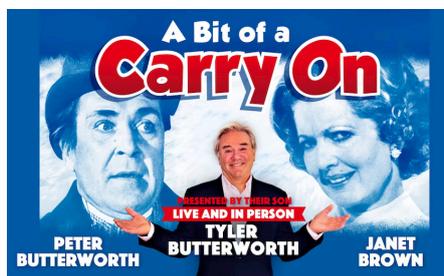
The Arts Society Ashtead

Throughout spring and summer, we continued our programme of fascinating monthly talks at APMH, on a diverse range of arts-related topics including Berthe Morisot, Food and Art Through the Ages, and Jewellery and Fashion in the Art Nouveau and Art Deco eras. We also enjoyed four well-attended visits to places of interest: Stansted Park, Chawton House and The Vyne, the Hindu temple in Wembley and Osterley Park, and Royal Tunbridge Wells and Hammerwood Park.

In August we staged a Special Interest Morning at St Giles' Dell Centre on the subject of Istanbul, and in September 40 members embarked

on a five-day cultural holiday to the beautiful and historic county of Suffolk.

Our programme of lectures continues throughout the autumn and winter, and



we are looking forward to our ever-popular Christmas Celebration on Tuesday 2nd December (see back page),

when we will hear about the fascinating lives of Peter Butterworth and his wife, the famous impressionist Janet Brown, from Peter's son, Tyler (including of course excerpts from the *Carry-on* films).

So much to enjoy! We are looking forward to meeting our members at our friendly and stimulating monthly meetings and events and giving a warm welcome to visitors and new members. We meet at the Peace Memorial Hall on the third Tuesday of the month at 10:30am – doors open 9:30am for tea, coffee and biscuits.

For more information on our upcoming programme, please visit our new website: www.tas-ashtead.org.uk

Keith Allardyce

ASHTEAD AND LEATHERHEAD PROBUS

Ashtead and Leatherhead Probus is the club for anyone with a professional or business background who wants to meet friends over a superb lunch, followed by an entertaining talk. We meet at 12:30pm on the third Monday of the month at Tyrrells Wood Golf Club (right) in Leatherhead. We also enjoy informal pub lunches, a countryside walking group and visits to places of interest. Past talks have included topics such as India, Clondon Park and the Whitbread Round the World Race. We are looking forward to our Christmas lunch, when we will be entertained by the famous Bowler Hatted Magician.

We have a full programme of talks planned for 2025/2026.

Details on our website: www.ashteadleatherheadprobus.org

Keith Allardyce





The *Ashtead* RESIDENT

Ashtead Advent Calendar

Tuesday 2nd December

🎄 The Arts Society Ashtead Christmas Celebration, 6 for 6.30pm, APMH 🎄
Book your place at www.tas-ashtead.org.uk/documents

Wednesday 3rd December

🎄 Carols & Tea, 2-4pm, St George's Church 🎄

Thursday 4th December

🎄 Word on the Street event, 7pm, APMH 🎄
Join *Torie True* for a cookery demonstration from her new book, 'Seven Kitchens: A Journey Through India's Culinary Heritage'.
Tickets £15 from Word on the Street

Friday 5th December

🎄 Ashtead Friday Market, 9am-12pm, APMH 🎄
Stalls will include gifts, cards, jewellery, haberdashery, jams, pastries and cakes, cheese and nuts, local honey, clothes, knitted items and Freer Skincare, plus Huntington's Disease Association, Mencap and Alzheimer's Society charity stalls
🎄 Friends of APMH Dinner 🎄

Saturday 6th December

🎄 Ashtead Choral Society Carols for Charity, 10am-noon, APMH 🎄
Admission donation £2 – pay on the door

Tuesday 9th December

🎄 Ashtead Traders Market, The Street, 4-8pm 🎄
A traditional market this year. Attractions to include Santa, tombola, penalty shootout, hook-a-duck, face painting, coconut shy, stalls, DJ, chocolate fountain and popcorn maker

Wednesday 10th December

🎄 Nativity Crib Festival, 9am-6pm, St George's Church 🎄

Thursday 11th to Saturday 13th December

🎄 Woodfield Entertainers presents Dick Whittington, APMH 🎄
Book tickets at: www.woodfieldentertainers.co.uk

