

Guildford Society Annual Report

April 2021 to March 2022

The Covid pandemic eased during the year and the Society resumed physical meetings for its workgroups together with Zoom events. Sadly, an upsurge in Covid cases caused us to cancel our Christmas social event, but by Easter the pandemic had eased to allow the holding of meeting and social events.

Guildford has continued to suffer due to Covid-19 pandemic, particularly the retail sector in the Town Centre.

The government made life difficult as the planning system was subject to much proposed change, not helped by a number of ministerial appointments during a turbulent time in UK politics. The status of the Planning for the Future White Paper has been subject to a number of major revisions.

The Local Plan that is based on assumptions related to Infrastructure notably A3 upgrades which have been delayed which impacts the ability to build on Strategic Sites thus impacting the fulfilment of housing targets in the Local Plan. It looks as if the M25/A3 junction will finally be consented.

Pressure continues to consent building on smaller plots in the countryside due to villages in part being removed from the Green Belt.

As a Society we continue to try and provide effective and informed input into the necessary debates to ensure Guildford optimises the balance between Economic Vibrancy, protecting our Heritage and Environment, and providing well designed space to live, work and play.

Working Groups

Much thanks is given to the members of our working groups who have been as usual fully engaged in looking at their various areas of interest as you will see from their respective reports.

The **Design and Heritage Group** (D&H) organised a successful Guildford Design Awards Exhibition in conjunction with Guildford Borough council for the first time. The awards were presented at the Guildford Baptist Church (one of the winners) in November. Interviews with the winners were made and have been placed on the Website. Sadly it became obvious that due to the low levels of completion it was not viable to hold a Design Award process in 2022. The plan is to hold a 2022 – 2023 design awards event in 2023. We are looking at holding a Design Awards Exhibition to fill the gap in later in 2022.

Finally, we were very grateful to attract sponsorship for the awards which helped defray the costs of holding the event.

The Architecture Lecture took place in the autumn where we had two architects speaking on Multiple Housing. Providing quality multiple housing has a special importance for Guildford with several large new developments planned in the Town Centre, Weyside, Wisley, Blackwell Farm and Gosden Hill. The Society is keen to see the design quality of multiple housing schemes improved in the Borough.

We were fortunate to have two engaging and interesting lectures, Jason Cornish, Partner at Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios (FCBStudios), and Glenn Howells, Managing Partner at Glenn Howells Associates.

Jason and Glenn discussed a wide range of issues related to Multiple Housing, illustrated by solutions they had adopted in various schemes. Areas covered included, Sustainability, Housing Forms, Landscape, Dealing with Transport, and Building Communities. They answered questions from the audience at the end of the two talks. We videoed both talks and after editing published these on our website.

The **Planning Group** met regularly to comment as required on planning applications. The group also collaborated with D&H on major applications. The group kept three major schemes under review during the year Stag Hill, North Street, St Mary's Wharf ex Debenhams, and Wisley Airfield. These are all due to come up for determination late in 2022 or early 2023. In addition comments were made on the Local Plan part 2 Development Management Policies. Our key concern with the DMP was the lack of robust policies to manage Height and Density of development.

The **Transport Group** produced a comprehensive paper on its ideas for Transport in Guildford covering all modes of transport (Published on the 13th April 2022). The Group also responded to the strategy proposed for Transport for the Southeast. The North Street scheme, referred to above, also includes a totally revised bus station and changes to road layout. The transport group commented on these changes via the Planning Group.

Shaping Guildford's Future

The Borough Council has embarked on a programme Shaping Guildford Future which is aimed at re-establishing the towns standing in Surrey and across the wider region. The focus is to solve issues with traffic congestion, poor air quality, flooding, poor architecture and public realm. The Council believes that Guildford needs a "resilience and growth" plan to defend itself against becoming a secondary centre in Surrey.

The Society has contributed views to the initial fact finding and consultation papers. We will be interested to see the outputs from this important work..

The Society

We have welcomed new members during the year but could always do with more.

We depend on being able to access a wide variety of expertise within our membership base, gained in their working careers or gathered after engagement with our working groups. We need to maintain this expertise for the future. We are thus always pleased to have members agree to join our working groups and also value members who have links to other groups within the area.

Our Website has continued to be regularly updated and we have been gratified by response to the news items we have placed on the site.

Finances

Our accounts are attached.

THE GUILDFORD SOCIETY		
Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year to 31 st March 2022		
INCOME		
GSoc Subscription	£3,033.45	
Donations	£61.00	
Architecture Lecture Income		
Guildford Design Awards Income	£ 2548.88-	
Xmas Social Income	£ -	
Town Bridge Market	£ 300.00	
Other	£ -	
Cumulative Income YTD		£5,943.33
OUTGOINGS		
Postage	£88.00	
Print & Publicity	£168.30	
Outgoing Subscriptions	£426.00	
Website E-Mail etc.	£600.00	
Refreshments	£ -	
Insurance	£285.36	
Lectures and Events. Etc	£120.00	
Guildford Design Awards Expenses	£ 2,715.12	
Xmas Social	£ -	
Other	£40.00	
Cumulative Payments YTD		£4,414.48
Cumulative Net Receipts		£1,528.85
Banking Balance at end of the Year		
Deposit Account (773)		£13,316.86
Current Accounts		
Bank Balance (701)		£1,512.00
Bank Balance (326)		£3,100.99
Total Funds		£17,929.85

Thanks

Finally, thanks to all of you for your continued support. We could not operate the society without you.

I would ask you all for one action to support the society in 2021-22, please try to recruit a new member or subscriber via our website where we have made it far easier to sign up to be a supporter.

Alistair Smith

Chair Guildford Society

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October 2022