

Hook Heath Residents' Association

2011 NEWSLETTER

The Local Development Framework

Last year I wrote at some length to alert you to our disquiet concerning an early draft of our council's proposals on which we had commented. I mentioned that I would need your support later in the year when the official consultation document was published. This was originally scheduled for the summer of 2010, but in the event it was delayed, ostensibly to allow the council to take due account of the new government's proposals for revision of planning regulation. The document, called *Woking 2027*, finally appeared in November with a consultation period that covered the Christmas/New Year period with a closure date in early January 2011.

By the time we had digested the 132 page document and drafted a letter for distribution, Hook Heath was snowbound and temperatures stayed firmly below zero most of the time. Deliveries by hand were clearly out of the question and we resorted to e-mail to reach all who had given us an e-mail address. My thanks go to all of you who found time to write to the council despite all the seasonal distractions and my apologies to those of you whom we did not reach.

Although the most extreme interpretation of the early draft was removed, in essence the draft retained all the features of most concern to us. It was still based on a relentless expansion of *Woking*, a significant increase in the proportion of affordable/social housing in the borough and a need to designate parts of the Green Belt for affordable housing. Most of the evidence on which the plans were based, and which we had previously criticised for being inconsistent, had been moved to separate papers that were not easy to locate on the WBC website. Although our councillors profess a preference for the lowest level of expansion offered, they have no means of enforcing a limit on growth and each planning application has to be judged on its merits and possibly pass scrutiny at appeal.

We now await the final version of *Woking 2027* that will be submitted to Secretary of State for approval. We should see it by the end of this year.

Planning applications

The most significant applications for major development that will affect Hook Heath are the twin applications by Mount Green Housing Association to demolish Alice Ruston Place behind The Star public house and the nearby Apple Trees Place in Cinder Path. Both were to be replaced by apartment blocks, the former for social housing partly funded by market value housing on the latter site.

Because these were not actually in our patch we left it to nearby residents to object to the over development of both sites and the intrusion into their privacy, and a large number did so. We confined our comments to the wholly inadequate provision for parking that had been made and the consequent traffic congestion in Wych Hill that would result from the

overspill parking from both sites.

In the event both applications were refused, but the Mount Green Housing Association has lodged an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate relating only to Apple Trees Place.

Farnborough Airport

The TAG application to expand considerably the number of flights permitted each year has been approved by the Secretary of State following an appeal against refusal.

Keeping an eye on crime...

The GU22 postcode area, which embraces Mount Hermon, St John's, Hook Heath, Mayford and Sutton Green, has an 'average' level of crime, according to information now available on **www.police.uk**, the recently launched national crime website.

In December last year a total of 180 criminal incidents were recorded in the area. They included 17 cases of violent crime, 11 of burglary and 79 of anti-social behaviour. In February the total fell to 133 incidents with 53 cases of anti-social behaviour, 14 of violent crime and 59 listed as 'other crime'.

**NEIGHBOURHOOD
POLICE TEAM**

WPC Clare Leggat
Email: leggat1884@surrey.pnn.police.uk
Tel: 0845 125 2222 ext. 30055
Mob: 07967987679

PCSO Leeanne Roberts
Email: W_safer_woking_cen@suurey.police.uk
Tel: 0845 125 2222 ext. 30055

PCSO Carina Jewell
Email: W_safer_woking_cen@surrey.police.uk
Tel: 0845 125 2222 ext. 30055

...and on our local Council

Warned by politicians and the commentariat that the country faces a period of austerity as the government tackles the nation's crippling debt burden, local authority spending is receiving unprecedented scrutiny. Not before time, elected councillors and local authority officers are now required to ensure that transparency characterises their every spending decision.

Woking Borough Council, together with virtually every local authority up and down the country, is complying with the Government's edict that every item of expenditure of £500 and above is made available to the public. Woking's website (**www.woking.gov.uk**) now carries a detailed monthly statement on expenditure which can be downloaded from the website in pdf format.

Volunteers needed

Spring is almost upon us and we are planning to undertake the refurbishment of four wooden benches in the area. They are presently in a rather dilapidated state and look less than inviting places to rest in the course of a walk.

It must be many years since they last saw a lick of paint or varnish and, given the pressures on local authority finances, it seems highly unlikely that Woking Borough Council will be inclined to list this restoration project among its priorities.

This small project will make a big difference to the appearance of our local environment.

If you would like to lend a hand, please e-mail to: chairman @ hhra.co.uk.

The street scene

This is often a key consideration of planning officers and inspectors when deciding whether a proposed development would be appropriate to the area. It follows that it behoves all of us to maintain and if possible improve our local street scenes. Our hedges and trees are an important feature of Hook Heath and should only be removed in extremis. Parking on the road degrades the street scene wherever it occurs. Of course this cannot always be avoided, but it should not be allowed to become the norm for private cars. And finally, please remember that it is an offence to leave dog faeces on paths and verges.

HHRA website

Hook Heath is an interesting and satisfying place to live, and Hook Heath Residents Association is dedicated to keeping it that way. You can find its website at <http://www.hhra.co.uk> or simply by putting "Hook Heath Residents Association" into Google. The website provides information about the Association and the Hook Heath area - from its general history and some of the more interesting houses to topical concerns such as planning applications. The website was started in 2004.

Our webmaster, reports that he can monitor which pages people look at, how long they spend, their screen size and lots more. These statistics show that the history page is the most popular followed by the home page, the map of the area and then the planning applications. Between 10 and 15 people view the website each day with many spending quite a time browsing the pages.

The planning applications page is possibly the most crucial for local residents. Its entries are compiled from a list sent to the Association by the council on a weekly basis. There is also a page of useful links, not only to local services such as the council and the police but also to traffic information for planning journeys. A link to a weather radar map, which is updated half hourly, shows when the next shower in the area is likely to arrive.

There is an account of how the area was originally part of the land put aside for Brookwood Cemetery and its later sale. An interesting related aspect is that the verges of some of the roads in Hook Heath are still owned by the cemetery. Indeed an application for a telephone mast was thwarted by the problem of the cemetery ownership of the verge. Clarification on this matter including the roads affected and the ownership details would make a valuable new page. Any volunteers?

A recent addition to the history section of the site has been the history of Saracens, a large house on our southern boundary. Sadly the report discredits an intriguing tale concerning Lord Balfour of Fishers Hill House. The tale went that when Fishers Hill House was being built he looked down the hill and saw Saracens about to be started. Then he pompously commanded that the new house should not spoil his view, whereupon the builders stuck on an extra structure to raise the height of the house, just to spite him. This tale probably came about because, viewed from the front, Saracens does seem to have a very unusual tiny 'house' perched on top of the main one. Appealing as the tale is, however, the recently added account fairly convincingly shows that it is not true. Have a

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

Chairman: Jean Dare,

Vice Chairman: Dr. Neil Cryer,

Treasurer: Dr. David Dare,

Secretary: Heather Mustard,

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bridget Stoney,

Arthur Craven,

Judith Oakley,

Peter Hill,

Ron Brandman,

look and see what you think.

The Association is always on the lookout for more historical articles regarding the buildings and/or life in the area over its earlier years. Is there something about your house that would interest others? Please contact me whenever ideas and queries strike you. In the meantime, just enjoy the site.

St John's Memorial Hall



Plans to redevelop the Memorial Hall have reached an advanced stage. The project will now be funded in part by building four houses at the rear of the site facing the canal, and in part by a major contribution from Woking Borough Council. Funds collected over the years by the St John's Village Memorial Hall Association will be used to finance the internal fixtures and fittings. Final details have still to be agreed with the WBC, but if the current schedule is maintained work will begin during Winter 2011/12.

E-mail addresses

In a world where electronic communication is already established — for better or for worse, I am not sure — as the norm, we need to keep our records up to date. Many residents have kindly provided me with their e-mail address(es). Do drop me a note with your details (**chairman @ hhra.co.uk**). Many thanks in advance.

J. Dare

**Jean Dare,
Chairman**

Aims of the Association

1. To preserve the present character of Hook Heath and protect the local environment.
2. To provide members with help and assistance on matters affecting them, particularly in relation to letters of objection to the local council or public enquiries.
3. To deal with planning matters that affect the area and are against the consensus of the opinion of residents.
4. To liaise with the council and all political parties to achieve an agreed status for Hook Heath which reflects the consensus of the opinion of the residents.
5. To be aware of local issues in adjoining areas which may have repercussions for Hook Heath, and to provide mutual support to adjacent Residents' Associations to fight plans which could be detrimental to the surrounding environment.
6. To care for other matters of common concern which arise from time to time, e.g. traffic, public services, security, trees, etc.