

# **HOOK HEATH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

Web Address: [www.hhra.co.uk](http://www.hhra.co.uk)

## **Spring 2014 NEWSLETTER**



**Summary of Accounts for 2013**

**&**

**Subscription Renewal**

**See final page**

***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.

# Hook Heath Residents' Association

## 2014 Newsletter

### **THE GREEN BELT**

The future of the Green Belt is once again a subject of debate. National government has determined that 250,000 new homes will be needed every year for the foreseeable future to meet predicted population growth. The result of dividing this total among English counties and boroughs is that Woking must build an average of 292 new homes every year up to 2027, after which a new target will almost inevitably follow. To meet their quotas local authorities are required to identify land to meet housing targets for at least five years ahead.

Woking Borough Council (WBC) has been able to identify sites within the town centre to meet about half the target and has sufficient other land in reserve to meet the balance up to 2022. Additional building land will be needed for the last five years of the period covered by the present Core Strategy. Most of the land within the borough outside the urban areas is within the Green Belt. To the north of the urban area much of the land enjoys additional protection such as that provided by the Thames Basin Heaths, or provides special habitats of one sort or another. That leaves the Green Belt land south of Woking up to the boundary with Guildford looking vulnerable.

WBC had intended to conduct a review of Green Belt boundaries in 2016/17 with a view to releasing land for development in the last five years of the Core Strategy period. Unfortunately, the planning inspector who conducted the review of the Core Strategy yielded to pressure from the building industry to bring forward the review. WBC subsequently commissioned a review and this has now reported, but so far its content has not been made public.

Hook Heath residents will be directly affected if land on the escarpment or adjacent to it is judged suitable for release. The boundary between Hook Heath and Mayford runs through this land, so close co-operation between ourselves and the Mayford Village Society will be essential if we are to preserve one of the more attractive and distinctive features of our local topography. Local councillors will also have an important role to play in influencing the outcome, but who they will be in future depends on the outcome of the Ward Boundary Review.

### **THE WARD BOUNDARY REVIEW**

At present Woking is divided into 17 wards of varying sizes each represented by 1, 2 or 3 ward councillors. There are 36 councillors in total. The proposal under consideration would change this arrangement to one in which:

- There are ten wards, each supported by 3 councillors;
- The number of voters in each ward is within 10% of the average;
- Travel from one location to another in the same ward does not involve leaving the ward; and
- There remains a sense of community within each ward, and local centres are not divided between wards.

Under the original proposals Hook Heath would no longer be in the St Johns and Hook Heath ward, but would join a new ward, called South Woking, that would encompass Hook Heath, Mayford, Sutton Green, Sutton Park, and parts of Bridley and Mount Hermon West. The new ward is described as lacking a community or retail core, having limited connections to local schools and not well connected by foot, bicycle, car or public transport, but sharing a common interest in preserving its semi-rural character.

The Hook Heath Residents' Association (HHRA) made a formal objection on two specific aspects of the proposal relating to the South Woking ward:

- We felt that the name was out of keeping with the other new ward names. There was to be no North, East or West Woking ward. Most of the other ward names have some local association with which residents can easily identify. We suggested some names that recognised the semi-rural nature of the area, and one of these, Heathlands, seems to have found favour with council members who have recommended the change of name to the Boundary Commission.
- Our other objection was to the inclusion of Mount Hermon West, which has a much more urban character than the rest of the proposed ward and is unlikely to share a common interest in maintaining the semi-rural nature of the landscape. It was probably included to bring the population closer to the average, but in character it would sit more comfortably within the Town ward. This point has also been recognised and the Heathlands ward will no longer include any part of Mount Hermon. To compensate for this loss both Brookwood and Barnsbury have been brought within its borders.

The new ward is by far the largest in physical size, has a low population density and much open land within the Green Belt. These are the characteristics that attracted many of us to move to the area. They are also the characteristics that could make us a prime target for the new housing in Woking that has been mandated. The production of a Hook Heath Neighbourhood Plan that will give us at least some influence on what kind of development would be appropriate and where it should be located has become a matter of some urgency.

The revised boundary proposals have now been passed to the Local Government Boundary Commission. The Commission will start drafting its own warding proposals and then undertake a further consultation between 14 July and 6 October 2014.

The Commission's final recommendations are due to be published on 20 January 2015, when a draft Order will be placed before both Houses of Parliament.

## **THE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

The Localism Act 2011 encourages local residents and businesses to play an active role in planning and development control in their areas. It was by no means a foregone conclusion that there would be support from residents for such a bold step, so it was encouraging that there was a positive response when we launched the proposal in the April 2012 HHRA Newsletter.

Thanks to the efforts of a small, but dedicated, band of volunteers we were able to approve the Forum's constitution and to elect its first officers exactly a year ago. In May last year we submitted our application to WBC seeking its approval to the proposed boundaries for the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Area and the formation of the Forum.