Thursday 11th December

🎄 Nativity Crib Festival, 9am-6pm, St George's Church 🎄
🎄 A cosy conversation, 6pm, Ashtead Library 🎄
Author Hayley Dunlop shares insights into her book, 'It's Beginning to look a lot like Christmas'. £5 per person. Book at the desk or email ashtead.library@surreycc.gov.uk

Saturday 13th December

🎄 Nativity Crib Festival, 9am-4pm, St George's Church 🎄
🎄 Christmas Fair, 11am-2pm, Barnett Wood Infant School 🎄
🎄 LLC Santa round* from 5pm 🎄
• Petters Rd • Chaffers Mead • Cray Ave • Newton Wood Rd

Sunday 14th December

🎄 LLC Santa round* from 5pm 🎄
• Glebe Rd • Read Rd • Skinners Lane • Gladstone Rd • Virginia Close • Paddocks Way • Paddocks Close

Monday 15th December

🎄 Ashtead and Leatherhead Probus Christmas Lunch 🎄
🎄 LLC Santa round* from 5pm 🎄
• The Murreys • West Farm Ave • Summerfields • West Farm Ave to Nos 41/54 • West Farm Close

Tuesday 16th December

🎄 LLC Santa round* from 5pm 🎄
• West Farm Ave from Nos 43/56 • West Farm Drive • Taleworth Rd • Orchard Drive • Taleworth Close • Maple Rd • Bramley Gr.

Saturday 20th December

🎄 Surrey Jive presents The Kingcats, 7:30-11:15pm, APMH 🎄
£13, www.surreyjive.co.uk/event/the-kingcats-hollywood-glamour

Sunday 21st December

🎄 Family Carol Service, 10.30-11.30am, St George's Church 🎄
🎄 Nine Lessons & Carols, 4-5pm, St Giles' Church 🎄
🎄 LLC Santa round* from 5pm 🎄
• Taylor Rd • The Chase • Oakhill Rd • Rosedale • Oakhill Close • Caen Wood Rd
🎄 Carol service, 6.30pm, Ashtead Baptist Church 🎄

Monday 22nd December

🎄 Christmas family film, 3-5pm, St George's Church 🎄
🎄 LLC Santa round* from 5pm 🎄
• Bramley Way • Stonny Croft • Darcy Rd • Berry Mead • Hillside Rd

Tuesday 23rd December

🎄 LLC Santa round* from 5pm 🎄
• Overdale (residents from St Stephens Ave meet by the Cattle Creep) • Broadhurst • Culverhay
🎄 LeRoc Surrey Eve of Christmas Eve Ball, 7:45-11.30pm, APMH 🎄
Tickets £14 in advance, £16 on the night: www.leroc.dance

Christmas Eve

🎄 Nativity Service, 10-11.30am, St George's Church 🎄
🎄 Carols at the Crib, 3.30-4.30pm & 5.30-6.30pm, St George's Church 🎄
🎄 Carols at the Crib, 3.30-4.30pm & 5.30-6.30pm, St Giles' Church 🎄
🎄 Communion service, 6.30pm, Ashtead Baptist Church 🎄
🎄 Candlelit Midnight Communion, 11.15pm-12.15am, St Giles' Church 🎄

Christmas Day

🎄 Holy Communion, 8-9am, St Giles' Church 🎄
🎄 Christmas Day Celebration, 10am, Ashtead Baptist Church 🎄
🎄 All Age Christmas Day Service, 10.30-11.30am, St George's Church 🎄
🎄 All Age Christmas Day Service, 10.30-11.30am, St Giles' Church 🎄

🎄 *The Leatherhead & District Lions Club has been supporting Santa on his rounds since 1974. Donations this year will go to Leatherhead Lions Welfare Fund, which supports a variety of individuals, groups and projects in the local area 🎄

Last posting dates

2nd class – Wednesday 17th December
1st Class – Saturday 20th December

See the Royal Mail website for international and tracked services: www.royalmail.com/christmas/last-posting-dates