

# **HOOK HEATH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

**Spring 2012**

## **NEWSLETTER**



**Summary of Accounts for 2011 and  
Subscription Renewal are on last page**

# Hook Heath Residents' Association

## 2012 NEWSLETTER

### KEEPING A WATCHFUL EYE

The prime purpose of the Association is to preserve the present character of Hook Heath and to protect the local environment on behalf of, and in the interests of, those who choose to live in this part of Woking.

As each year passes, the challenges to that eminently worthy objective seem to grow as the experience of the past twelve months has demonstrated. We have never considered it appropriate or desirable for the Association to have a motto but should we decide to do so at some point in the future, one that might commend itself would be '*semper vigilare*', to be ever watchful.

Over the past year the Association has vigorously and successfully opposed three planning applications and submitted a constructive critique of Woking Borough Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy that will be the planning cornerstone for Woking through to 2027. More about that document later in this Newsletter.

### So what have the successes been?

With the strong support of many local residents, the application to erect a giant 17.5 metre high telephone mast at the junction of Holly Bank Road and Hook Heath Road was rejected; a bid to demolish 'Kineton', a house built in the Arts & Crafts style in Holly Bank Road and replace it with a block of twelve flats, which astonishingly the planning department had recommended for approval, was turned down unanimously by the planning committee; and refusal of the planning committee to allow the installation of additional floodlighting of several courts at the Lawn Woking Tennis and Croquet Club in Pine Road.

Further information on each of these issues appears elsewhere in this Newsletter. I take this opportunity of recording my sincere thanks and appreciation to those residents who made their own individual representations to WBC - 156 in the case of the 'Kineton' proposal - for their support of the HHRA. It really does make a huge difference to be able to demonstrate the strength of local feeling to our elected representatives when controversial proposals are being considered.

Each of these applications had major implications for the quality of our local environment. Without the Association's opposition, supported by the views of concerned residents, it is eminently possible that any one of these proposals could have proceeded and seriously compromised our attractive and pleasant surroundings.

Against the background of the Localism Act and the profound changes to national planning guidelines that carry a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development,' the HHRA will continue to be vigilant on behalf of residents. Membership of the Association is entirely voluntary but for an annual subscription of £10 a year - unchanged for the past 16 years - I hope that residents who are not yet members will consider becoming members

and those who are will encourage friends and neighbours to do so. A membership application/renewal form is at the end of this Newsletter.

Thank you for your interest and support.

## **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - CORE STRATEGY DOCUMENT**

The planning policy team published a revised version of the WBC Core Strategy document in July 2011 for public consultation. It sets out the Council's vision of the ways in which they foresee Woking developing in the period 2012 to 2027. The HHRA along with many other interested parties commented on the document. A copy of the HHRA submission can be downloaded by clicking on the link on the HHRA website ([www.hhra.co.uk](http://www.hhra.co.uk)).

In December 2011 WBC submitted the Core Strategy document to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for independent examination together with a summary of the comments received, a schedule of proposed changes (all minor), and other supporting documents.

The Planning Inspector appointed to conduct the examination held a pre-hearing meeting in February 2012 at which he issued a list of 'Matters and Issues' that he wished to discuss at the Hearings beginning on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012. HHRA were represented at all sessions of the hearings and contributed to discussions of the importance of the Green Belt, infrastructure and transport problems, housing need, as well as more general issues such as the distinctions between growth, prosperity, and quality of life.

The smooth course of the examination was interrupted by the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that replaces existing Planning Policy Guidance publications. The Inspector added an extra Hearing session for a preliminary discussion of the implications of the NPPF as a result of which he decided to give Woking Borough Council two weeks to produce a revised version of the Core Strategy Document. He will then invite all previous respondents to consider how their previous submissions should be modified in the light of the NPPF and the revised Core Strategy Document. His plan is to deal with the revised submissions by the written representation method, but if necessary he will hold a one-day hearing to complete the examination.

The examination remains technically open until the Inspector has submitted his report to the Council, which will now not be until June 2012, but possibly later if extensive amendments to the Woking Core Strategy are required to ensure consistency with the newly published National Planning Policy Framework.

## **WHY HOOK HEATH IS SPECIAL**

Hook Heath is one of seven areas within the Woking Borough Council boundary that are defined as Urban Areas of Special Residential Character (UASRC). This designation has been vitally important in ensuring that the unique characteristics of particular areas are safeguarded for future generations and are not undermined or compromised by unsympathetic developments.

UASRC's are all low-density housing areas and generally well endowed with trees with many parts, such as Hook Heath, developed in the last years of the 19th century and early

part of the 20th century. Hook Heath is described as having an 'Arcadian character' within the Woking Borough Local Development Plan which was introduced in 1999. Unfortunately, Hook Heath's jealously guarded status as an Urban Area of Special Residential Character (UASRC) is being consigned to the dustbin of planning history.

