

It's just over three months since the last Update so time to review what's been happening on the planning front.

You may have started to see adverts in the press (or hear them on the radio) about Neighbourhood Planning; the Government is running a one month promotional campaign to persuade more communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans. I'm not sure how effective it will be as I expect that most communities with an interest have already started on a plan. Some have found it difficult to convert early enthusiasm into action so I hope the Government's promotional campaign will help them.

The St. Ives Neighbourhood Plan (now approved at referendum) has probably done more to bring the subject to the public's attention than anything else. This is because of its controversial policy on new homes:

'New Open Market Housing without a restriction to ensure its occupation as a Full Time Principal Residence (occupied for at least 270 days per year) will not be permitted. Sufficient guarantee must be provided of such occupancy through the imposition of a planning condition. New second homes and holiday lets will not be permitted at any time.'

The logic behind the proposal is that in recent times a lot of the much needed extra housing has ended up as holiday homes, priced out of reach of local people. Not surprisingly, there has been a request for the plan to go to judicial review before it is formally 'made' by the Council.

Within Woking Borough there are four other Neighbourhood Forums: Byfleet, West Byfleet, Pyrford, and Brookwood & Bridley. The Pyrford plan is well advanced and is out for consultation. It's available on the Council website and interested readers may note some similarities between their policies and those in our Plan – not surprising since we face similar issues and are both working within the constraints of the Woking Core Strategy.

### **Planning applications**

The main purpose of the Update is to let the residents of Hook Heath know about planning applications in our Area – what's been submitted and what's been decided. The main ones are Woodbank and the Star Inn though I'm sure there's also interest in Hoe Valley School which is just outside Hook Heath.

#### Woodbank

It's a long time (nearly 2½ years) since Woodbank was closed and the owners, Methodist Homes Association (MHA), submitted an application for a new home. Their first attempt was turned down by the Council and went to appeal. The Inspector decided that one of the grounds for rejection – the impact on the street scene – was not justified, but he rejected the plans on the basis that there were insufficient two-bedroom suites, a specific requirement of the Woking Core Strategy.

Although MHA believed the 50% ruling was inappropriate they had not tried to demonstrate a compelling reason why they should be exempt, and having had the plans rejected, eventually submitted a new design for a four-storey building.

Representatives of the HHNF and HHRA committees met with MHA and explained that this did not comply with the Neighbourhood Plan, and MHA then submitted a final design for a three-storey building. It's bigger than the first application because there are both more single and two-bedroom suites. The debate then moved to policy BE2 about parking requirements and MHA submitted a paper that tried to demonstrate that in their experience there would be sufficient parking available. This didn't convince everyone but the application was passed at a meeting of the Council Planning Committee on 26 April. Only time will tell whether parking is a problem or not – it will probably depend on whether MHA's views on the average age of the residents is correct.

From my perspective the original design would have been a more attractive building but clearly, according to WBC's policies, not acceptable. MHA needed to make the building large enough to be financially viable and that's how we've ended up where we are. On the plus side we will have a modern care home rather than see the site sold for a block of flats.

### The Star

For nearly all of the last three months nothing has happened; however in the last couple of weeks the unsightly fencing has been removed. The latest news from the Co-op is that construction work will start in July or August and that the store will open at Christmas.

### Hoe Valley School

There has been a resubmission of the plans with some minor changes. More worryingly for those with children at the school was the announcement that the new site won't be ready for another year, taking the estimated opening date to September 2018. Given the size of the building and the complexity of the process for obtaining finance and planning consent, this probably should not have come as much of a surprise.

### 1 & 2 Pine View, Wych Hill

Pine View is at the north-east end of Hook Heath Road, on the other side of Wych Hill, and hence just outside the neighbourhood area. Permission has been granted for the demolition of No. 2 Pine View and its replacement with a building containing three flats. If building work here coincides with the work on the Star then we can expect traffic issues during the rush hour!

### **Other Applications**

Four applications reported in the last Update have been approved by the Council:

#### **PLAN/2016/0019**

Proposed single storey side extension and garage conversion at 3 Copper Beech Close.

#### **PLAN/2016/0051**

Proposed erection of a two storey side extension and rear conservatory following the demolition of existing conservatory at Hollands, 1 Penwood End.

#### **PLAN/2016/0057**

Erection of a two storey side extension and front porch and erection of a rear facing dormer roof extension to facilitate a loft conversion at Highcroft, The Drive.

**PLAN/2016/0126**

Proposed conversion of existing detached double garage with space in the roof into habitable accommodation and insertion of 6 roof lights and fenestration alterations to the rear at Rowans, Golf Club Road.

Three applications have been refused:

**PLAN/2015/1326**

Proposed two storey front extension at Scote Howe Cottage, Hook Heath Road

This fell foul of the National Planning Policy Framework which limits the total size of extensions which can be built on properties in the Green Belt.

