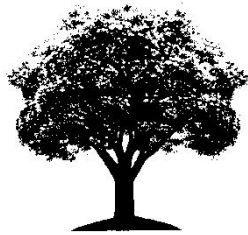


HOOK HEATH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Web Address: www.hhra.co.uk

Spring 2017 NEWSLETTER



Summary of Accounts for 2016

&

Subscription Renewal

See final page

Hook Heath Residents' Association

2016 Newsletter

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The HHRA has once more had a busy year. As well as dealing with all the regular applications for extensions and new developments, we have had to engage with Woking Borough Council to continue our fight to protect the Green Belt land on our doorstep. We are still in a battle to save what is left of the Hook Heath escarpment from development, but it will be a hard fight.

We have employed a professional planning consultant this year to help us respond to a consultation paper on the suitability of a site in the Green Belt east of Martyrs Lane for development after 2027. If selected it could lead to a reprieve for some of the sites previously identified on the Hook Heath escarpment.

The Neighbourhood Forum is still going strong under the guidance of Mike Cooke, who scrutinises all applications as they arrive to ascertain whether they comply with the Neighbourhood Plan adopted by the Council in late 2015. Any infringements are drawn to the attention of Planning Department by both the Residents' Association and the Neighbourhood Forum. So far planning officers have generally been supportive of the Plan.

Most applications are for modest extensions to existing houses to improve accommodation for family members young and old, and are usually easy to deal with. The contentious ones are usually those that involve subdivision of a plot. The Strawberry Tree in Fernhill Lane is one such, where a plan for an additional house on the plot was approved only after it had been reduced in scale. The applicant has subsequently submitted amendments that would increase the accommodation again. Merrywood in Hook Heath Avenue was another example, where an earlier extension to the main house was to be separated from it to create a separate and independent dwelling. The application was refused by the Council and a subsequent appeal to the Planning Inspectorate has been dismissed. A further example turned down by the Inspectorate was an application for a small house facing Holly Bank Road to be built in a corner of the garden of Haere Mai in Mile Path.

Our environment is a very important part of where we live. It is important for our health and wellbeing. The air we breathe is increasingly polluted by traffic on the ground and in the air. To help counter pollution in the surrounding area we need to preserve the trees in our gardens and all the surrounding greenery which is important for the wildlife. Every time we dig up a bush, or take down a tree, we are depriving some of our wildlife of a home. What a horrible world it would be without the birds, and the squirrels, even though they annoy us at times. The loss of the green area on Egley road has devastated the local wildlife. It is therefore up to us to help in any way we can. We should try not to have too many hard surfaces round our houses, and to preserve the trees if we possibly can. Britain has become the least forested country in Europe. What does that say about us? If we are to live

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

Chairman: **Jean Dare**
Tel: 01483 764942

Vice Chairman **Dr Mike Cooke**
Tel: 01483 727832

Treasurer: **Dr. David Dare**
Tel: 01483 764942

Secretary: **Heather Mustard**
Tel: 01483 729052

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bridget Stoney

Judith Oakley

Ron Brandman

Gerald Griffiths

WEBMASTER

Dr. Neil Cryer

healthy lives we must in the next ten years plant millions of trees. Otherwise, we or the next generation, without a doubt will be struck down by illnesses caused by the pollution. Trees eat up pollution and provide oxygen. With a change in attitude to our cars, and the planting of greenery, we can create a healthy atmosphere for the next few generations to enjoy.

We are fortunate to live in an area with a relatively low crime rate, but nationally the police have a very heavy workload and are understaffed. Surrey is no different from any other large county, and the pressure on the force is quite considerable. The need to maintain security at a high level means the Surrey Police must be ready to support other forces when needed. Also, Woking is not the quiet place it used to be. We have many problems with drugs and antisocial behaviour being issues the local force must deal with. We can help by keeping aware of what is going on in our surroundings, and reporting any suspicious activity, such a drug pushing or anything you think is out of the ordinary for the area.



Jean Dare (Mrs)

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.

THE GREEN BELT AND SITE ALLOCATIONS

Background

At this time last year we were waiting for Woking Borough Council's response to all the representations made on the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) published for consultation in June 2015. The document set out proposals for releasing land from the Green Belt to build 550 houses in the period 2022-27 to meet the requirements of the Woking Core Strategy, and additional land for 1200 houses in the period 2027-40. In total around 1600 hundred organizations and individuals submitted comments. These between them included over 32,000 suggestions for changes to be made. The high level of interest and criticism was only to be expected because the SADPD depended heavily on an earlier paper produced for WBC by a planning consultancy, Peter Brett Associates (PBA), which was limited in its scope and had never been subjected to formal public scrutiny. In these circumstances a long delay while the Council considered how to proceed was not surprising.

