

Welcome to your regular Update on planning issues.

As usual the first part of this edition covers news about Neighbourhood Planning in general and potential changes to planning regulations. The second part summarises Planning Applications specific to our Neighbourhood Area.

It's been a while since we issued the last Update, partly because there was an AGM, and partly because the Residents' Association produced their annual newsletter a few weeks ago and we didn't want to confuse readers. The HHRA newsletter goes to everyone in Hook Heath (whether they are interested or not!) whereas the Forum Update only goes to members of the Forum, most of whom (I hope) have at least a passing interest in planning matters, especially as they relate to Hook Heath.

February and March saw an increase in the number of Neighbourhood Plans going to referendum in England – up from 6/7 in December and January to 17 in February and 13 in March. The turnout varied quite a lot from a remarkable 61.2% in Winchfield (Borough of Poole) to a disappointing 11.5% in Poole Quays (Bassetlaw District Council). However both results were over 90% in favour.

We have a relatively simple Neighbourhood Plan as we were unable to allocate land for development as all our 'spare land' is in the green belt. Other areas have far more difficult decisions to make and it's not surprising that it's taking them longer.

Closer to home, some of our neighbours in the Borough have made good progress. Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan was formally made part of the Woking planning framework as from 9 February 2017. West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum has produced a draft Neighbourhood Plan. There are two other Neighbourhood Forums within Woking Borough: Byfleet and Brookwood & Bridley. From their websites it appears that both are making progress, but have some way to go before producing Neighbourhood Plans.

Changes to Planning Law

The Housing White Paper, published on 7th February, presented the Government's long-awaited plans to address the 'broken housing market' and its failure to deliver the numbers of homes needed to house the nation. For us the content can be read positively, in that it re-emphasises the Government's commitment to Neighbourhood Plans.

The white paper contains a large number of proposals for initiatives to increase the number of houses built. Most of the conventional things you can think of are covered – so the Government is at least doing the right things even if it's not being radical in its approach. I have a feeling that house construction today is as

much limited by the number and size of construction companies and availability of builders than by anything else.

House prices are driven by supply and demand. The white paper concentrates on the supply side but does not tackle demand. Perhaps the type of laws in place in other countries which prevent overseas residents purchasing houses and flats would be helpful. (It seems to work in Denmark where it prevents the Germans buying holiday homes.) Interestingly there is no mention of a reduction in housing demand following Brexit (a word that does not appear in the 106 page document). Also, disappointingly, there is no estimate of what impact any of the proposals might have on the number of houses built.

One proposal is to revise the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the high level document with which local and neighbourhood plans have to comply.

The proposed modifications are to:

- a) indicate that local planning authorities should provide neighbourhood planning groups with a housing requirement figure, where this is sought.
- b) make clear that local and neighbourhood plans (at the most appropriate level) and more detailed development plan documents (such as action area plans) are expected to set out clear design expectations; and that visual tools such as design codes can help provide a clear basis for making decisions on development proposals.
- c) emphasise the importance of early pre-application discussions between applicants, authorities and the local community about design and the types of homes to be provided.
- d) make clear that design should not be used as a valid reason to object to development where it accords with clear design expectations set out in statutory plans.
- e) recognise the value of using a widely accepted design standard in shaping and assessing basic design principles – and make clear that this should be reflected in plans and given weight in the planning process.

The white paper reaffirms the Government's commitment to preserving the green belt. None of this seems to have any impact on us (but we need to see the detail when it is decided and find out how the changes are to be interpreted).

Recent newspaper reports have said that the Conservatives are proposing further changes to planning laws. The most radical is to allow compulsory purchase of land for development at its value without planning permission – at present a council has to pay for the land at the value it would have once planning permission is granted. This would eventually result in the transfer of profit from land owners to councils, allowing them to build more houses.

The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 was passed by the Commons on 27 April. Part 1 of the Act contains sections on neighbourhood planning, local development documents, planning conditions, permitted development rights relating to drinking establishments, development of new towns and planning registers. It also incorporates a new schedule on how to modify a Neighbourhood Plan that has already been 'made'. We have had a couple of ideas as to how we might modify our Plan in a very minor way but I don't think we'll rush into anything yet.

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.

Starting with the two big ones outside the Neighbourhood Area:

The Star / Co-op

The proposal to convert the Star to a Co-op was (re?)-presented to the Co-op board in March when it was (re?)-approved. It was discussed at a meeting of their capital allocation committee in April and a start is expected in August.

Given the parlous state of the Co-op bank it would not be surprising if the company were trying to minimise capital expenditure and that is part of the reason for the delay.

Hoe Valley School

Work is continuing rapidly and it looks as if the school will be ready for use in 2018 as promised. Last December the Council announced that the Education Funding Agency is paying in full for the school.

Drone footage showing the state of the buildings at the beginning of April is available on 'www.getsurrey.co.uk'.

There's no recent news of the associated leisure centre.

Local Planning Applications in the Neighbourhood Area

Woodbank

The Woodbank site has been 'cleared' except for a pile of rubble which will be used in the footings of the new building. MHA have not been very precise as to when building will commence but they hope to make a start this year. They have claimed a start to finish time of 14 months (which would be excellent if achieved but is a very challenging target).

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

PLAN/2016/0859

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.

We wrote to object, partly to point out an inconsistency between the site map in this application and the map in the previous one (which was subsequently admitted to be incorrect) and partly to point out that parking and turning provisions were inadequate and did not comply with policy BE2 (picked up in the approval document). Now that planning permission has been granted, the land has been put up for sale with Martin & Co. with an asking price of offers in excess of £1.2m. It seems likely that the eventual owner will want to make further changes to the house design anyway.

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.

Two previously rejected applications were turned down on appeal:

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. The planning inspector dismissed the proposal, finding that it would harm the character and appearance of the area and that the parking and manoeuvring provisions for the cottage were inadequate.

PLAN/2016/0838

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.

The planning inspector found that the proposed development would adversely affect the character of the host property and surrounding area.

Ten applications have been submitted and approved since the last update:

PLAN/2016/0993

Two storey side extension and loft conversion and new front porch at Hermitage House, Sun Hill.

PLAN/2016/1009

Single storey rear extension and erection of pool house attached to existing annexe, following demolition of existing conservatory and detached pool house. First floor extension over existing ground floor accommodation and minor internal and elevational alterations. Brettanby Cottage, Hook Heath Road.

PLAN/2016/1142

Erection of five bedroom detached dwelling, double garage and detached poolhouse following demolition of the existing dwelling at Pippins, 4 Mount Close.

We wrote to point out that the design and access statement failed to mention or take account of the Neighbourhood Plan and the design failed to comply with policy BE1. Others also wrote in and the plans were modified and passed in March.

PLAN/2016/1244

Erection of a replacement dwelling following demolition of existing building at Belfairs, Pond Road.

The original plan to build two houses on this plot was turned down by WBC.

PLAN/2016/1354

Hip to gable loft conversion, erection of a rear dormer, raising of existing roof height and the insertion of 3 front velux windows at the Hippins, Hook Heath Road.

PLAN/2017/0081

Variations of Condition 2 of PLAN/2016/0174. (Erection of a new 2 storey, 4 bedroom dwelling with single garage and parking spaces Revised) for amendments relating to rooflights, photovoltaic panels and a window at The Strawberry Tree, Fernhill Lane.

We felt that a five bedroom property on this site would be too large for the plot but the presence of properties on small sites nearby made our case weak and the application was granted.

PLAN/2017/0098

Single storey side and rear extension at 9, Allen House Park.

PLAN/2017/0112

Erection of single storey side extension and detached single garage at Eastwood, Hook Heath Road.

PLAN/2017/0124

Construction of a detached timber framed carport with space for two vehicles at Cranford, Pond Road.

PLAN/2017/0160

Erection of a greenhouse and garden building at Beech House, Hook Heath Road.

Four older applications were also approved:

PLAN/2011/0892

Retention of a single storey infill extension between outbuildings to allow their use as staff accommodation and a decking area at Hilltop, Hook Hill Lane.

PLAN/2013/1265

Demolition of existing bungalow and erection of two detached dwellings at Tamarisk, Golf Club Road.

PLAN/2015/1356

Two storey side and front additions, garage addition, new steeper pitched roof, new rendered walls throughout. New black aluminium windows. Oaklea House, Comeragh Close.

PLAN/2016/0347

Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) of planning application reference PLAN/2013/1073 (granted under appeal reference APP/A3655/A/14/2220739 (correct amended plans)). The variation seeks to permit a larger footprint at both ground and first floor levels in order to allow for an additional bedroom. Land adjacent to Oakhurst, Fernhill Park.

There are nine applications currently undecided, two of which were submitted last year.

PLAN/2016/1453

Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) and informative 3 of PLAN/2014/1317 dated 08.05.2015 for new dwelling following the demolition of the existing dwelling at Greenlea, Cedar Road.

PLAN/2017/0048

Proposed erection of a detached 2 bay oak framed car port at Witchentree, Hook Heath Avenue.

PLAN/2017/0100

Erection of first floor side extension to form annexe accommodation and proposed porch extension at Tree Tops, Mile Path.

PLAN/2017/0222

Proposed single storey side and rear extensions and alterations, loft conversion with two front dormers and erection of detached garage at The Strawberry Tree, Fernhill Lane.

We have objected to this proposal in conjunction with the Residents' Association in that it takes no notice of policy BE1 in the Neighbourhood Plan. The proposal is to create a two and a half storey dwelling which would not fit in with the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and the chosen site for the garage results in the unnecessary removal of hedging.

PLAN/2017/0318

Proposed single storey rear conservatory at Kilmore, 6 Mount Close.

PLAN/2017/0330

Proposed single storey side extension at Tall Timbers, Fairway Close.

PLAN/2017/0408

Proposed detached garage following the demolition of existing detached garage at Fir Ridge, The Drive.

PLAN/2017/0449

Proposed two storey side and rear extension and a single storey front and rear extension following the demolition of existing single garage at 4, Orchard Mains.

This application was submitted following dismissal on appeal of Plan 2016/0838 (see above). We have objected to this new application on the basis that the extension is too still large for the original house, and that parking three cars in the front would harm the street scene.

PLAN/2017/0483

Prior notification for a single storey ground floor rear extension to extend a maximum of 8.0m, maximum height of 3.56m and a maximum height of eaves 3.56m at Cedarwood, Hook Heath Road.

Certificates of Proposed Lawful Development

There have been two applications for Certificates of Proposed Lawful Development; these are determined entirely on whether they comply with the regulations and no-one can write to comment.

PLAN/2017/0385

Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development for a two storey rear extension at Amberley, 4 Hook Hill Park.

PLAN/2017/0416

Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development for a proposed single storey detached garage at Cedarwood, Hook Heath Road.

Neither has yet been determined.

In all a longer list than normal, reflecting the time since the last Update.

Many thanks for your interest and support.

Sincerely,

Mike Cooke, Chairman

On behalf of the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee