



**The Guildford Society**  
**Annual Report 2021-2022**  
**Annual Report 2022-2023**  
**86<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting**  
**[www.guildfordsociety.org.uk](http://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk)**

**Guildford Society**

**Annual Report 2020**

**86<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting**

**86th Annual General Meeting**  
**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

**Agenda**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held 6th October 2020
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman Report
5. Honorary Treasurer's report
6. Election of Trustees
7. Any other business

## **Minutes of 85<sup>th</sup> AGM Meeting**

**6<sup>th</sup> October 2020 7:00PM**

**Conducted by Zoom Call due to the pandemic restrictions.**

**The Chairman**, Alistair Smith, welcomed the 32 members who signed into the meeting.

**Apologies** none received.

**Minutes** of the 84<sup>th</sup> AGM held on 7th June, 2018 were approved.

**Matter's arising:** There were none.

**Chairman's and Group Reports:** These were incorporated into the Annual Report which was sent to all members, either by post or electronically to those for whom the Society holds email addresses. The previous year's Minutes were also included.

### **Chairman's Address:**

The Chairman discussed the main points in the Annual Report highlighting that the Pandemic had made normal Society activities more complex. The Chair noted that the use of Video conferencing was enabling the Executive and Workgroups to continue to be active.

Like other Towns the impact of the Pandemic is unclear, but it has certainly impacted the Retail environment severely. Guildford is also losing major employers to other towns e.g. Reading.

The Chair highlighted the changes in the Executive and at Group level detailed in the Annual report.

The Society has refined its objectives, and these have been added to the Website.

A change that will be seen shortly is the launch of a new website with a crisper design and new logo. We hope this will make the website more relevant to our members and other users.

**Honorary Treasurer's Report and Accounts:** These were available at the meeting and subsequently on the Society's website. They had been independently verified by Mr Keith McPherson, an accredited Independent Examiner. There were no questions arising.

**Election of Trustees:** No nominations for new trustees had been received. Those standing for re-election were approved.

**Any other business:** No other matters were raised, so the meeting was closed at 8pm.

## **Chairman's Report 2021-2022 & 2022-2023**

Due to several factors we failed to conduct an Annual General Meeting in 2022 and are thus covering two years in this report.

### **Why the Society is Important**

The Society is the Civic Trust for the Guildford Area. As such it provides a non-political group that can contribute to the continuous debate as to how Guildford evolves to meet future challenges; whilst preserving its Heritage and areas of Natural Landscape that make it such an attractive area to live.

Keeping the Society relevant to Guildford is a constant challenge, as we need to refresh the Society with new active members who keep our ideas relevant.

The society needs to 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 dwellings and space to live, work and play.

### **Key Issues in Guildford**

#### **Economy**

The current economic situation means that Guildford is operating in a challenging environment, although we remain a successful town.

The borough has seen a number of major companies leave the area e.g. Sanofi, Alexander Dennis and the closure of Debenhams, and recently House of Fraser, in the town centre. Neighbouring towns like Reading and Woking remain very attractive to businesses and provide a good retail offer to inhabitants.

The Society believes that the town needs to provide employment of all types to attract and keep the population in the town and avoid Guildford becoming solely viewed as a commuter centre.

GBC produced Guildford's Economic Strategy in early 2023 that we commented upon<sup>1</sup> and that we view as an important contribution on consideration of the economic future of the borough.

#### **Completing 'Shaping Guildford's Future'**

This is a wide-ranging program to develop an adopted masterplan for the Town which will guide development in the future. It is part of what has been termed the Guildford Economic Regeneration program (GERP), the Guildford Economic Strategy is part of this. SGF has been commissioned by GBC which states the council's ambition is to breathe new life into the town by opening up the riverside, reducing congestion, improving alternative, sustainable and affordable transportation as well as making the centre a more attractive place to live, work and visit.

The Society has commented on the proposals made so far and members have attended consultation meetings. Progress has been very disappointing despite interim Stage 2 proposals being presented to the Council in September 2022, which gave the council confidence to endorse the report and allocated a further funding allocation of £3 million for stage 3.

Since that time, there has been a change of council administration and little has been heard from councillors or officers within GBC. The Society is concerned that given the council's financial situation that this project is now very much on the back burner.

The Society's detailed views have been made known to GBC. We argue there is insufficient information about alternative

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Economy Report<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/Economyreport1.html>

public transport options, no mention of connectivity for rail services, that by taking out sections of the road network it might reduce town-centre resilience and that overall, we have a feeling that the boundaries for the scheme are drafted rather narrowly without sufficient study of how traffic affects outlying areas and villages. Our Comments see Footnote<sup>2</sup>

### Strengthening Planning Policies

Our fears about the impact of the Local Plan 2019 with its poor policies have sadly come to pass.

The Society argued, with others, for some of these policies to be strengthened in the Development Management Policies that complete the Local Planning. Sadly, only very minor changes were achieved.

The Society is now working with others to persuade the council to develop a proper heights policy for Guildford Town. Many of the candidates at the recent local elections supported the concept of height policy.

The Society will be meeting a working group of councillors, shortly, to discuss how the borough can learn from other authorities which have clear policies to manage height.

### Enhancing Design Quality

Quality of new development and maintaining streets and older buildings is critical to Guildford to improve the urban landscape and to maintain its attractiveness to visitors.

As you will read below the Design and Heritage Group has been active in various initiatives to improve awareness of the impact of good design.

It is particularly important as new Buildings may have a long life, as concern grows on embodied Carbon prompting re-use. Unfortunately, we are seeing some very poor estate houses being produced and major schemes are showing unimaginative plans and design.

### Conserving our Heritage

We have continued to support the Heritage Open Days.

### Caring for our Environment

The Environment is an issue that is of vital importance, as a Society we have contributed across the Work Groups to issues such as why not Redevelop rather than Rebuild on various sites, protecting the Greenbelt, enabling active travel.

### **Future of the Society**

Ensuring the Society continues to thrive and respond to the needs of Guildford is a challenge. We are very aware that we must continue to focus on three areas:

#### 1. Build up our Membership.

Sadly, the Society like a lot of other local societies is losing membership. We need to recognise that like others we have benefited from an era where many retired relatively early and had many active years to get involved. The segment of the population in their 30-40's are difficult to engage with partly as they are busy at the peak of their working and family lives.

#### 2. Expertise

We are incredibly lucky to have access to members who have a wide variety of expertise often gained in their working careers or gathered after engagement with our working groups. We need to be careful to keep this expertise current and in sufficient depth for the future.

#### 3. Funding

The Society does have costs to cover ranging from Website, E-Mail costs to having funds to support activities e.g. Public Meetings, Professional Advice. We need to keep our funds at a reasonable level via subscriptions, donations, and paid for activities.

### **Engagement with others**

We have been active in strengthening our relationship with Guildford Borough Council (GBC), in particular interacting with the new senior officers who have been appointed over the last two to three years. We are especially interested in being able to comment and advise at the early stages of design for the strategic projects in the borough.

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Shaping Guildford's Future <sup>2</sup>

[https://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/Shaping\\_Guildford\\_Future\\_Critique\\_v2\\_1-23.pdf](https://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/Shaping_Guildford_Future_Critique_v2_1-23.pdf)

We have good relations with other Guildford Groups e.g. Guildford Residents Association, Guildford Environment Forum and value having joint positions on certain topics.

### **Communications**

We continue to update our Website. A significant change in early 2023 was the addition of a interactive map of the borough showing pictures and short summaries of recent and proposed developments in the borough. This is fully compliant with smart phones so can be used on whilst walking past sites or new builds. [See Map at Link<sup>3</sup>](#) as we are very aware the society's demographic doesn't match that of the area. We are exploring how to make our communications more relevant to busier and younger members of the population.

We are also going to revise the Website to provide more information on our letters related to planning applications in the near future.

Although we update our Facebook page, we are aware it is not reaching as a wide an audience as possible. We are planning on rectifying our use of social media shortly.

### **Executive**

During the past two years the Executive Membership has remained as

Alistair Smith Chair

Peter Coleman Deputy Chair and Chair of D&H

Gillian Cameron Secretary

John Shorto Membership Secretary

John Baylis

Nic Allen

Rosemary Napp

Barry Williams

John Shorto is retiring at this AGM and we thank him for his contribution to the Society over the past years.

The Executive recognise that we need to strengthen the Executive. We are actively looking for new members to join the

executive and hope to appoint new members over the coming months.

All the current Executive are standing again for re-election but in several cases we anticipate that they will not serve their full term being replaced by others.

### **Thanks**

Finally, thanks to all 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 2024, please try to recruit a new member or subscriber to our newsletter. We have made it easier to become a supporter on the new website.

Alistair Smith

Chair Guildford Society

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Key Sites in the Borough <sup>3</sup>

<https://www.guilfordsociety.org.uk/Keysites.html>

## Working Groups

Many 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 the group reports.

We have tried to create a viable Local Strategy and Economy Group but this has proven very difficult and is the group is currently in abeyance. We continue to believe we should have a group considering the Guildford Area meeting 3-4 times a year.

### Local Strategy & Economy Group

Despite no Working Group we have continued to monitor relevant Strategies and Reports notably Guildford Borough Council (GBC produced Guildford's Economic Strategy in early 2023 that we commented upon<sup>4</sup> and that we view as an important contribution on consideration of the economic future of the borough.

The current economic situation means that Guildford is operating in a challenging environment, although we remain a successful town.

The borough has seen a number of major companies leave the area e.g. Sanofi, Alexander Dennis and the closure of Debenhams, and recently House of Fraser, in the town centre. Neighbouring towns like Reading and Woking remain very attractive to businesses and provide a good retail offer to inhabitants.

The Society believes that the town needs to provide employment of all types to attract and keep the population in the town and avoid Guildford becoming solely viewed as a commuter centre. We need to build upon the mixed economy based on Professional Services (Legal, Accountancy), Education (University etc.), Retail, and a group of hi tech industries fostered by the Research Park and Pirbright.

It should not be forgotten that many in Guildford also commute to jobs in London and elsewhere (e.g. Heathrow) using the reasonable rail links to London and creaking road network.

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Economy Report<sup>4</sup>  
<https://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/Economyreport1.html>

### Design and Heritage

The Design and Heritage group has had a busy two years.

Architecture Lectures - The group is consistently attempting to improve design, unfortunately we still see too many uninspired designs. The D&H group have been instrumental in running two Architecture lectures.

- 'Sustainable Design in Housing, addressing the Climate and Energy crisis' given by Justin Bere and Alex Clifford in 2022 See Full Details at Footnote<sup>5</sup>

and

- Multiple Housing - Best Practice for the Future? given by Jason Cornish and Glen Howells in 2021 See Full Details at Footnote<sup>6</sup>

Guildford Design Awards The awards were held in 2021 as a joint exercise with the GBC. A judging panel of Society Members, GBC representatives, and invitees was assembled to form the judging panel.

The Guildford Design awards were not held in 2022, due to the lack of new buildings due to the Covid pandemic, instead a series of Exhibitions of past winners was shown in various village halls across the Borough with a final two-day event in the Guildhall.

Heritage and Environment. - We have not been as active as we might have been due to lack of resources and impact of dealing with several major developments in the borough. However, we are looking at

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2022 Architecture Lecture 5  
<https://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/AL2022Videos.html>

2021 Architecture Lecture 6  
<https://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/AL2021Videos.html>

instituting a series of visits/ and walks to interesting New Buildings outside the borough and

The society has continued to support Heritage Open Days (HODs) acting as guides for opened buildings and also in 2022 having a exhibit in the old Dennis Factory on the gyratory system,

Planning Policy - The D&H group are extremely concerned that we have a weak Local Plan particularly as the Development Management Policies failed to make any mention of Height restrictions in the town. We are reliant on Town Centre Views Document which although it has commendable aspects fails to protect streetscape and has many limitations.

Overdevelopment is also a critical concern where Buildings are put into sites that are too small and fail to provide space for Public Realm.

Visits & Walks The has held Walks e.g. walks on Heritage and Architecture in the Centre of Guildford and visits to new developments of interest elsewhere e.g. Cambridge. The group recognises that we can do more in this area.

### **Planning Group 2023-2023:**

The Planning Group has met regularly every 3 weeks to review new planning applications. The group reviews applications that

- Impact Heritage Buildings
- Are for Major Developments over 15 Dwellings, and/or major redevelopment of existing buildings.
- Permitted Development Applications in the Town Centre
- Infrastructure Improvements e.g. the Multi Storey Car Built at the Royal Surrey County Hospital.

The Planning Group, with aid from members of the Design and Heritage Group have had to deal with several Major applications.

Weyside Urban Village - This is the redevelopment of the Sewage Treatment Site in Slyfield. This is a large scheme promoted by Guildford Borough Council. As noted the D&H Group participated in the Design Workshops to create a Design Guide for the development. The Society expressed concerns that the site had inadequate sustainable transport links, and that the spine road running through the site could have been routed to make for a more open and pleasing riverside.

St Mary's/Debenhams Site The society viewed this site as one of the best in the South of England. The consented scheme on which development will start in 2024 on current plans we still contend is a missed opportunity, with a overscale mundane design, providing a little public benefit.

North Street - After many failures to develop the site over decades St Edwards proposed a scheme that was consented in modified form in October 2023.

Wisley Airfield - The Society has participated in consultations with the developers Taylor Wimpey. The Society has noted that the site is a Strategic Site in the Local Plan 2019 and we have confined our comments to, in particular, the the lack of transport infrastructure to support the scheme.

The Planning Group remains concerned that there are schemes coming forward



which are of poor quality and represent overdevelopment on sites. Several in-fill schemes have been particularly poor.

### Transport Group

The Transport Group has met regularly, normally every 4 to 6 weeks.

The Group bought together many of its ideas into a document published in April 2022 “*A Manifesto for Change - Guildford Transport - Improving and Supporting the Borough*”. Note: - This document will be updated in the near future to reflect changes. See Link to Report at footnote 7.

The group has reviewed and commented on a diverse range of subjects including:

North Street Scheme - The impact due to the scheme proposing to stop up two roads to improve the bus station layout, pedestrianisation of mid to upper North Street, mobility hubs etc. We identified safety concerns on proposals to make Leapale Road two-way for bus movement and for HGV and taxi movement back onto the gyratory system from the lower end of North Street.

Rail Services - A demand for electrification and / or hybrid train operation on the North Downs to improve services and air quality. A need for faster and more frequent services on the Portsmouth line and a return to pre-covid schedules at least; plus the renewed interest in a southern rail link to Heathrow Airport from Guildford

A3 National Highways - Addressing our local MP's demands for tunnelling or widening A3 through Guildford. We agree there is a need to separate out long distance through traffic from the town-centre, albeit there may be more cost - effective ways to do this  
Air Quality Management Plan - for the town centre

Local Plan - Transport implications for housing developments within the Local Plan that are car dependent or have no local bus system built in.

Bus Services – Responded to Surrey County Council's (SCC) BSIP – Bus Service Improvement Programme by studying demand for cross - town routing, expanding Park and Ride sites, expanding On Demand bus services, suggesting ideas for a Guildford Travel Card for all transport modes, asking why the new bus station does not incorporate opportunity charging for electric buses

Bike Lanes / Active Travel - Expanding the Sustainable Movement Corridors and greater use of bike lanes and the pros and cons of the planned e- bike hire share scheme to be rolled out in Guildford in 2024

Town Centre - Air Quality Management Areas – AQMA - In October 2021, GBC declared an AQMA which should consider the area where potential current exposure is located or may be in the very near future, i.e. Millbrook, Commercial Road, and the Park Street, Bridge Street/Onslow Road sections of the Gyratory. There appears to have been no progress in instituting measures to improve air quality in this AQMA or in others Shalford and Compton.

15 Minute Towns - The Transport Group has held discussions with representatives of the Department for Transport on our views for 15-minute towns.

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Transport Report 7

[https://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/2021-4\\_Transport\\_in\\_Guildford\\_manifesto\\_for\\_change.pdf](https://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/2021-4_Transport_in_Guildford_manifesto_for_change.pdf)

### **Membership Secretary's Report**

Our membership has remained broadly constant. We are concluding a review of our membership list. The numbers below are as at the 24<sup>th</sup> November.

We currently have:-

<b>Group</b>	<b>Total</b>
Membership Single	167
Membership Joint	99
Total Membership	266
Corporate Membership	1
<i>Signed up for our Newsletter</i>	195

This is certainly true for the Guildford Society. It would be appreciated if existing Members would publicise the Society to friends and neighbours to increase the membership.

### **Treasurer's Report and Accounts**

We have yet to appoint a new treasurer. We have now identified a suitable candidate and hope to appoint a new treasurer shortly. The new treasurer will be a member of the Executive.

#### **Comments on financial Statement**

The financial statement has yet to be reviewed by a qualified accountant. This is not an audit, which is not required due to our small size under charity commission rules but is a verification for the executive that accounts have been properly administered and reflect a proper view of the society's affairs. Two Summary set of accounts are presented for years 2022-2023 and 2022-2023.

The Executive reviews finances at every meeting.

Accounts have been lodged with the Charities commission for both 2021-2022 and 2022-2023

THE GUILDFORD SOCIETY

**Statement of Income and Expenditure  
for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

	2021-2022	2020-2021
<b>INCOME</b>		
Subscriptions & Donation	£3,033.45	£2,632.12
Donations	£61.00	£47.00
Architecture Lecture Income	£0.00	£0.00
Christmas Social	£2448.88	£0.00
Town Bridge Market	£300.00	£0.00
Other	£0.00	£0.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>5,943.33</b>	<b>£2,679.12</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Postage	£88.00	£55.60
Print & Publicity	£168.00	£116.30
Subscriptions	£426.00	£406.00
Website & e-mail	£600.23	£10,169.98
Refreshments	£0.0	£0.00
Insurance	£285.36	£285.36
Lectures and Events	£120.00	£1,768.80
Guildford Design Awards expenses	£2,715.12	£0.00
XMAS Social		£243.00
Other	£40.00	£32.95
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>£4,454.48</b>	<b>£13,077.99</b>
<b>NET RECEIPTS</b>	<b>£1,528.85</b>	<b>-£10,398.87</b>
Total Funds in Bank	<b>£17,929.85</b>	<b>£16,349.85</b>

THE GUILDFORD SOCIETY

**Statement of Income and Expenditure  
for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

	2022 - 2023	2021-2022
<b>INCOME</b>		
Subscriptions & Donation	£2,579.11	£3,033.45
Donations	£98.46	£61.00
Architecture Lecture Income	£771.61	£0.00
Christmas Social	£250.00	£2448.88
Town Bridge Market	£306.64	£300.00
Other	£54.03	£0.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>£4,059.85</b>	<b>5,943.33</b>
<b>EXPENTIDURE</b>		
Postage	£0.0	£88.00
Print & Publicity	£72.34	£168.00
Subscriptions	£358.00	£426.00
Website & e-mail	£300.40	£600.23
Refreshments	£0.00	£0.0
Insurance	£394.66	£285.36
Lectures and Events	£20.00	£120.00
Guildford Design Award	£3,083.90	£2,715.12
Architecture Lecture	£1,390.76	£40.00
Society Social Events	£199.82	
Other	£50.00	
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>£5,833.14</b>	<b>£4,454.48</b>
<b>NET RECEIPTS</b>	<b>-£1,773.29</b>	<b>£1,528.85</b>
Total Funds in Bank	£16,349.00	£17,929.59

## **Group Membership**

### **Design and Heritage**

Peter Coleman Chair  
Rosemary Napp Secretary  
Nic Allen  
Niels Laub  
Anna Hummel  
Gerry Lytle

### **Planning**

Alistair Smith (Acting Chairman),  
John Baylis (Secretary),  
Peter Coleman,  
John Harrison  
Amanda Mullarkey  
David Ogilvie  
Nic Allen.