**PLAN/2015/1346**

Erection of single storey dwelling with accommodation in the roof space, new vehicular access to Holly Bank Road and associated works on land adjacent to Haere Mai, Mile Path.

The Planning Officer deemed that the proposal would be out of character with the rest of the properties in the area. As noted in the last Update it clearly contravenes policy BE1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

**PLAN/2016/0078**

Proposed detached garage at Penwood Lodge, Pond Road

The Council felt that the proposal would represent a discordant urbanising addition to the street scene, adversely affecting the Arcadian character of the area. It also contravenes policy BE1 of the Neighbourhood Plan. (A request for a Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development has subsequently been submitted by the applicant - see below.)

One application has been submitted and approved during the last three months:

**PLAN/2016/0336**

Erection of a single storey side extension at Harcourt, The Drive.

There were five new applications in the last three months which have not yet been decided.

**PLAN/2016/0174**

Erection of a new 2½ storey, 5 bedroom dwelling with single garage and parking spaces on part of the existing site at The Strawberry Tree, Fernhill Lane.

This appears to contravene policy BE1 in that the proposed development is 2½ stories high whereas the surrounding properties are only two stories.

**PLAN/2016/0362**

Proposed construction of a single storey double garage and store outbuilding at South Hill, Sun Hill.

Apparently superseded by a request for a Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development - see below.

**PLAN/2016/0442**

Proposed amendment to PLAN/2008/0811 for proposed detached double garage and new retaining wall including landscaping and engineering works to alter ground level at Little Frankley, Sun Hill.

**PLAN/2016/0450**

Erection of part two storey and part single storey side and rear extension and front porch following demolition of existing single storey side and rear extensions with alterations to external finishes at Chantecler, Pond Road.

**PLAN/2016/0548**

Proposed first floor extension over existing single storey structure and single storey side extension at Hook Heath Lodge, Hook Heath Avenue.

**Certificates of Proposed Lawful Development**

If someone requires a formal decision as to whether an existing or proposed development is lawful (i.e. it does not require planning permission), then they can submit an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness. There are two kinds of certificate that can be applied for:

- Certificates of Lawful Existing Use or Development
- Certificates of Lawful Proposed Use or Development

The normal planning issues raised by these applications are not considered. It is just a matter of evidence, fact, and legal consideration. In Woking the normal neighbour notification procedure is not used though the details are put on the planning website.

There are a number of developments that do not require planning permission (The Department for Communities and Local Government Technical Guidance on permitted development for householders is 48 pages long.) Both the recently submitted proposals fall under section E and are for free-standing garages:

**PLAN/2016/0488**

Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development for the erection of a detached garage at Penwood Lodge, Pond Road.

The original planning application having been refused, this is a new application with the garage moved back from the road and the height reduced.

**PLAN/2016/0547**

Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development for construction of an outbuilding for use as a garage at South Hill, Sun Hill.

In this case the original application is formally undecided but a Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development should be easier to obtain.

**Neighbourhood Plan Impact**

We believe that the Neighbourhood Plan is having an impact; there is no doubt that both officers and councillors are referring to it when making planning decisions. I can think of four applications where the Plan was relevant to the decision; whether the Council would have come to the same conclusion without the Plan we cannot know.

We are also beginning to see planning applications referring to the Plan so architects are becoming aware of its existence.

### **Development Management Policies DPD**

As reported in the last update, WBC has drafted a Development Management Policies DPD (Development Plan Document). This 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 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. Fortunately for us there is nothing in it that contradicts the Neighbourhood Plan.

The DPD has been examined by an external expert who has recommended it be approved with some (minor) changes.

### **The Plan Projects**

Section 11 of the Neighbourhood Plan contains a list of projects:

- Improve road markings
- Address damaged and inappropriate signage
- Change Sat Nav directions
- Control speeding and improve pedestrian safety
- Update/improve the footpath and cycleway network and clarify rights of way
- Improve amenity value of specific areas in the HHNA by ensuring regular maintenance
- Address problems with drainage and flooding
- Create a viewing point over the North Downs

Progress has been made with some of these: two 30 mph signs have been erected in Hook Heath and another is promised. The rights of way map in the final version of the Neighbourhood Plan was updated using information from the County Council. Flooding at the railway bridges has been reduced.

However, we do not know whether these and the other items listed above were major issues of general concern or the particular request of one individual. It would therefore be helpful if specific issues could be identified and any reader who would like to see progress with any aspect of these, please let us know the details.

The next Update is scheduled for October. In the meantime you can keep up to date with developments by looking at the HHRA and HHNF websites. (<http://www.hhra.co.uk/> and <http://www.hhra.co.uk/hookheathforum/>)

Many thanks for your interest and support.  
Sincerely,

Mike Cooke, Chairman  
On behalf of the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee