

Well, that's it – the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Forum (HHNF) has achieved its primary aim of establishing a Neighbourhood Plan. The referendum on 8<sup>th</sup> October resulted in resounding support for all the effort that had gone into producing the Plan and all the supporting documents. With a 39% turnout and 95% vote for 'yes', the six policies in the Plan now have to be applied by Woking Borough Council (WBC) when determining planning applications.

### **So what next?**

The Residents' Association Committee and the Neighbourhood Forum Committee have spent some time discussing this. The Forum has an initial life of five years. During the remaining three years it was decided that there are three issues that are the responsibility of the Forum. These are

- (a) Monitoring planning applications. Here the focus will very much be on whether planning applications comply with the Plan policies. It will be more of a technical review than that carried out by the Residents' Association who will continue to respond to the wishes of members as they have in the past.

While the Forum Committee will keep track of applications using the Council website, we have also asked that the HHNF be added to the list of bodies that are formally advised of developments in Hook Heath.

- (b) Monitoring progress with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Forum will be the first point of contact for WBC when it consults on how to spend funds arising from the CIL on developments within the Neighbourhood Area. In the absence of a parish council, a neighbourhood forum is cited as the most suitable body for such contact.

- (c) Projects. The HHNF also has a role in ensuring that a number of topics not directly related to planning consents, but listed as Projects within the Plan document, be taken forward. These range from prevailing on satellite navigation providers to revise some of their directions to clarifying rights of way.

### **What is the Community Infrastructure Levy?**

The CIL tariff came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. It is a charge by WBC on the 'gross internal floor space' of the proposed development. However, some developments are exempted, including minor development and residential extensions of less than 100 sq m of net internal floor space (unless comprising one or more dwellings), new affordable housing, development for charitable purposes, self-build housing and residential annexes. Clearly we are not expecting that many developments in Hook Heath will be liable for CIL as most planning applications are for small residential extensions.

Areas with a neighbourhood plan receive 25% of any Community Infrastructure Levy arising from developments in their area compared to areas without a neighbourhood plan which receive 15%. In our case (without a parish council) the money is retained by the Borough Council but they have to consult with the HHNF on how it should be spent.

Since the implementation of the Plan there has not been a development in Hook Heath that has resulted in the payment of CIL.

### **What happens when the five-year life of the Forum is up?**

We don't know. What we do know is that planning law is unlikely to stay the same and that Hook Heath is better off with a Forum than without one.

### **Do we need both a Forum and a Residents' Association?**

The answer to this is an unambiguous 'YES'. The Forum has a limited remit but is formally constituted to be the relevant body to deal with issues that fall within its responsibilities. The Residents' Association has a broader scope and will continue to do the things it has done in the past. We believe that effective co-ordination between the two bodies will be achieved as all the Forum Management Committee members are also members of the Residents' Association Committee.

### **Development Management Policies DPD**

WBC has drafted a Development Management Policies DPD (Development Plan Document), which contains detailed policies on various issues such as design and access, noise, advertisements and shop fronts, specific leisure developments, residential extensions and tree protection. The main purpose of the DPD is to provide detailed policies to help determine day to day planning applications. The policies of the DPD supplement the Core Strategy; they do not cover issues where principles for development are fully addressed by national or Core Strategy policies.

The Neighbourhood Forum submitted comments on the draft DPD, the most important of which was that the DPD did not adequately reference Neighbourhood Plans!

### **Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)**

A large number of the trees in Hook Heath are subject to TPOs. WBC has recently prosecuted a project manager and his appointed subcontractor for causing damage to two trees in contravention of a 1964 Tree Protection Order at a private residential property in Hook Heath. Both were fined.