



The Guildford Society

Annual Report 2024-2025

89th Annual General Meeting

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Guildford Society
Annual Report 2020
87th Annual General Meeting

87th Annual General Meeting
March 2026

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

Note Meeting had to be rescheduled from a planned earlier date.

Minutes of 85th AGM Meeting

88th Annual General Meeting Annual General Meeting 19:00hrs 19th June 2024 Dapdune Wharf

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

Apologies none received.

Minutes of the 84th 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 expanded on the main points in the Annual Report, highlighting The Society continued to try and influence preservation of Heritage and improve the Quality of New Development.

The Chair highlighted the volume of development that was going on in the Borough and said he would cover some of these in the presentation after the AGM.

The Chair also highlighted the need to strengthen the various Working Groups and the Executive of The Society. It was critical to ensure that the Society could be an effective non-political voice for the future of the area that our Executive and Workgroups had new members.

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 2024-2025

The Civic Society for Guildford

The Society serves as Guildford's Civic Trust, offering a non-political forum to guide the town's development while preserving its heritage and natural landscapes. To stay relevant, we seek new members who can bring fresh perspectives. Our goal is to contribute informed ideas that help Guildford balance economic vitality, heritage conservation, environmental protection, and quality spaces for living, working, and recreation.

New Government

A new government was elected in July. The government is implementing major changes to Planning Policies and Local Government.

The government has proposed major changes to the planning system in its quest to build 1.5 Million new dwellings in the country.

These changes include a revised NPPF and the imposition of Mandatory Housing targets. The Housing targets have resulted in Guildford Borough having to provide twice as many new dwellings as in the current Local Plan. This will have a major impact on Guildford.

In addition the government is implementing major changes to Local Government.

The UK government's English devolution white paper of 16 December 2024 proposed reorganising two-tier local government in England into fewer unitary authorities, each serving at least 500,000 residents. This process is referred to as Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). New council elections are planned for 6 May 2027 with operations starting 1 April 2028; Surrey will move faster, with elections on 7 May 2026 and operational councils from 1 April 2027.

All District and Borough Councils including Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council will cease to exist. Surrey will be restructured around two or Three Unitary authorities will ultimate an elected Surrey Mayor overseeing the entire County.

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 experienced the departure of several major companies. Fortunately, at least two significant firms are now considering relocating to the area, which could bring many high-tech jobs. The loss of two major stores—Debenhams and, more recently, House of Fraser—from the town centre has diminished Guildford's appeal as a retail destination. In contrast, neighbouring towns such as Reading and Woking continue to attract businesses and offer strong retail options for residents.

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.

'Shaping Guildford's Future'

This comprehensive initiative aims to develop an adopted masterplan for the Town that will provide strategic guidance for future development. SGF has been commissioned by GBC, reflecting the council's objective to revitalise the town through enhanced access to the riverside, reduced congestion, improvements in alternative, sustainable, and affordable transportation, and efforts to make the town centre a more attractive destination for residents, workers, and visitors.

The Society has submitted feedback on the proposals presented thus far, and its members have participated in consultation meetings. However, progress to date has been less than satisfactory.

It appears that the work undertaken on Shaping Guildford's Future may inform the forthcoming Local Plan Update, which is scheduled to advance in 2025. Consultations are anticipated to commence in early 2026.

Strengthening Planning Policies

Concerns about the effects of the Local Plan 2019 and its inadequate policies have unfortunately become reality. The Society, together with others, advocated for stronger Development Management Policies to

complete the Local Planning process; however, only minimal adjustments were made. Now, the Society is collaborating with partners to encourage the council to establish a comprehensive heights policy for Guildford Town. Many local election candidates supported the idea of such a policy. Currently, the council is preparing a Heights Policy for public consultation and future adoption, which is expected to be released soon.

Enhancing Design Quality

Maintaining quality in new developments, streets, and older buildings is essential for Guildford's urban landscape and visitor appeal. The Design and Heritage Group has promoted the value of good design through various initiatives. As buildings last many years and sustainability concerns rise, re-use is increasingly important. However, some recent estate housing lacks quality, and major projects often suffer from uninspired planning and design.

Conserving our Heritage

We have continued to support the Heritage Open Days. A major topic during this year have been the proposals from the National Trust to restore Clandon House. This is referred to more fully in the report from the D&H Group below.

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.

The new government has revised planning regulations related to siting Solar Farms. The first major application in the Borough was from the University to place a Solar farm on the edge of the AONB/SHNL on the Hogs Back

Future of the Society

Ensuring that the Society continues to prosper and meet Guildford's needs remains a significant challenge. We recognise three key areas to prioritise:

Membership Growth

Unfortunately, like many other local organisations, our Society is experiencing a decline in membership. We've benefitted from a period when many people retired early and had plenty of active years to participate. However,

individuals in their 30s and 40s are harder to reach, as they're typically busy with careers and family responsibilities.

Expertise

Our Society is fortunate to have members with diverse expertise, developed through their professional lives or involvement in working groups. It's important that we maintain this depth of knowledge and keep it relevant for the future.

Funding

The Society faces various expenses, including website and email costs, as well as resources needed to support events like public meetings and professional consultations. It is essential to sustain a healthy financial position through subscriptions, donations, and paid 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.

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

We are also a member of Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), London Green Belt Council and Civic Voice

Communications

We continue to update our Website

We also update our Facebook page, we are aware it is not reaching as wide an audience as possible. We continue to review our use of Social Media particularly the resources required to manage it really effectively.

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 Baylis

Nic Allen
Rosemary Napp
Barry Williams

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

Thank you all for your ongoing support—we truly couldn't run the society without you. Looking ahead to 2026, I'd like to ask everyone to help by recruiting a new member or encouraging someone to subscribe to our newsletter. It's now even simpler to become a supporter with our updated website.

Alistair Smith
Chair Guildford Society

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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

Although there is no Working Group, we continue to monitor relevant strategies and reports. Guildford faces economic challenges but remains a successful town. The Society supports providing diverse employment to attract and retain residents, preventing Guildford from becoming purely a commuter centre. Building on our mixed economy—Professional Services, Education, Retail, and hi-tech industries—is essential. Many residents commute to London or Heathrow via rail and congested roads.

Design and Heritage

The Design and Heritage group has had a busy year.

Architecture Lectures - The group is consistently attempting to improve design, unfortunately we still see too many uninspired designs.

The D&H group continues to run a Annual Architecture Lecture in partnership with the University of Surrey.

The 2024 lecture with the title of 'Housing to Benefit the Environment and Public' was delivered in October by Cany Ash and Robert Sakula the two co-founding partners of Ash Sakula Architects, one of the UK's leading housing and regeneration architects.

Cany and Robert described their evolving approach over years, referencing completed schemes in Bordon, Southwold, and Newcastle, as well as a new project in Lewes that has received planning permission as part of The Phoenix Project—see the link below for more details. Their method focuses on creating strong communities and friendly neighbourhoods through people-centered design.

Guildford Design Awards

2024 was a year where no awards were made as the Society in conjunction with our co-sponsor has decided to run the wards every two years. In 2024 we held an exhibition of the winners in 2023 on two occasions in the Town Centre. This kept the awards in the minds of the general public, and attracted a high level of interest.

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 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

Clandon House

A major site that has attracted considerable comment and debate is the National Trusts plan to restore in an innovative way Clandon Park, seriously damaged by fire in 2015. The D&H group combined with the Planning group to discuss the proposals and also engaged in discussions with the National Trust Team responsible for the proposals. This work culminated in The Society agreeing to the proposed restoration and speaking in support of the planning application. The Planning Application was agreed at the end of March 2025, but immediately the Ministry of Housing Communities and local Government requested final approval be delayed whilst they reviewed the application. This process is not an official call in but MHCLG reassuring themselves on this important site.

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.

The group created a summary of Height Policies from other boroughs which has been discussed with the Borough Council. This summary shows how a Heights Policy can be developed using the experience of other councils. Guildford Borough are now in the process of finalising a draft heights policy for the town centre.

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 group has held walks and visits to new developments of interest elsewhere e.g. Cambridge. The group recognises that we can do more in this area.

Planning Group

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
- Smaller applications particularly in the Town Centre if they are judged to be of significance e.g. Change of use of buildings in the High Street.

Planning Policy

The group has taken time to review and comment on aspects of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). We are also very concerned at the revision of Housing Numbers imposed by the Standard Method with Guildford Borough now

required to move from delivering 562 units to 1,155 dwellings per annum.

Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS)

The Society has engaged with Stakeholder discussions of the provision of a Flood Scheme to protect the Town Centre. Modelling is still underway to determine the Flood Protection required. Solving Flooding is necessary to unlock several sites in the Town Centre which currently have usage restrictions.

The Planning Group, with as required guidance from the Design and Heritage Group have had to deal with several Major applications including:

Clandon house – Referred too above

The Solar Farm proposed for the Hogs Back

This raised several issues related to using agricultural land and impact on the views from the Hogs Back.

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 lack of transport infrastructure to support the scheme.

Riverview

We participated in discussions with the developers on this scheme to convert the current light industrial park to a mixed use site. Creating a viable scheme whilst implementing flood protection measures is a major issue.

Magnet Woodbridge Road

We objected to this redevelopment of the Magnet site at the North Ends of Woodbridge road as we considered the design was of exceptionally poor quality on what is a gateway to Guildford.

Gosden Hill

Initial discussions have been held on proposals for Gosden Hill at Burpham. We await final proposals for consideration.

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 brought together many of its ideas into a document published in April 2022 “ *A Manifesto for Change - Guildford Transport - Improving and Supporting the Borough*”.

It was agreed to refresh and revise this document and a this is being worked upon at present.

We have a need to re-energise the Transport Group as several important members have retired. The Group is important as creating Sustainable Sites in Guildford required proper provision of Transport links. Too often we have sites dependent on a already overloaded road network

Membership Secretary's Report

Our membership has remained broadly constant. We have concluded a review of our membership list which has resulted a number of lapsed members being deleted from our list.

We currently have:-

Group	Total
Membership Single & Joint	131
Joint Memebrship	65
Total membership	261
Corporate Membership	3
<i>Signed up for our Newsletter</i>	245

It would be appreciated if existing Members would publicise the Society to friends and neighbours to increase the membership.

Treasurer's Report and Accounts

As reported at the last AGM a new treasurer had been appointed, who very sadly has then had to relinquish the role as he has serious health issues. We are now searching for 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. A set of accounts is presented for 2024-2025. The Society has financial year starting 1st April stretching to 31st March.

The Executive reviews finances at every meeting.

Accounts have been lodged with the Charities commission for 2024-2025.

Annual Accounts Ending March 2025

INCOME

Subscriptions	£3,031.55	
Donations	£9.82	
Architecture	£265.64	
Lecture	£0.00	
GDA Income (inc Deposits)	£0.00	
Society Social Events Income	£200.00	
GDA Donations	£366.97	
AGM Income	£45.00	
Book Sales		
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Cumulative Income YTD		£3,918.98

OUTGOINGS

Postage	£0.00	
Print & Publicity	£486.58	
Outgoing Subscriptions	£46.00	
Website	£300.00	
Refreshments	£116.88	
Insurance	£294.59	
Lectures and Events. Etc	£0.00	
Guildford Design Awards Expenses	£1,403.28	
Architecture Lecture Expenses	£894.61	
Society Social Events Expenses	£0.00	
Hire of Meeting Rooms for Groups	£372.00	
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Culmulative Expenses		£3,913.94
Cashflow over Year		£5.04
Deposit Account (773)		£12,603.67
Current Accounts		
Bank Balance (701)		£461.50
Bank Balance (326)		£1,615.01
Total Funds		£14,680.18

Group Membership

Design and Heritage

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

Planning

Alistair Smith (Acting Chairman),
Peter Coleman,
John Harrison
Amanda Mullarkey
David Ogilvie
Nic Allen
Alastair Atkinson

Transport Members

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

Contact List

Chair

Alistair Smith

chair@guildfordsociety.org.uk

Hon.Secretary

Position vacant

secretaryguildfordsociety.org.uk

Hon. Treasurer

Position vacant

Contact via The Chairman

Work Groups & Leaders:

Planning Group

Alistair Smith

planning@guildfordsociety.org.uk

Transport Group

Alistair Smith

transport@guildfordsociety.org.uk

Design & Heritage Group

Peter Coleman

design@guildfordsociety.org.uk

Membership Secretary

Position vacant

membership@guildfordsociety.org.uk

Website - www.guildfordsociety.org.uk

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***The Guildford Society.
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Access The Society Website



See our Key Sites Map of Development in Guildford