At the hearing into the WBC Core Strategy document - the basis for the 2012-2027 plans - officials confirmed that the UASRC designation would disappear. WBC has emphasised, however, that it will ensure that the special characteristics of the (former) UASRC's will be protected and enhanced within the new development plan by reference to the Character Study (October 2010). This 'protection' will be extended to the 330- plus 'locally listed' buildings within the borough.

## **A NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM FOR HOOK HEATH?**

Included in the new Localism Act is provision for local residents to play a more active part in planning and development control as it affects their area by forming a Neighbourhood Forum. In many instances the Parish Council would be expected to fulfil the role, but in areas such as ours where there is no such organisation, existing community groups may put themselves forward, or an entirely new group may be formed for the purpose.

The general principle is that local communities will be able to draw up a neighbourhood plan that sets out a vision for the future development and use of land in their neighbourhood. It can be as general or detailed as the community wishes. Of course there will be a tedious (and probably expensive) administrative process to go through to get the plan accepted, but the reward would be a Neighbourhood Plan that planning authorities will be obliged to take into account when considering proposals for development.

The HHRA believes that Hook Heath could benefit from an approved Neighbourhood Plan and is considering taking the lead in establishing a Neighbourhood Forum, but to do so we shall need your support. One of the requirements laid down in the Localism Act is that the forum must consist of at least 21 members who will be responsible for drawing up the plan. In practice we suspect that a rather smaller number would do the actual drafting on behalf of the forum, but all members will need to endorse it. In addition, once the draft plan has passed through all the administrative checks including scrutiny by an independent examiner, it must be approved by majority vote in a referendum covering all electors in the neighbourhood.

The HHRA committee will make preliminary enquiries to establish more precisely exactly what is involved, but in the meantime we need to know whether residents of Hook Heath are broadly supportive of the idea and whether any of you would consider playing an active part, however small, by joining a Neighbourhood Forum. Please let me know your views. My contact details are: [chairman@hhra.co.uk](mailto:chairman@hhra.co.uk) .

## **GIANT 'PHONE MAST PLAN FOILED**

Plans by two of the country's largest mobile telephone companies to erect a giant 17.5 metre high 'phone mast at the highest point in Hook Heath on land at the junction of Holly Bank Road with Hook Heath Road facing Hook Hill Lane were foiled last summer. The decision followed opposition from the HHRA and more than 100 residents.

Vodafone and 02 submitted a joint application to locate the macro-cell mast and

ancillary equipment. The mast was of a type not intended for use in residential areas and would usually be located well away from homes or on high ground in rural areas. In residential areas, much less powerful micro-cell transmitters are the norm.

The HHRA cited four principal reasons for opposition this application and argued that the mast of this size, together with the associated equipment, would detract from the street scene in an Urban Area of Special Residential Character (see separate article). The application was rejected.

Residents should note, however, that the same two companies applied successfully to erect a mast of identical height and the same type at Kettlewell Hill, Horsell in December last year.

## **ARTS & CRAFTS PROPERTY PRESERVED**

Woking Borough Council's planning department recommended approval for a proposal by the owner to demolish 'Kineton', a historic house in the Arts & Crafts style, and replace the property with a block of twelve flats.

The planning department's endorsement of the application was all the more remarkable since the house, which was built in 1910, is designated as "a locally listed building of importance" under the Woking Local Development Plan 1999. Its demolition, therefore, would have been contrary to one of the central tenets of Council policy.

This was the fifth bid to redevelop the 'Kineton' site in Holly Bank Road and on each occasion proposals had been rejected by both WBC and the Planning Inspectorate. The worrying aspect of this application was that if it had succeeded it would have created a most unwelcome precedent for Hook Heath.

In the event HHRA campaigned successfully against the plan with huge support from members and residents. Members of the planning committee responded to an invitation to visit the site and view the plans for its redevelopment. Terry Oakley, a member of the Association and local resident, together with Councillor Graham Cundy, our local ward councillor, both spoke eloquently and with real passion against the plan at the planning committee meeting in mid December. The application was refused by a unanimous vote.

The applicant subsequently appealed to the Planning Inspectorate. The Appeal is being decided on the basis of written representations. We expect to learn the Inspector's decision in May 2012.

## **GAME, SET AND MATCH**

In this year of the London Olympic Games, it is good to know that there is real interest in developing a new generation of young sportsmen and women, and nowhere more so than at the Woking Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Pine Road. Few neighbourhoods can be so fortunate as to have a first class club on their own doorstep.

The Club has expanded significantly in recent years and some years ago floodlighting of the courts was introduced and this innovation prompted a less than enthusiastic response from some local residents who live in close proximity. Alarmed by an application to increase the number of floodlit courts, a small group of local residents took the initiative in

commissioning a professional assessment of the proposal and its impact on neighbours.

The independent study confirmed the planning department's recommendation that the proposal should be refused and subsequently confirmed by a majority vote by the planning committee which noted that the Club had failed to produce any evidence of the need for additional lighting.