There followed a six week public consultation period, a requirement under the provisions of the Act, so it was not until 24 October that WBC formally approved the formation of the Forum and agreed the boundaries for the Neighbourhood Area. Hook Heath was the first area within the borough to secure approval to set up a Forum - residents of Byfleet, West Byfleet, Pyrford and Brookwood & Bridley have since followed a similar path - and nationally, we are one of almost 1000 groups working to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Membership Grows**

From an initial membership of slightly more than 20, there are now close to 300 residents and businesses who have registered their interest in the Forum and the production of our plan. Three working groups, all volunteers, covering the built environment, open spaces and local infrastructure, have been taking the work forward since autumn of last year.

Your replies to the questionnaire we circulated to all 720 addresses in the area last September provided the working groups with the foundations for the policies which will lie at the heart of the plan. Further evidence for policy development was provided by the replies to the questionnaires distributed to more than 100 residents who visited the Forum's "Drop-in" event at Woking Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club on 15 March.

The Forum, which is open to everyone, has met regularly, while the Forum's steering group and management committee have, necessarily, met much more frequently. There will be many challenges to come in producing the Neighbourhood Plan: the working groups would welcome any volunteers who are able to contribute their time and expertise by helping develop the Plan.

## Referendum Support

Our objective is to produce a document which is capable of withstanding the independent scrutiny of a planning inspector and securing the support of residents and businesses within Hook Heath in a public referendum. A simple majority will ensure that the plan is formally 'made'.

The prize is that it then becomes a legal document and WBC will be obliged to take account of the policies within the plan in relation to any planning applications for development within the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Area.

With your help, continued interest and support we shall achieve that objective. There will be more opportunities over the next few months for residents to make their voices heard as the Neighbourhood Plan takes shape. The next meeting of the Forum will be held on Wednesday 11 June at Gorse Hill commencing at 7.30 pm.

Meanwhile, please keep up to date with all the news from the HHRA and the Neighbourhood Forum by visiting our website at: [www.hhra.co.uk/hookheathforum](http://www.hhra.co.uk/hookheathforum).

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

While the Association has been busy dealing with the strategic issues of the Green Belt and Ward Boundary Reviews and supporting the development of a Neighbourhood Plan the HHRA has also been keeping an eye on the day to day planning applications that affect Hook Heath. Most of these relate to extensions to existing properties and are not generally controversial. The following applications, however, were of greater significance for the future development of Hook Heath and required some immediate action.

### Gorse Hill License Application

Last autumn De Vere Venues submitted an application to extend its entertainment licence until 2.00 am on 7 nights per week. It provoked a storm of protest from nearby residents who felt that they had tolerated noise and anti-social behaviour late at night for long enough. The prospect of more of the same every night until the early hours was too much to bear. They organized a letter-writing campaign that was successful in persuading the licensing committee to grant only an additional hour for alcohol sales and late night refreshment to midnight on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and to retain all the current conditions attached to the premises licence. The committee also suggested that if nearby residents experienced any further problems or issues they should report them to the appropriate agency (Police, Environmental Health, Licensing) as these records would assist/inform any future licensing decisions.

#### ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

*Chairman:* **Jean Dare**

Tel: 01483 764942

*Vice Chairman:* **Peter Hill**

Tel: 01483 720943

*Treasurer:* **Dr. David Dare**

Tel: 01483 764942

*Secretary:* **Heather Mustard**

Tel: 01483 729052

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Bridget Stoney**

**Dr. Neil Cryer**

**Judith Oakley**

**Ron Brandman**

### **Kineton**

This attractive and locally listed house in Holly Bank Road has been the subject of a series of applications over many years to demolish the property and to replace it with varying numbers of detached houses. All have been refused, but in 2012 a new proposal to replace Kineton with a block of flats was approved on appeal. Subsequently, in 2013, the owner submitted an alternative application to build two substantial detached houses on the site. Although there were some minor objections to the design and layout, local residents prefer the new proposal because it is much more consistent with the existing street scene and will not significantly add to the traffic and parking problems in Holly Bank Road. The application has been approved and work is expected to begin in late April or early May 2014.

### **Grey Walls**

We would normally have been alarmed at a proposal to build a new house in the garden of a locally listed house, but this appears to be one of those rare instances where there is sufficient room for the development to take place without detriment to its surroundings. The plot is wide enough to accommodate two large houses side by side in Hook Heath Road without looking cramped, and is of sufficient depth that both houses will have gardens commensurate with their size. The application has been approved.