### **Transport Members**

Alistair Smith - Chair  
Barry Williams - Secretary  
Hugh Anscombe  
Keith Chesterton  
Doug Clare  
Trevor Jones  
Chris Blow  
Colin Selvin, now a Corresponding Member  
Maurice Barham, now a Corresponding Member

## **Contact List**

### **Chair**

*Alistair Smith*

*[chair@guildfordsociety.org.uk](mailto:chair@guildfordsociety.org.uk)*

### **Hon.Secretary**

*Gillian Cameron*

*tel. 01483 503172*

*[secretaryguildfordsociety.org.uk](mailto:secretaryguildfordsociety.org.uk)*

### **Hon. Treasurer**

*Position vacant*

*Contact via The Chairman*

### **Work Groups & Leaders:**

#### **Planning Group**

*Temporary Chairman Alistair Smith*

*[planning@guildfordsociety.org.uk](mailto:planning@guildfordsociety.org.uk)*

#### **Transport Group**

*Position Vacant*

*[transport@guildfordsociety.org.uk](mailto:transport@guildfordsociety.org.uk)*

#### **Design & Heritage Group**

*Peter Coleman*

*[design@guildfordsociety.org.uk](mailto:design@guildfordsociety.org.uk)*

#### **Membership Secretary**

*Barry Williams on a Temporary Basis*

*[membership@guildfordsociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@guildfordsociety.org.uk)*

**Website - [www.guildfordsociety.org.uk](http://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk)**

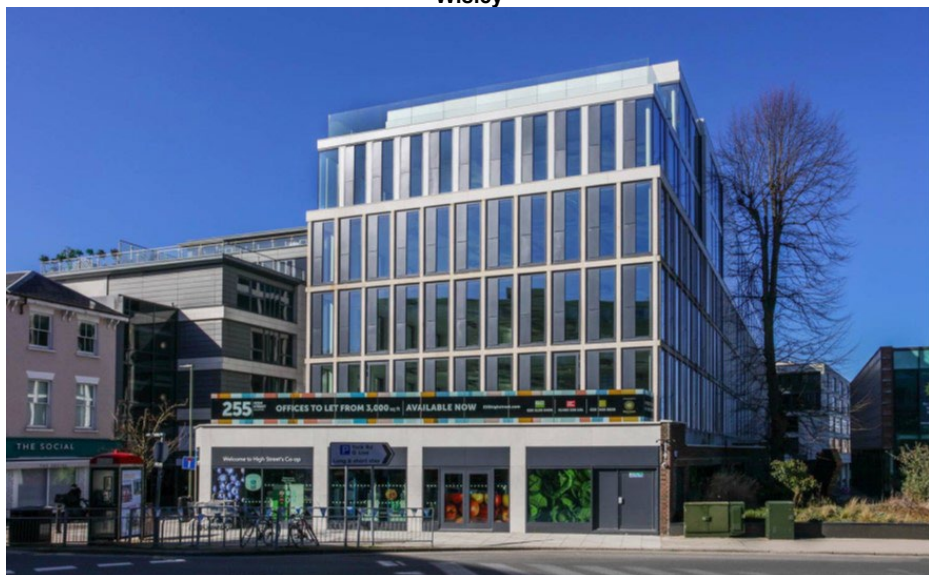
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## Two of the Winning Entries from the Guildford Design Awards 2021



**RHS Hilltop  
Wisley**



**255 High Street Guildford.**

***The Guildford Society.  
C.I.O reg. Number 1174395.  
Registered Office: 24 Bury Fields, Guildford GU2 4AZ***



Access The Society Website



See our Key Sites Map of Development in Guildford