## Website update

The Hook Heath Residents' Association website is at <http://www.hhra.co.uk> but it can easily also be found by simply typing "hhra" or "Hook Heath Residents" into Google.

The website provides information about the Association and the Hook Heath area - from its general history and the history of some of the more interesting houses to topical concerns such as planning applications and road repairs.

Data are available showing which pages website visitors look at, how long they spend on each page, their screen size, how they got there and much more. These statistics show that the top pages in order of popularity are: the home page, the history page, and the planning applications page.

For an area as small as Hook Heath, what is remarkable is that the site is visited every day and that, once there, visitors spend considerable time looking through the various 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 shows when the next rain 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. There are a few fascinating histories of some of the houses in Hook Heath, and we would welcome more.

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

## IT'S THE LIMIT

Speeding in and around Hook Heath, especially on the enticingly attractive straight stretches of Hook Heath Road and Holly Bank Road, has become quite intolerable. Several speakers raised their concerns at the HHRA Annual General Meeting last autumn. Suggestions ranged from installing 'speed bumps' and 'pinch points' at key points to training local volunteers to track motorists' speeds. The Association is pressing Surrey County Council and WBC to introduce 30mph repeater roundel signs along both roads.

### 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,**

## NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE TEAM

The team covering Hook Heath is led by PC Clare Leggat who is assisted by PCSO Gemma Henty and PCSO Craig Hawkes. They hold regular panel meetings in St Johns Memorial Hall. These are formal meetings that give residents and businesses from St John's and Hook Heath an opportunity to put forward their issues re the area and set neighbourhood priorities.

## THE GAS MEN COMETH

If you have not visited the HHRA website recently you may not be aware that Southern Gas Networks is scheduled to embark on the lengthy process of laying a new gas main in Hook Heath. Work will start in May and the new pipe laying operation will run from the junction of Hook Heath Road with Cedar Road to Sun Hill. All roads to the south and east of this line will also be affected with the exception of Allen House Park.

## HHRA NEEDS YOU!

Your Committee is eternally grateful to those members who kindly distribute this Newsletter and other occasional letters from the Association to residents. There are some gaps in our coverage, however, and we are looking for volunteers to deliver in Fernhill Park, Fernhill Close and Hook Hill Park. If you would like to help, please contact the chairman, Jean Dare, at: [chairman@hhra.co.uk](mailto:chairman@hhra.co.uk) .



**Jean Dare,  
Chairman**

### NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE TEAM WPC Clare Leggat

Email:

[woking@surrey.police.uk](mailto:woking@surrey.police.uk)

Tel: 0845 125 2222 ext.  
30055

Mob: 07967987679

PCSO Craig Hawkes

Email:

[woking@surrey.pnn.police.uk](mailto:woking@surrey.pnn.police.uk)

Tel: 0845 125 2222 ext. 30055

### PCSO Gemma Henty

Email:

[woking@surrey.pnn.police.uk](mailto:woking@surrey.pnn.police.uk)

Tel: 0845 125 2222 ext.

30055

### ***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.

## Summary of Accounts for 2011

Income and Expenditure	2011	2010
Income:		
Subs and Donations - cheques	£2,430.00	£2,560.00
standing orders	£440.00	£430.00
Interest on reserve Account	£155.21	£150.88
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>£3,025.21</u></b>	<b><u>£3,140.88</u></b>
Expenditure:		
CPRE Subscription	£34.00	£32.00
Open Spaces Society Subscription	£40.00	£40.00
Photocopying and Printing	£43.73	£37.13
AGM Costs	£120.00	£135.00
Flowers	£0.00	£28.50
Lighting Survey (50% share)	£225.00	£0.00
Website Renewal Fee	£15.98	£0.00
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b><u>£478.71</u></b>	<b><u>£272.63</u></b>
Creditors	£0.00	£0.00
Debtors	£0.00	£0.00
Income less Expenditure and Liabilities	£2,546.50	£2,868.25
Fund Balance at 1 January 2011	£35,576.21	£32,707.96
<b>Fund Balance at 31 December 2011</b>	<b><u>£38,122.71</u></b>	<b><u>£35,576.21</u></b>
 <b>Balance Sheet</b>		
Current Account Balance at 31 December	£2,362.57	£2,971.28
Reserve Account Balance at 31 December	£35,760.14	£32,604.93
Gross Assets at 31 December	£38,122.71	£35,576.21
Liabilities	£0.00	£0.00
<b>Net Assts at 31 December</b>	<b><u>£38,122.71</u></b>	<b><u>£35,576.21</u></b>

### Subscription Renewal Form

To: David Dare, Treasurer HHRA, Fair Ling, Hook Heath Road, Woking GU22 0DT

(a) I/We wish to renew my/our membership of / join the HHRA for the period April 2011 to March 2012 and enclose the subscription of £10.00   
 (Please make cheques payable to the Hook Heath Residents' Association)

(b) I/We wish to pay by standing order. Please deliver a suitable form.

Name.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Signature.....Tel No:.....

E-mail Address.....