The Martyrs Lane Option

A number of councillors, perhaps realising that the SADPD would be vulnerable to legal challenge unless a wider range of options was considered, identified a new site east of Martyrs Lane that had not previously been given serious consideration. This option was put before a full Council Meeting in October 2016. The proposal was for a replacement SADPD that included consideration of the Martyrs Lane site to be prepared for a second round of public consultation.



The Proposed Site East of Martyrs Lane

Strong opposition from councillors who supported the original SADPD led to an amended proposal being accepted; the original SADPD would be retained, and public comment invited only on the merits of the Martyrs Lane site.

WBC Response to Representations made on the June 2015 SADPD

Shortly after debating the Martyrs Lane option WBC published a response to comments made on the June 2015 SADPD. It was clear that WBC did not accept most of the public's concerns or criticisms and saw no reason to make any substantive changes.

The Martyrs Lane Consultation Paper

When the stand alone Martyrs Lane consultation paper was published in January 2017 it specified that the site allocations identified for development up to 2027 in the original SADPD would be retained, and that the Martyrs Lane site should only be considered as a possible location for post 2027 development in place of some or all of the six sites in Byfleet, Pyrford and Mayford previously identified for building post 2027. There was no reference to the sites north of Hook Hill Lane identified for removal from the Green Belt in the June 2015 SADPD and which are within the Hook Heath Neighbourhood area.

The intention appears to be to close down any further discussion of those elements of the June 2015 SADPD that relate to development up to 2027 and to confine future debated to the relative merits of the Martyrs Lane and the other six sites. It is possible that two new SADPDs will be produced to address the pre and post 2027 Green Belt land requirements separately.

The HHRA Response to the Martyrs Lane Consultation Paper

There would be obvious advantages to Hook Heath residents if selection of the Martyrs Lane site for removal from the Green Belt led to a reprieve for the two sites in Mayford north of Saunders Lane (GB10 and GB11), but we need to avoid the trap of finding that the two Hook Heath sites (GB14 and 20g) would be removed from the Green Belt by default simply because they were not specifically included with the six sites specified in the Martyrs Lane proposal. The HHHRA Committee decided to take professional advice on how best to comment on the Martyrs Lane option.



Mayford and Hook Heath sites identified in the June 2016 SADPD

The professional advice was that we should divide our comments into two separate representations. The first would address the suitability of the Martyrs Lane site for development and to argue that its characteristics prove it to be preferable to the other sites proposed for removal from the Green Belt. The second representation would challenge the legitimacy of the WBC's decision to decouple the

release of Green Belt land to meet pre 2027 requirement from the post 2027 requirement, specifically the close connection between the Saunders Lane and Hook Heath sites.

The arguments in favour of the Martyrs Lane option were relatively easy to enumerate: the site is big enough to accommodate 1200 houses, including affordable housing, and the necessary infrastructure of shops, primary schools, etc; there are major employers close by such as St Peter's Hospital, the Animal and Plant Health Agency, and McLaren Technology Centre; the A320 gives easy access to the M25 and Heathrow Airport to the north; Woking town centre and the mainline railway stations in Woking and West Byfleet to the south are easily reached via the A320 and A245; bus routes and cycle routes, including to Woking town centre, exist already; there is little development along the A320 north of Woking, making road widening relatively easy if necessary; although in the green belt, the site has no other national or local landscape designation unlike some of the other proposals; north of the golf course the land is largely disused and derelict and planning permission has previously been given for McLaren to build a technical centre on part of the site.

The second representation is important to us because as things stand the Hook Heath sites would be removed from the Green Belt even if the adoption of the Martyrs Lane allowed the Saunders Lane sites to remain in the Green Belt. This would clearly be illogical since the sole reason advanced in the June 2015 SADPD for removing sites GB14 and 20g from the Green Belt was that if GB10 and GB11 were removed the other two sites would be left isolated. Consequently they were proposed for removal with GB14 to become Green Infrastructure and 20g also to be removed, but without any specified use. Even more worrying was the Proposals Map accompanying the June 2015 SADPD, which showed GB10, 11 and 14 as scheduled for release from the Green Belt, but with 20g absorbed into the urban area of Woking as if it had already been released!

While the Martyrs Lane option is likely to be popular with residents in West Byfleet, Pyrford, Mayford and Hook Heath, we must expect fierce opposition from residents in Horsell, in whose ward the site lies, and from residents of Woodham and Sheerwater, who would be most directly affected by the proposed development. In total about 3000 organizations and individuals were submitted before the consultation period closed on 27 February 2017, so we can anticipate another long delay before a revised SADPD is published.

The full text of the HHRA representation on the Martyrs Lane paper is available on the HHRA website.

HOE VALLEY SCHOOL

Construction of the new school building, funded by the Department of Education (DoE), is very evidently in progress on the Egley Road site. The work is on schedule for the school to open in September 2018. It will be a non-selective free school with an annual intake of 120 leading to an eventual total of 840 pupils. The curriculum and day to day running of the school will be under the control of the governing body, with maintenance and running costs met by the DoE. The funds will come via Surrey County Council which has responsibility *inter alia* for: admissions policy, ensuring that core elements of national curriculum are met, and determining term dates.

At present the first two intakes are in temporary accommodation in Woking Park, which will be extended to take the third intake later this year. Shortage of space in Woking Park has resulted in each year's intake being well below the planned 120 places. All the costs of building and running the

temporary site have been met by WBC to date. WBC hopes to recover these costs from the DoE when transfer to the permanent site has been completed.

Funding for the athletics stadium and the leisure centre elements of the Egley Road development were expected to be financed through the sale of the athletics track in Sheerwater, but the planned re-development of that estate appears to have stalled. Again, WBC has to cover the cost. The expectation is that, as house building in the borough continues, developer contributions to the Community Infrastructure Levy will enable WBC to recover this cost.

The Egley Road site is in the Green Belt. Recreational activity is a permitted use of Green Belt land, but to build the school it was necessary for WBC to argue that exceptional circumstances made it necessary to site the school within the Green Belt. Plans to develop the remainder of the site for housing must await a decision on releasing land from the Green Belt and adoption of a future Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

WOODBANK

The amended application to replace the former Methodist Care Home with a larger 3 storey building with 26 two bedroom units and 25 one bedroom units was approved in August 2016. Residents in Holly Bank Road and Pond Road then had to endure the noise, dust and disruption for several months while the old building was demolished and the debris crushed on site. The site was secured, and subsequently there has been no further activity.

The latest information from the Head of Development at the Methodist Homes Association (MHA) is that work on building the new apartments is planned for "sometime this year", but as yet no specific date has been agreed. Once work begins the building is expected to take 14 months to complete.

MHA will be posting some material advertising the sale of apartments on the hoarding, which is painted purple because that is the colour of the logo of the Methodist Homes Association!

THE STAR INN

It was as long ago as December 2014 that Co-op Food heralded the proposed opening of a retail outlet on the Wych Hill site. More than two years later there is no sign of a start on construction of the store, so the question arises as to whether the Co-op will actually go ahead with its plans. According to very recent information, it seems the answer is a qualified "yes"!

The Residents' Association has been in frequent contact with the Co-op seeking progress reports. At the time of going to print, the Co-op has confirmed that the store has received Board approval (on 28th March). The store project will now go before the Co-op's capital expenditure committee for final approval during April. It is known that the costs of the development were underestimated back in 2014, so it is a matter of economic viability based on increased development costs which will determine the final decision and start date of development.

Although it now appears unlikely that the Co-op will abandon its plans to proceed with the store, other options are available for the site if they do not go ahead. As far as is known, the Co-op is tied into a fifteen year lease (presumably from a date in 2014), so it could extricate itself from the lease by means of a deal with the freeholder. Alternatively, the Co-op could assign the lease to a new retail proprietor. Failing an assignment of the lease, the site could be sold for residential

development! Were that to be the case, it is anybody's guess as to what we could end up with and when. The answer is almost certainly flats following a long and tedious planning process.

Any aspirations residents may have had for a high quality restaurant at Wych Hill have faded away. But there is a hope that such an establishment – a high quality restaurant – will surface at Gorse Hill following a change of ownership of the Gorse Hill hotel business earlier this year.

