

Welcome to your regular Update on planning issues.

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

Changes to Planning Law

The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 was passed by the Commons on 27 April. Regulations were passed in July which bring parts of the act into force. The section which I find most interesting - on making minor changes to Neighbourhood Plans - was not included in these. Also in July, the Government issued updates to the planning practice guidance on Neighbourhood Planning.

There have been some changes to Permitted Development Rights. There are a number of categories of permitted development – in Hook Heath this is commonly used for building garages and car ports. It is essentially a short cut planning application procedure whereby various details of the development are considered by the local authority but the principle of the development is not a matter for consideration. There is therefore no local consultation process.

Other neighbourhoods

Since the last update, West Byfleet Neighbourhood Plan has been making good progress and is now going out to referendum. As more areas within Woking are covered by Neighbourhood Plans it is to be hoped that developers will take more notice of them.

Elsewhere in Surrey, two plans in Mole Valley were 'made' in May – these were Ashted and Bookham.

In England as a whole there was a total of thirty neighbourhood plans that passed referendum in May, ten in June and sixteen in July. There was a very wide range of turnouts, with Trull and Staplehay (Taunton Deane Borough Council) highest at an amazing 81%, and Great Aycliffe (Durham County Council) lowest at 14%.

Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan

In Neighbourhood Planning terms, the big issue of the last few months has been a challenge in the High Court to the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan (Vale of White Horse District Council). This was 'made' in December 2016 following a 19% turnout at referendum. The issue at stake is the future of Wicklesham quarry, a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) which the Plan has safeguarded for use by industry and warehousing in order to increase employment opportunities. The quarry is no longer being worked and current planning conditions require it to be restored and then subject to five years aftercare.

There were four complaints by the claimant and one was found by the court to be well-founded. This was the requirement that a neighbourhood plan should be 'in general conformity with the strategic policies' contained in the development plan. The judge agreed with the claimant that the allocation of the quarry was in conflict with one strategic policy of the Local Plan which concerned the acceptability of development outside settlements.

In addition, the judge found that the basic conditions statement had failed to 'have regard' to national policy, a mistake that both the Independent Examiner and the District Council failed to correct. Nevertheless, the judge held that this error was not 'material' in the circumstances and he did not find the Plan unlawful on this ground.

In the end, the court decided to take no action on the successful complaint on the basis that the Council would have made the same decision in any case.

Though the Plan has been upheld, the outcome was not a complete failure for the claimant. By ruling that both the quarry restoration and 5 years aftercare schemes must be carried out, the High Court has deferred any planning decision for years - though it seems possible that the owner will submit an appeal on the basis that aftercare is not needed if the site is to be developed.

The costs of the judicial review in the High Court were paid for by crowdfunding.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect is that the referendum turnout was so low given the disagreements over the Plan; a lot of the residents seem to have been uninterested, one way or the other.

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. While some plans have been modified following representations, the Council has not rejected any application so far this year.

Starting with the two big ones outside the Neighbourhood Area:

The Star / Co-op

After a quiet period, work on the new Co-op seems to have started in earnest, with a number of vans seen in the forecourt.

Hoe Valley School

Work continues to get the new school ready for 2018. In the meantime, the temporary school car-park has been filled with more teaching buildings.

Local Planning Applications in the Neighbourhood Area

Woodbank

No progress on the new care home since the last Update.

However, the *News and Mail* reported in June that our other care home - Greys - has been voted the best in Surrey by its users.

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

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 had objected to this proposal in conjunction with the Residents' Association in that it took no notice of policy BE1 in the Neighbourhood Plan. Modifications were made to the proposed building and the garage was removed from the plans. The final proposal is thus an improvement.

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/2017/0483

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.

Three planning applications have been submitted and approved since the last Update.

PLAN/2017/0511

Variation of condition 6 to PLAN/2008/0661 (Slight design changes from the original scheme to the scheme proposed) at 4 Hurst Close.

PLAN/2017/0575

Proposed garage conversion into habitable accommodation. Replacement of garage doors with windows at Cranford, Pond Road.

PLAN/2017/0633

Demolition of conservatory and erection of single-storey side extension at South Hurstgate, Hook Heath Road.

Two planning applications listed in the last Update are still undecided.

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.

New plans have been submitted and there have been objections on the basis that these are not a variation but require a complete new planning application.

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. We have objected to this new application on the basis that the extension is still too large for the original house, and that parking three cars in the front would harm the street scene.

There are eight new planning applications which are currently undecided.

PLAN/2017/0515

Erection of a two storey replacement dwelling (7x bed) with accommodation in the roof space and a basement level following demolition of existing dwelling and erection of a detached double garage with first floor accommodation and external staircase at Holywell House, Hook Hill Lane.

While complying with the Neighbourhood Plan, we felt that there was insufficient information submitted to be able to understand or justify the development.

PLAN/2017/0620

Proposed two storey side extension following demolition of the existing side extensions, single storey rear, front and side extensions to provide garage and new roof structure over building with rooms in roof space at Fermo, Blackridge Road.

We objected to this because of the size and position of the proposal. New plans were subsequently submitted which look to be more acceptable. Since then there have been no objections.

PLAN/2017/0659

Proposed replacement front porch, new porch to side elevation and replacement of pitched roof to flat roof on garage along with garage conversion at Newlands View, Hook Heath Road.

We wrote to ask that the Council check that there was space to turn a car round in front of the house as Surrey County Council had made that a condition for the development of the land next to Gorse Hill.

PLAN/2017/0704

Erection of a two storey detached dwelling (3x bed) on land south of Little Ponds and associated vehicular access and landscaping at Little Ponds, Mount Road.

We wrote to object on the basis that the plot sizes were not in compliance with policy BE1 of the Neighbourhood Plan. Surrey County Council has questioned whether visibility from the site entrance is adequate, and also whether there is sufficient room to turn a vehicle round on site. In addition, the Drainage and Flood Risk team have expressed concerns about the drainage of the site.

PLAN/2017/0732

Erection of 2x detached two storey dwellings (4x bed) with associated detached garage, landscaping and access works at Skye Cottage, Hook Heath Road.

We wrote to object on the basis that the proposed plots were too small, failing to comply with policy DM10 of the Development Management Policies or policy BE1 of the Neighbourhood Plan. Also, that the developer proposed to cut down trees and a hedge not belonging to the property, in order to improve access, without agreeing that with the owner.

In total there have been 15 objections to this application.

PLAN/2017/0818

Proposed garage conversion and first floor side extension at 3, Fernhill Close.

PLAN/2017/0850

Erection of two storey front, side and rear extension, front porch extension, insertion of front dormer window, insertion of first floor side-facing windows, alterations to fenestration and external finishes and erection of a detached double garage to the frontage at Cedarwood, Hook Heath Road.

PLAN/2017/0926

Erection of two storey rear extension, front porch extension, re-roofing house with cedar shingles, re-cladding of external elevations and replacement of windows and doors at Foxwood, Mile Path.

Certificates of Proposed Lawful Development

The two applications for Certificates of Proposed Lawful Development referred to in the last Update have been approved.

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.

A further application has been submitted since the last Update.

PLAN/2017/0810

An application for a triple garage at Hill House, Hook Heath Road.

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 at 7.30 pm on Monday 2nd 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