

Walton intouch

Local news from
your local Conservatives

Delivered by your Walton Conservative team

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TOWN CENTRE NEWS

There's been a flurry of planning applications for new flats in Walton town centre recently. There are some new stores set to open, though there's still more empty shops than we'd like. Here are some recent updates:

- Elmbridge Borough Council has refused a few applications for flats above the **old Wellington pub** on the corner of High Street and New Zealand Avenue. However, the applicants won an appeal in December and are now allowed to extend the building and create 12 flats on the first, second and third floors. The ground floor is retained for commercial use, though sadly remains vacant.
- The new **Marks & Spencer** food hall and café is due to open in the old Aldi on 21 March.
- The Council is considering an application to build two storeys above **New Zealand Avenue's Auckland House** (which houses the Bath Store & Topps Tiles) to create 10 new flats. No additional parking spaces are proposed.
- Elmbridge Council has granted permission for a **new dental practice** to open above 'Jina Beauty' in Church Street.
- Walton's **Homebase** store closed earlier this year and it is due to re-open soon under the new name 'Bunnings'. This follows the purchase of the Homebase chain by the Australian DIY, garden and hardware chain.



The Walton-on-Thames Trading Alliance (WoTTA), formed in 2016, aims to make Walton a better place to live and work. Visit www.wotta.co.uk to find out more and how you can help out.

WALTON STATION TAXI RANK

Walton South Councillor Malcolm Howard is winning the battle to alleviate the taxi problem at Walton station. It requires agreement between Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) (as the taxi licensing authority) and Surrey County Council (SCC) (as the Highways authority).



Thanks to the Walton on-street parking review, SCC have embraced Malcolm's suggestions and are proposing a dual-use scheme to reduce the taxi rank to 8 spaces during the day - thereby providing extra short term free parking - but to increase the rank to 16 spaces during the busy evening period.

EBC are supportive of the plan and are working with SCC to iron out the legal and procedural requirements. SCC are also proposing double yellow lines on the north side of Station Avenue, between Gainsborough Court and Ashley Park Road, which will help the enforcement of parking restrictions on that side of the road.

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A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR WALTON?

A new secondary school is proposed for Walton. The ElmWey Learning Trust, which runs Heathside School in Weybridge, has made a successful bid to the Department for Education to open a new school on the land on the right of Waterside Drive off the Terrace Road roundabout.

Although the Trust has Government permission to open a school, they still need to obtain planning permission from Elmbridge Borough Council. A few days before Christmas, the ElmWey Learning Trust formally asked the Council whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was needed for the proposal. An EIA examines the possible effects an application would have on the environment. On 6 February the Council confirmed an EIA would be needed.

We understand a planning application is expected later this year, following public consultation. The original plan was for the school to open in autumn 2019, but it now seems unlikely it would be that soon.

The application will be decided by Elmbridge's North Area Planning Sub-Committee. Walton North Councillor Alan Kopitko sits on the Sub-Committee and will be taking a particularly close interest in this proposal. He said "I welcome the idea for a new secondary school for Walton. I've got a 14-year-old son so I know how valuable a new school in our town will be. But this won't be a simple planning application. The site presents particular challenges, not least being Green Belt and additional traffic being added to Terrace Road. Walton Heathside is an exciting proposal for our town, but we need to ensure the location is right and that the application is the very best it can be." Alan added "If I am re-elected on 3 May, this proposal is going to be one of the biggest issues of my next term."



Walton North Councillors Rachael Lake and Alan Kopitko at the proposed Walton Heathside site

PLAYHOUSE'S FUTURE IN DOUBT

Walton North's Cllr Andrew Kelly, who is a member of the Playhouse Users Committee, has been putting pressure on the Residents' Association/LibDem-run Elmbridge Council to stop dragging their feet on the future of Walton's Playhouse.

Andrew said "The RAs and LibDems have been in power now for two years and yet nothing has happened on the Playhouse. A condition survey has been repeatedly delayed and a report on future options has been buried. The users are deeply worried and want clarity on what the future holds for this historic building. HWM Motors want to use part of the Playhouse's land to park their cars, councillors refused them planning permission but HWM are appealing. Walton Society leader Cllr Chris Sadler, as the cabinet member in charge of the Council's finances and assets, has the power to stop this but refuses to help. In December I asked him to at least refuse HWM permission to use the land whilst the future of the whole Playhouse site is being considered. But he refused to do so. It's clear he doesn't care about the Playhouse."



Christine and Andrew outside the Playhouse

Christine Richardson, Walton Central's Conservative candidate, is disappointed by the Walton Society's attitude: "When the Conservatives ran Elmbridge, money was put into important restoration work at the Playhouse. By contrast, the Walton Society aren't interested and are happy to let users face ongoing uncertainty. I'm worried the Playhouse isn't safe with the RA/LibDem administration."

YOUR LOCAL CONSERVATIVES WORKING FOR WALTON

YOUR LOCAL WALTON CONSERVATIVE TEAM



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Walton's Conservative Councillors hold a surgery on the first Saturday of each month (Farmers' Market Day) at Walton Library from 10am to 12 noon. There is no need to book, so please just turn up on the day.

Mayor of Elmbridge's Charity Concert

As the current Mayor of Elmbridge, Cllr Rachael Lake is holding a Charity Concert in aid of Oasis, a children's charity supporting families across Elmbridge. Performers will include the Elmbridge Choir, the Weybridge Male Voice Choir and 1st Claygate Scout & Guide Band.

The concert takes place on Friday 6 April at 7.30pm at ACS Cobham International School off Portsmouth Road. Tickets cost £12.50, including interval refreshments, and can be bought at www.mayorsconcert.co.uk.

NEWS IN BRIEF

• A further public consultation is being carried out on the proposed expansion of **Heathrow Airport**. This consultation focuses on two aspects: the physical changes on the ground needed for the expansion, and the potential principles Heathrow could apply when designing the new 'airspace' required. A consultation event will take place at the Playhouse in Walton on Monday 12 March from midday to 8pm. For more information visit www.heathrowconsultation.com.

• Following a public inquiry by the Planning Inspectorate late last year, the decision on **Drake Park** – the proposal for over 1,000 homes on the Walton Green Belt off Molesey Road between Fieldcommon and the Lyon Road industrial estate – is due by early May. The inspector will pass his report to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government who will make the final decision. Elmbridge Borough Council turned down the planning application, but the applicants launched an appeal. Speaking last year before the inquiry, Cllr Chris Cross said "The land should be kept for farming, leisure or sporting facilities only. The proposed development will have a severe impact on local infrastructure and traffic, which already tails back towards Molesey on very busy days and often grinds to a halt."



Walton South Councillors Malcolm Howard and Chris Cross at the proposed Drake Park site

• The next one-hour **litter pick**, organised by the Walton-on-Thames Trading Alliance (Wotta), will take place on Sunday 15 April, meeting at 9.50am at the Heart's High Street entrance. Walton South Conservative Cllr Malcolm Howard, who took part in January's litter pick, said "There was a good turnout and I was able to take a group down Hershams Road to the Halfway railway bridge and back. I plan to do the same again in April. Extra volunteers welcome!"

• Walton Conservatives welcome Elmbridge Borough Council's decision to introduce new parking charges for the **Walton Park car park** by Hershams station. Since 2 January it has been possible to pay 40p to park for 30 minutes, or 80p for one hour; previously the lowest tariff was £1.40 for two hours. It is hoped this will help customers wishing to use the businesses near the car park. Walton Conservatives remain disappointed that the Residents' Associations (including Walton Society) and LibDem administration at the Council voted to increase charges at the Ashley Park car park last year.



• Elmbridge Borough Council is continuing to consider the application to demolish the Grade II-listed **Birds Eye building** on Station Avenue and replace it with 375 homes. Historic England, the government body responsible for historic buildings, have formally objected to the proposed demolition saying they are not convinced the developers have proven the current building is economically unviable.

• Consultation was carried out in two parts of Walton late last year for proposed **residents' parking permit schemes**. In Winchester Road, Highfield Road, Churchfield Road, Esher Avenue, Fir Close and Royston Close permit only parking is proposed from 10am-4pm Monday-Saturday. Rembrandt Way is proposed to be permit only from 8am-6pm Monday-Friday. The results of the consultation will be reported to the Elmbridge Local Committee, consisting of Elmbridge and Surrey Councillors, who will make the decision on whether to go ahead with the proposals.

THE PAIN OF POTHOLES

Local residents are justifiably angry at the state of our roads and Walton's County Councillor Rachael Lake shares their frustration. She has been reporting potholes in Walton and chasing for repairs to be done. "There's a huge amount that needs to be done and it's an ongoing challenge. I will continue fighting for improvements to Walton's roads."

Hershams County Councillor John O'Reilly chairs the Elmbridge Local Committee and said "While Surrey is in financial straits, largely through no fault of its own but because of massive reductions in government funding, the Council still has to act to improve our roads. It's a service that is critical to our residents and businesses. I am applying maximum pressure to increase spending on local highways, and making myself unpopular in certain quarters for doing so. But I don't care: we cannot go on as we are."



Rachael added: "The Government's funding formula for roads puts Surrey at a disadvantage. The formula pays per mile of road, taking no account of how much the road is used. That means in my native North East the roads are much better as they get the same amount per mile of road as us despite our roads being amongst the most-used in the country. The Conservatives at Surrey County Council are pressuring the Government to change this formula."

The Seven Hills Road may be resurfaced soon. Elmbridge Borough Council is considering a £455,000 bid by the Elmbridge Local Committee for the full resurfacing of the road from Whiteley Village's Chestnut Avenue entrance southwards to the Byfleet Road.

The quickest way to report a pothole is online: www.surreycc.gov.uk/do-it-online/report-it-online. You can also report overgrown bushes, faulty street lights and pavement problems.

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