### **New House adjacent to Gorse Hill**

Last year we reported on this application to build a new house on Green Belt land next to Gorse Hill and adjacent to the Fishers Hill conservation area. After a long delay planning permission was granted. The decision was justified on the grounds that an earlier application to build a house on the site had been partially implemented. No one living in the area can remember any work being carried out in the past, and a freedom of information request to WBC revealed that the building inspectors had no knowledge of it and had no record of ever visiting the site. So far there has been no activity on the site except for the erection of a rather unsightly hoarding to screen it from Hook Heath Road.

### **Cranstone**

When this fine, if somewhat neglected, property set in a large, wooded plot at the corner of Pine Road and Hook Heath Road came on the market last year, many residents feared that it might be replaced by a mini-estate of identikit modern houses. At our request the Council imposed a Tree Preservation Order on the two major clumps of trees. Happily, the new owners have set about modernizing and refurbishing the original house to a very high standard. Cranstone will surely once again join the ranks of prestigious family homes that make Hook Heath such a desirable place to live.

### **Gorse Hill Expansion**

At the end of 2013 De Vere Venues submitted an application to build a self-contained conference suite on the site of the existing squash courts and to convert the existing conference and training rooms in the courtyard building to 22 additional bedrooms. At the same time the company planned to construct a new entrance from Hook Heath Road for which planning permission had previously been given. The potential for an enhanced hotel operation independent of the conference/training business is obvious, and could change the balance of activity at Gorse Hill away from the core business of residential and non-residential training. The prospect of increased traffic and noise, particularly at weekends, was not welcomed by residents. However, there is general agreement that moving the entrance to a safer part of Hook Heath Road should have happened long ago. While it must be accepted that De Vere Venues will seek to enhance its business by making maximum use of its facilities, the venue should operate only within the restrictions currently imposed by WBC and without detriment to the rights of other residents to enjoy their property. The HHRA recommended that if planning permission were to be granted the following conditions should be imposed:

- The new entrance is constructed first;
- The garden suite and additional parking be constructed next;
- The conversion of the courtyard annex takes place last; and
- Current restrictions on bedroom use for non-training purposes, licensing hours, noise and entertainment hours should be retained.

Regrettably, at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 the WBC Planning Committee approved the application.

### **Woodbank**

The Methodist Care Home at the junction of Pond Road and Holly Bank Road is not the most attractive of buildings, so when the owners, Methodist Homes Ltd. (MHL), proposed to replace it with a well-designed, state of the art facility, it seemed too good to be true. Unfortunately, in seeking to replace 38 individual rooms with 40 apartments (11 studio, 23 one bedroom and 6 two bedroom suites) on the same footprint, a three storey building was required. This resulted in a rather bulky and overbearing appearance that neighbours felt was invasive of their privacy despite attempts by the architects to provide additional screening.

The new apartments each with kitchen facilities are clearly aimed at people capable of a more independent style of living than the original care home provided. Future occupants are likely to have their own cars, particularly as the road is not served by public transport, so the facility will generate considerably more traffic movements daily than at present. The result will be additional noise in what should be a quiet residential area.

The proposed provision of 23 parking spaces, three of which were reserved for staff, was totally inadequate for the occupants of 40 suites. Even the previous, smaller



care home was unable to provide sufficient parking on site, and the stretch of Holly Bank Road around the entrance to Woodbank was daily lined with parked cars belonging to staff and visitors. In addition to degrading the street scene, they constituted a hazard by reducing visibility for traffic exiting the site and, by restricting the available road width, impeding passing traffic.

The application has been refused by WBC on the grounds that the mass, scale and bulk of the building would be out of character with the area, and because the number of two bedroom suites was below that required by Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy. No doubt a revised application will follow.

### **Greenlea**

Applications to demolish properties in Hook Heath and to replace them with larger modern houses can, if sensitively executed, lead to an enhancement of the area. On this occasion the sheer scale of what was proposed in Cedar Road caused neighbours to object. The new house would have extended across virtually the whole width of the plot and extended much deeper into the rear garden than its neighbours. Overlooking, particularly from the attic rooms, would have been invasive of privacy. A triple garage sited forward of the property and with accommodation above was also out of keeping with the general building pattern in Cedar Road, particularly as the trees that had formerly partially screened the plot had been removed.

The WBC planning committee refused the application on the grounds that it represented an overdevelopment of the plot, and at appeal the planning inspector upheld the decision.

### **HHRA WEBSITE**

The Hook Heath Residents' Association website is at [www.hhra.co.uk](http://www.hhra.co.uk) and Hook Heath Neighbourhood Forum's website is at [www.hhra.co.uk/hookheathforum](http://www.hhra.co.uk/hookheathforum)

The Residents' website now includes remarkable pictures of Hook Heath from all angles, thanks to great photography from a helicopter under the guidance of Maxwell New. When these aerial pictures went up, there was a dramatic increase in the number of visitors to the site - with 180 visits on one day. The corresponding peak when additional aerial pictures were added to the Forum's website was 87 visits on one day. Currently the Residents' site has 30 main pages, and during March this year it received an average of 30 visitors a day. The Forum's site has 35 pages and the corresponding number of visitors was 17 a day. Surprisingly the actual numbers can vary by as much as a factor of 6 either way.

On the Residents' site the most popular pages are those about the history of the area, planning applications, the Green Belt and the aerial photographs. On the Forum's site, they are the Forum updates, the diary of events, FAQs, the registration form and the aerial photographs.

The designs of the two sites are quite different with the Residents' home page having a light magazine approach while the Forum's home page is more measured.

The webmaster would very much appreciate contributions from any and all residents on topical items for both sites. He needs pictures and one or more paragraphs of detail. Please try to help. He can be reached at [webmaster.hhra@gmail.com](mailto:webmaster.hhra@gmail.com) for either website. This is a new email address as a distressing recent revelation was that the previous webmaster email address had ceased to function. So if anyone has emailed him and received no reply, please accept his apologies and resend your message.

### **ST JOHNS MEMORIAL HALL**

At long last the tortuous task of replacing the old Memorial Hall is nearing completion. The new hall is scheduled to open on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2014.

### **HOOK HEATH AVENUE RAILWAY BRIDGE**

Work is due to begin this summer on strengthening the parapet and installing permanent traffic lights. Temporary bridge closures will be necessary during this period.

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE TEAM**

We have a new Neighbourhood Police Team. The Team will hold regular panel meetings at which residents can raise issues that concern them, hear the latest crime statistics, and debate the future priorities for the Team. The planned dates for the St Johns and Hook Heath Panel are:

Monday 28 July 2014  
Tuesday 21 October 2014

All meetings will be held at The Lounge, St Johns Church, Church Road, St Johns GU21 7QN, and commence at 7.30 pm.

#### **NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE TEAM**

##### **PC Siobhan Williams**

ID Number: 40617

Email:

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

##### **PCSO Jane Taylor**

ID Number: 15008

Email:

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

Between meetings members of the Team may be contacted by e-mail, or by calling the non-emergency number 01483 571212.



Jean Dare  
Chairman

**SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 2013**

<b><u>Income and Expenditure</u></b>	<b>2013</b>	2012
Income:		
Subs and donations - Cheques & Cash	<b>£1,855.00</b>	£2,130.00
Direct Transfer	<b>£840.00</b>	£700.00
Repayment of NF printing costs	<b>£85.76</b>	
Interest on Reserve Account	<b>£191.57</b>	£180.21
 Total Income:	 <b><u>£2,972.33</u></b>	 <u>£3,010.21</u>
Expenditure:		
CPRE Subscription	<b>£34.00</b>	£34.00
Open Spaces Society Subscription	<b>£45.00</b>	£40.00
Photocopying and Printing	<b>£149.63</b>	£72.48
AGM Costs	<b>£150.00</b>	£130.00
Website Renewal Fee	<b>£23.99</b>	£23.99
 Total expenditure:	 <b><u>£402.62</u></b>	 <u>£300.47</u>
Creditors	<b>£0.00</b>	£0.00
Debtors	<b>£0.00</b>	£0.00
Income less Expenditure and Liabilities	<b>£2,569.71</b>	£2,709.74
Fund Balance at 1 January	<b>£40,832.45</b>	£38,122.71
Fund Balance at 31 December	<b><u>£43,402.16</u></b>	<u>£40,832.45</u>
 <b><u>Balance Sheet</u></b>		
Current Account Balance at 31 December	<b>£2,770.24</b>	£2,392.10
Reserve Account Balance at 31 December	<b>£40,631.92</b>	£38,440.35
Gross Assets at 31 December	<b>£43,402.16</b>	£40,832.45
Liabilities	<b>£0.00</b>	£0.00
<b>Net Assets at 31 December</b>	<b><u>£43,402.16</u></b>	<u>£40,832.45</u>

## SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Membership subscriptions for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 are now due.

**Existing members** may renew their membership in one of the following ways:

1) By direct interbank transfer to the HHRA account, details of which are:

Account Name: Hook Heath Residents' Association,

Sort Code: 30 - 99 - 80

Account Number: 00376381

Reference: This is your membership number. It is important to include this.

(If you are unsure of your membership number, please contact the Treasurer.)

2) By cheque - please complete the form printed below and send to the Treasurer

3) By standing order - you may set this up yourself using method (1) above or by completing the form below.

**Residents wishing to join the Association** should complete the form below.

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### Subscription Renewal Form

To: David Dare, Treasurer HHRA, Fair Ling, Hook Heath Road, Woking GU22 0DT  
(Tel: 01483 764942, e-mail: [treasurer@hhra.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@hhra.co.uk))

(a) I/We wish to renew my/our membership of / join the HHRA for the period April 2014 to March 2015 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.....