Lastly, residents may have noticed that the Star Inn site has been tidied up and the grass cut. So a thank you is due to the Co-op for honouring their leaseholder commitments. Let's hope that the Co-op will continue to maintain the site pending the final decision on its future and that the decision will be known by the end of April.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

It is now around a year and a half since the Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' and its policies incorporated in the planning framework used by Woking Borough Council. Since then the Management Committee has spent its time reviewing planning applications to ensure they comply with the plan's requirements.

To keep residents informed of planning applications we have issued a regular newsletter with information about recent submissions to the council, and the results of applications and appeals.

It is fair to say that despite the extensive publicity, the existence of a Neighbourhood Plan has not been recognised in a surprising number of planning applications. Sometimes it has just been a relatively minor issue, easily remedied, perhaps with plans submitted by a local builder who isn't aware of the change in planning law. Others have been inexplicable, where professional architects have explained at length in a design and access statement how a development complies with planning law but have omitted any reference to the Plan. It is possible that in some instances the plan has been ignored on purpose.

In cases where we thought that the policies in the plan had not been complied with we wrote to the planning department pointing this out. In virtually every case the planning officer agreed, and plans were modified appropriately, or in some cases rejected.

The main purpose of the plan is not to prevent development but to ensure new development fits into the surrounding area. Despite trying to be as precise as possible with the policies, at the end of the day this can sometimes be a matter of opinion.

The other aspect of Neighbourhood Planning is that the Forum is consulted on how to spend the Community Infrastructure Levy collected in the Neighbourhood Area. So far nothing has been collected – partly a question of timing and partly because of self-build exemptions. We are however keeping an eye on this.

Other areas in Woking Borough have made progress with their plans this year. Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan was strongly supported at referendum and incorporated in the Woking Development Plan from 9 February 2017. West Byfleet plan has gone out for consultation, finishing 10 March 2017.

The main differences from ours are that they both have more policies, partly because the areas have commercial centres which require a different approach. When writing the plan we were advised to keep the number of policies to a minimum (thus policy BE1 contains a number of related items

which could have been separated out) and not duplicate anything covered by the Borough Council's policies in the Core Strategy. With the benefit of hindsight this seems to have been successful; if there is anything we would do differently today, it would probably be to add a policy specifically dealing with the subdivision of plots, which is where local residents seem to have the most objections.

There are two other areas in the Borough with defined Neighbourhood Areas – Byfleet, and Brookwood & Bridley. Both have Neighbourhood Forums and websites to record progress.

DRONES IN HOOK HEATH

The hum of the lawn mower and the buzz of the leaf blower have become familiar sounds in Hook Heath. Last summer they were joined by another noise, the whine of a drone skidding across the sky and circling our area, perhaps surveying the lie of the land with its inbuilt camera, perhaps taking photos, or maybe just innocently hovering while its operator decided on its next move. Whatever its motive, it was not a welcome presence. Not only did its whine disturb residents as they relaxed in their gardens on a sunny afternoon, but it was also invading their privacy. So what are our rights when this happens? Are there any privacy laws in place? What action can we as residents take?

Drone use has increased significantly in recent years yet the legislation controlling their use is still evolving. The Civil Aviation Authority's 'Drone Code' states that it is an offence without the permission of the Civil Aviation Authority to fly a drone within 150 metres of a congested area and 50 metres of people and property. A drone operator must always keep the drone in sight which means it cannot go above 400 metres in altitude or further than 500 metres horizontally. Failure to observe these regulations would put the operator in breach of the Air Navigation Order 2009.

A drone user's actions could also represent the offence of harassment; concerned residents should consider reporting the operator to the police. A drone could also be in breach of civil law if it repeatedly flies above or near your home at a low level; in such instances residents should keep a record detailing the drone's activities and consider applying to court for an order prohibiting any future infringements.

In December 2016 the Government announced that it was proposing a number of changes to the regulations so that recreational drones of more than 250 grams have to be registered, and so that drones can be 'electronically identifiable' on the ground so their owners can be tracked. In addition, there are proposed increases to the maximum fine for flying in a no-fly zone. As drone use becomes more popular it is to be hoped that these proposals become law to enhance existing regulations and protect the rights and privacy of residents such as those in Hook Heath.

TRAFFIC

Traffic issues, principally speeding and on-road parking, remain areas of concern.

On-road parking is a problem especially in the vicinity of the tennis club and the SMC garage where cars are frequently parked on both sides of Hook Heath Road, where they impede the flow of traffic, and those parked close entrances and road junctions severely restrict visibility. Elsewhere in Hook Heath the street scene is increasingly being disrupted by vehicles parked on the road, often unnecessarily.

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address this problem by requiring all new developments to provide adequate off street parking. The Residents' Association and the Neighbourhood Forum

closely scrutinise new planning applications to ensure that adequate off street parking and safe street access are provided. The re-development of the Woodbank residential home is of particular concern because the provision of visitor parking seems likely to prove inadequate.

Some new house construction has resulted in a number of trade vehicles being parked on Hook Heath Road on the inside of a bend, forcing drivers to move to the "other" side of the road. Thankfully construction has now finished and the problem has subsided.

Other issues have arisen with abandoned cars on Hook Heath Road and elsewhere, but, thanks to the vigilance of residents, these have been dealt with.

Many drivers, seeking to avoid congestion on the Egley Road, use Hook Heath Road and Holly Bank Road as 'rat runs', and regrettably drive at excessive speeds well in excess of the 30 mph limit. The major school development on the Egley Road will no doubt add to road congestion in that area and put more pressure on the Hook Heath roads. As residents will know there are now a number of interactive street signs erected in the area to warn drivers of excessive speed.

The prospective new Co-op store in Wych Hill opposite the SMC garage and near a road junction has given rise to safety concerns over large delivery vehicles negotiating a narrow road and entrance at unsocial hours. The HHRA will continue to watch developments closely.

WEBSITE

Our website exists to keep residents updated on matters of interest to our area. It is well received with between 10 and 30 visitors every day, which is very satisfying considering the size of Hook Heath. The home page summarises recent updates and gives links to more information on the other pages. The home page also alerts residents to action where their inputs are important. For example during the council's consultation regarding the Martyrs Lane site, the home page had a prominent item encouraging residents to write to the council with points that it ought to consider. One of the links is to the Association's own submission. The website address is www.hhra.co.uk, but it can also be found via a Google search.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the HHRA is open to all residents of the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Area. Without your support we could not act on your behalf or have any influence on matters that concern our community and environment. To become a member, we are asking for an annual fee of just £10 per household. As you will see from the Summary of Accounts (see next page), we had a surplus of over £2,500 in 2016. This occurred only because the long delay while WBC considered the public response to the June 2015 SADPD meant that we did not have to seek professional advice in 2016. However, in January this year when the Martyrs Lane paper was published for consultation, we had to take professional advice again. The cost of was well in excess of the 2015 surplus.

In order that we may keep you fully informed of any important issues which arise over the coming membership year, please ensure that you provide the treasurer with your email address either by completing the renewal membership form overleaf or by emailing treasurer@hhra.co.uk.

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 2016

<u>Income and Expenditure</u>	2016	2015
Income:		
Subs and donations - Cheques and Cash	£1,325.00	£1,415.00
Direct Transfer	£1,450.00	£1,290.00
Repayment of NF printing costs	£0.00	£50.00
Interest on Reserve Account	£175.46	£204.64
Total Income:	<u>£2,950.46</u>	<u>£2,959.64</u>
Expenditure:		
CPRE Subscription	£36.00	£36.00
Open Spaces Society	£45.00	£45.00
Photocopying and printing	£130.95	£255.76
AGM	£180.00	£150.00
Website renewal fee	£35.99	£35.99
Consultancy	£0.00	£5,670.00
Contribution to HHNF Expenses	£0.00	£250.00
Total Expenditure:	<u>£427.94</u>	<u>£6,442.75</u>
Creditors	£0.00	£0.00
Debtors	£0.00	£0.00
Income less liabilities	£2,522.52	-£3,483.11
Fund balance at 01 January	£42,268.20	£45,751.31
Fund balance at 31 December	<u>£44,790.72</u>	<u>£42,268.20</u>
<u>Balance Sheet (at 31/12/2016)</u>		
Current account balance at 31 December	£44,790.72	£1,228.21
Reserve account balance at 31 December	£0.00	£41,039.99
Digital Projector estimated value	£0.00	£0.00
Gross assets at 31 December	£44,790.72	£42,268.20
Liabilities	£0.00	£0.00
Net Assets at 31 December	<u>£44,790.72</u>	<u>£42,268.20</u>

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Membership subscriptions for the year 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018 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.

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)

- (a) I/We wish to renew my/our membership of / join the HHRA for the period April 2017 to March 2018 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.....