



# Effingham Residents Association

February 2021

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



This year's report covers a ten month period from March 2020 because EFFRA changed its year end last year to 31<sup>st</sup> December. In April, there was the dreadful fire at the Village Supermarket which spread to Bevans and resulted in both being closed. A Community Store (staffed by volunteers) was set up by the church as an interim measure; this illustrated the great community spirit of Effingham residents rallying together in difficult times. Work has recently begun on Bevans and it plans to reopen with its new extension soon.



The Covid situation, although terrible, has resulted in people coming together across the country and supporting each other. EFFRA has provided information about support which is available through its website and Facebook page; the popularity of both is continuing to grow as a result. The number of subscribers to website posts has increased from around 300 to 539 currently, whilst the Facebook page now has 495 followers and 397 likes. We are very grateful to Harry Clarke, the editor and EFFRA committee member for the excellent work he does. He makes regular posts about local news and information adding new website pages as appropriate. The EFFRA website covers subjects which are of interest and helpful to Effingham residents and Harry is always happy to listen to residents' suggestions for improvements. For example, the "About Effingham" section has been revised and updated. It includes information on current activities and facilities in the village and information about the village in the past. The information provided by community organisations about their activities has also been updated. When restrictions ease we hope this will help draw residents back to these organisations and attract new members. A new page on Recycling written by committee member, Diane Poole, also a co-founder of Plastic Free Bookham, has been recently added.



Effingham suffered from three travellers' incursions in 2020. In May, travellers illegally entered Effingham Lodge Farm. In August, the Church Hall, its carpark and gardens had to be closed as a result of a travellers' incursion and in September the KGV Playing Fields suffered a similar fate. Eviction of the travellers from the Church Hall and KGV required the use of bailiffs with associated significant costs: expenditure both charities running the venues were ill able to afford especially in a year with much reduced income. Both charities have held funding appeals to raise money to increase their security. EFFRA was pleased to support these appeals and new security is planned for the Church Hall and barriers have been installed around the carpark at the KGV. In October 2020 EFFRA wrote to our MP, Sir Paul Beresford, who has previously expressed concern about this issue, to ask him to take action. In his detailed reply in December Sir Paul said that he was fully aware of the problem and had been "putting these points [re the problems caused by unauthorised travellers' incursions] ..to Ministers for years" and that he and "a number of like minded Conservative colleagues are determined to continue to push the cause." Other local organisations have also contacted him supporting our plea for action. Subsequently, the Government announced it is currently considering two proposals to reform the policing of unauthorised encampments. It has committed itself to legislate on this issue with a Police Powers and Protections Bill in this parliamentary session, either by introducing a new criminal offence or by strengthening the police powers in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 Act. It is encouraging that our MP is supporting measures to resolve this problem.



Each year EFFRA co-ordinates Heritage Open Day in Effingham and Little Bookham (including our neighbour The Grange in Great Bookham) and it has always been a very popular event. Unfortunately, the Open Day could not be held in 2020 due to the pandemic but we hope it will go ahead this year so that residents and visitors will again be able to enjoy some of our heritage properties.

The EFFRA committee has continued to meet throughout the last ten months by virtual Zoom meetings and has been involved in many issues. Planning and proposed developments continue to be a major task. EFFRA only reviews developments that we believe affect all residents and will only comment on individual applications which might impact the village in general such as those adversely affecting the Green Belt, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Conservation Area or be against the policies in the Effingham Neighbourhood Plan. EFFRA is available to help or advise any residents who require support,



seeking the views of neighbouring residents where developments are proposed. This year EFFRA has objected to five planning applications in Effingham. These included the proposals for the Douglas Haig site on the grounds of overdevelopment and damage to the Conservation Area. There is currently no decision on this application. The other four objections were for residential properties where the proposals would adversely affect the Conservation Area, Green Belt or AONB. Two were refused, one was withdrawn and one is currently pending. EFFRA also objected to the proposed development of Forest Garage, Forest Road, just over the boundary in East Horsley boundary, which was refused. Three objections were made to Mole Valley District Council regarding properties in Little Bookham near the boundary. One of these was refused but has gone to Appeal, one was approved with conditions relating to EFFRA's objections and the other was

allowed. EFFRA also supported the rebuilding and small extension to Bevans Butchers in The Street, Effingham.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> February, Guildford Borough Council turned down the planning application for 17 dwellings on the former St Lawrence School field in Church Street. EFFRA was closely involved in this decision and I spoke at the Planning Committee meeting as Chairman of EFFRA. The Committee worked with the Parish Council and encouraged them to obtain a legal opinion on the planning officer's recommendation to approve the application and her application of policy in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan (which proposed up to 9 homes on this site) and its relationship to the Local Plan. This opinion confirmed that the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan apply fully where they are not in conflict with the Local Plan and that those affected by the inseting of the village (such as the numbers recommended for the individual sites) still have some weight. So whilst the capping of the number of dwellings at nine on this site may now have less weight as it is no longer in the Green Belt, the other policies in the site allocation and Neighbourhood Plan including the requirement for the buildings to be small-scale in keeping with the cottages on the other side of Church Street and that they should preserve and enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area still apply in full. This opinion was important in the rejection of the application and will help the village defend its Neighbourhood Plan (which so many of us voted for), against inappropriate development.

The next challenge for Effingham is the 110 extra houses proposed by Berkeley Homes as additional enabling development as a result of a claimed rise in costs for the new Howard School. EFFRA was very encouraged that our MP, Sir Paul Beresford, our County Councillor, Julie Iles and the County Councillor for Bookham and Fetcham West, Clare Curran have spoken out to say that they do not support the proposal and have asked Berkeley Homes to reconsider. EFFRA, reflecting residents' views, is also firmly against the proposal and has called on Berkeley Homes to withdraw it. EFFRA has always believed that the issues regarding the condition of the existing school should have been dealt with by refurbishment on the existing site rather than a rebuild of the school on a new Green Belt site. Increasing the school's size from 1,600 to over 2,000 pupils is inappropriate in a small village and the proposed 110 additional houses on Green Belt land next to Ancient Woodland would cause more significant damage and put the infrastructure of the area under even greater strain. You can read our MP's and Councillors' statement at <https://effinghamresidents.org.uk/sir-paul-beresford-statement-on-proposed-110-houses> and the EFFRA statement at <https://effinghamresidents.org.uk/effra-statement-on-the-proposed-110-houses-on-the-green-belt>.



Later this year, Taylor Wimpey is expected to submit a planning application for the former Wisley Airfield for some 2,000 homes. EFFRA's view is that the infrastructure of the area cannot cope with the size of this development.

EFFRA continues to work closely with the Parish Council in the interest of the village. Two EFFRA committee members, Bhupinder Mahi and Diane Poole, are helping the Parish Council's Climate Change working group. Bhupinder is helping the group put together an environmental survey to understand residents' concerns about the environment and what we can do about it. Diane has championed the "Blue Heart wild flowers on the verges" scheme in Bookham and it is hoped this will be extended to appropriate places in Effingham.

The Committee is grateful to the road wardens who were able to deliver the last Newsletter in May 2020. We hope to produce another printed Newsletter in the next few months. I would like to thank Committee members for their contributions and support over the last ten months.

*Vivien White* Chairman

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