

Welcome to your regular Update on planning issues.

The first part of this edition covers news about Neighbourhood Planning from the rest of the country and potential changes to planning regulations. The second part summarises Planning Applications specific to our Neighbourhood Area.

The Haddenham Neighbourhood Plan ran into trouble earlier this year; it passed referendum but a developer launched a judicial review, claiming that the housing figures in the Plan were wrong. They were able to do this as the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (equivalent to the Woking Core Strategy in our case) was only at an early stage of development. Even though Aylesbury Vale District Council had provided the housing figures in the first place, this wasn't good enough. This shows that while it is possible to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan in the absence of a local plan, it can be fraught with difficulties. This is one area where we should be grateful to Woking Borough Council for their competence in getting the Core Strategy passed so efficiently.

The Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan was officially adopted by South Oxfordshire District Council in April this year, £90,000 having been spent on its preparation. However, the District Council has failed to identify sufficient land to meet building demand for the next five years. It therefore appears that sites explicitly rejected by the Neighbourhood Plan can still be considered for housing because the Council's plan is effectively invalid. This is more than a theoretical issue – planning permission to build 95 homes on a site not in the Plan has been applied for. Last week the application was refused by the Council, but the developer is expected to go to appeal. This is not the first time that there have been issues with this Plan; in July the Council gave a developer permission to build 53 'assisted living' flats on a site which the Plan had allocated to building 55 homes. The Department for Communities and Local Government has been asked to 'call in' this application.

The Overton (Hampshire) Neighbourhood Plan has created an unenviable record – it had more votes against it at the referendum stage (in June) than any other. It was passed by 53% to 47% and was 'made' four weeks later. I suspect the housing sites allocated did not meet with everyone's approval.

Closer to home, there are four other Neighbourhood Forums within Woking Borough: Byfleet, West Byfleet, Pyrford, and Brookwood & Bridley. Pyrford are the most advanced and their Neighbourhood Plan has recently been reviewed by an external examiner, who has recommended that the Plan proceed to referendum subject to a number of changes. Pyrford have different issues to us but some of their policies are similar to ours. News on the progress of the other three local Plans will follow in due course.

Changes to Planning Law

The Government has published a summary of responses to the neighbourhood planning chapter of the 'Technical consultation on implementation of planning changes – Feb 2016'. The document sets out how the Government will implement, via regulations, the commitments made during the passage of the Housing and Planning Act. If you're keen, you can see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/implementation-of-planning-changes-technical-consultation> for details. None of the changes will affect us. The issues it deals with concern Neighbourhood Plans running into problems during their development, for example where the local council is not sympathetic.

There have been two more consultations launched recently. The first is on improving the use of planning conditions. This consultation paper seeks views on the Government's proposals to improve the use of planning conditions, specifically,

- How the process of prohibiting the use of pre-commencement conditions without the agreement of the applicant would operate; and
- The potential for a wider application of primary legislation.

The second is a technical consultation to seek views on detailed regulations to implement the neighbourhood planning provisions in the Neighbourhood Planning Bill. The most important (for us) is the introduction of simple measures to update a Neighbourhood Plan without going through a referendum. We might (for instance) consider using this approach to make a small modification to a policy. Other issues include modifying a Neighbourhood Area and reviewing Statements of Community Involvement.

Local Planning Applications

The main purpose of this 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 largest development is Woodbank, though the Star Inn and Hoe Valley School (both outside the Neighbourhood Area) are also of interest to many.

Woodbank

The old Woodbank building is no more; it's been demolished (not very safely) and the plot is now surrounded by a magenta fence. The Methodist Homes Association's corporate colour is magenta and it's not (as you might think) just a random colour that they happened to have in stock. At least it's only temporary and the fence itself is well built.

The Star / Co-op

Despite earlier suggestions that work would start in July, there's still no sign of anything happening, though a new planning application for signage has been submitted. The Hook Heath Residents' Association (HHRA) has written to object about a large illuminated blue 'Co-op' sign high up on the front of the building. The rest of the proposal looks as if it will fit in.

Hoe Valley School

Work is proceeding at a pace and it's beginning to look as if the school could be ready for use in 2018 as promised.

Other Local Planning Applications

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

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.

We wrote to object to this application on the basis that it was too high and had inadequate parking provision. Revised plans were submitted which reduced the height marginally and reduced the number of bedrooms to four. An extra parking space was also added.

We were still unhappy about the height but the Council decided to approve the application.

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.

One application has been refused:

PLAN/2016/0362

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

This was superseded by a request for a Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development. (see below)

One previously rejected application has gone to appeal:

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 contravenes policy BE1 of the Neighbourhood Plan (on plot sizes).

Six applications have been submitted and approved during the last three months:

PLAN/2016/0605

Proposed single storey rear extension and detached car barn and omission of central chimney stack at The Beech House, Hook Heath Road.

PLAN/2016/0645

Proposed erection of two storey side and rear extensions, single store front extension, alterations to external finishes, insertion of first floor side-facing window and erection of a detached double garage to frontage following demolition of existing garage at Pinewood, Holly Bank Road.

We wrote a letter of objection about a proposed new brick wall bordering the front of the property which did not comply with policy BE1. The plans were modified to remove the wall and leave the existing hedge in place.

PLAN/2016/0655

Erection of an oak framed garden room to rear elevation at 12 Hale End.

PLAN/2016/0706

Proposed alteration to existing garage at Tall Timbers, Fairway Close.

PLAN/2016/0747

Proposed detached triple bay garage to the side of the property at Cedar Cottage, Cedar Road

PLAN/2016/0752

Proposed construction of two dormer windows to the front elevation at Charleswood, Mile Path.

Three applications submitted since the last Update have been refused:

PLAN/2016/0730

Proposed erection of 2x detached two storey dwellings (4x bed) and associated parking and landscaping following demolition of existing dwelling at Belfairs, Pond Road.

This proposal was clearly in contravention of policy BE1 because of the plot sizes. There are also Woking Core Strategy policies with which it did not comply.

PLAN/2016/0824

Variation of condition 7 of PLAN/2015/0035 dated 02.06.2015: Removal of mansard roof over existing annex (Merrywood Cottage) and formation of first floor extension with pitched roof over, and part two storey, part single storey extensions with associated alterations to fenestration following demolition of existing ground-floor link to Merrywood and demolition of existing garage to annex.

The impact of condition 7 is to prevent Merrywood and Merrywood Cottage being split into two entirely separate properties, each with their own plot. We wrote to point out that the proposal did not comply with policies BE1 on plot sizes and BE2 on parking provisions.

PLAN/2016/0838

Proposed two storey side and rear and a single storey front and rear extension with a new detached double garage following the demolition of existing single garage on the side of the dwelling at 4, Orchard Mains.

We wrote to point out that the proposal did not comply with policy BE1 on the size of the resulting property or with BE2 on parking provisions.

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

PLAN/2016/0859

Proposed single storey side extension following part demolition of existing garage and erection of new car-barn following demolition of existing outbuilding at Cranstone, Hook Heath Road.

PLAN/2016/0868

Erection of a detached four bedroom dwelling (re-submission of previously approved application) on land adjacent to Gorse Hill, Hook Heath Road.

PLAN/2016/0911

Erection of first floor side extension, single storey rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory and rear extension and front porch at 3, Blenheim Gardens.

Certificates of Proposed Lawful Development

The two applications for a Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development which were referred to in the last Update have both been permitted. These are:

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 was 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 was refused after the new application was submitted.

Advertisements**PLAN/2016/0731**

Star Hill Garage submitted an application (approved) for changing its signs. They also applied for permission to paint the garage (technically not required).

The Plan Projects

The following were the projects listed in section 11 of the Neighbourhood Plan:

- 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

Since the last Update was issued a further 30mph sign has been installed in Hook Heath Road though it does not seem to have had any impact on speeding in the evening. A

problem with flooding at the end of Pine Road has been brought to our attention but because this is private land the Forum is unable to act.

Annual General Meeting

We are required by our constitution to hold an annual AGM. The Forum's officers: David Dare, vice chairman; Heather Mustard, secretary; Gerald Griffiths, treasurer; and myself offer ourselves for re-election. The AGM will be held with the HHRA on Monday 3rd October at Woking Golf Club, Pond Road and all members of the Forum are welcome to attend.

Many thanks for your interest and support.

Sincerely,

Mike Cooke, Chairman

On behalf of the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee