

OGRES CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2007

There are currently a number of planning matters underway both in and around Wallington that may impact on us as residents. Part of OGRES remit is to monitor planning applications submitted to the council that affect the area and act on your behalf.

We continue to keep an eye open for planning applications (via the Sutton council website) and we check them while there is still time to mount opposition or suggest changes if necessary. Committee members regularly attend the bi-monthly Beddington and Wallington area planning committee meetings, as well as the Wallington Forum meetings. Looking ahead, the committee will continue to keep a close watch on the planning activity and we find that our representation at these regular meetings is one of the most effective ways there are of making the views of residents known to the Council. You can also monitor planning applications by visiting the Sutton Council planning site through the links on the OGRES web site.

We ask your help to remain vigilant if you do see planning notices on lampposts or receive flyers in the post, please notify a committee member as soon as possible, either by contacting one of them directly or via the contact button on the OGRES website.

Two members of OGRES attended a meeting in October called as a result of Sutton reviewing their core planning strategy which will replace the Unitary Development plan over the next three years, this will set out the councils policy for the use of land over the next 10 to 15 years. The meeting, which took the form of a workshop discussed the three main options being considered, and most people at this meeting felt that none of the options were perfect in every respect. The council are looking for input and seem prepared to accept alternatives at this stage the full details are on this page of the Sutton website

Three OGRES members attended the March Beddington and Wallington Area Committee meeting to provide input on a discussion held by the planning department entitled "A Vision for Wallington Town Centre". Various options for the regeneration of Wallington Town Centre were outlined and comments and feedback invited from the audience. The input will be added to that from local businesses and an outline planning document will be created. As more details of this initiative

develop we will put more information on our website at:
www.ogres.org.uk

We also responded to Andrew Pelling regarding the London Assembly's Planning and Spatial Development Committee investigation into how the suburbs can be looked after and improved. The main point that we put forward was that existing gardens should not be treated as "brown field sites" and in filled with new developments. The development of existing garden space changes the whole look and feel of an area, and increasing the density in this manner does not allow for adequate planning of the additional services that are necessary with an increase in population. The nature of the area is changed when blocks of flats are placed where there once was a single residence, increases in car parking and traffic makes the existing street busier and more built up. A private garden is not the same as an ex-industrial site, there are plenty of areas where flats can be built without encroaching on either the green belt or residential garden spaces.

Many OGRES residents want to park their cars off the street, which generally means paving over the front garden. However there are disadvantages to doing this - many environmental.

The increase in paving causes rainwater to run off into the street drains rather than be absorbed into the ground that can lead to flooding when the system becomes overloaded. The effect on the street scene is also potentially damaging to us as residents in that one of the main arguments for this area being designated as an 'Area of Special Local Character (ASLC)' is that it is an area with a distinctive landscape characterised by verdant front gardens. Complete removal of a significant proportion of front gardens could result in this distinctive character being lost and a review of the ASLC could result in a loss of this status. The overall impact is potentially an increase in the number of successful developments within the OGRES area that are applied for and granted by Sutton Council.

If you are going to pave over your garden consider keeping as much shrubbery and unpaved area as possible and think about using a porous surface rather than solid paving,

This year we again walked around the area singing carols and raising money for the Diamond Riding Centre. Thanks go to all those who joined us on clear but cold evening. We're particularly keen to be joined by anyone with a powerful voice, an ability to play carols on a

musical instrument without being able to see the music or a persuasive manner on the doorstep collecting cash.

Residents will have seen from the Newsletter that we have tried to make the collection of subscriptions easier with the adoption of an envelope payment system. All the committee members are volunteers and find it difficult to find the time and sometimes awkward to knock on doors "cold calling" for subscriptions. We hope that our members are happy with this system. It is important to collect as many subscriptions as possible in order to demonstrate that we represent a significant percentage of the residents of the area.

OGRES is run by residents who all have other commitments and give their time in order to help to retain the unique character of our area. We urgently need some extra volunteers to serve on the committee. If you have not yet put your name forward may I urge you to do so when it comes to the elections later in the meeting.

I would like to express my thanks to all members of the committee who have given so much of their leisure time to these activities and to attending the various meetings and other activities throughout the year.

David Duncan

9/7/07