

Planning Matters - A Letter to the Residents of Hook

As residents of Hook are well aware, in recent years there has been the threat of large scale development in the fields around the edges of Hook. There is no doubt Hook needs to deliver more homes, given the evidence on Hart's housing register, our natural residential growth, as well as other national factors contributing to the demand for new homes. Nevertheless, there is a balance that has to be struck between need and over development - that is what we, your District Councillors, are endeavouring to achieve.

To provide some background information, new Government planning policy came into effect in 2012. It changed the way local councils are allowed to make decisions regarding new development. The fundamental change was the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and a requirement on Local Councils, to put in place an updated Local Plan. This Plan must show how the District is to meet in full its housing needs. Unfortunately, Hart's Local Plan was rejected by Government inspector in 2013 because it did not show how Harts housing needs were to be met. In summary, the Plan did not deliver enough new homes. However, much work is being done to ensure Hart secures approval when the next plan is presented to the Government inspectors in 2016.

To help boost the required supply of housing, the Government requires all councils to identify and keep up to date a deliverable 5 year housing land supply. Currently, Hart can demonstrate it has a 5 year land supply, BUT only if the 550 houses designated for North East Hook and part of the original Local Plan, is taken into account. With the development in NE Hook as well as other site such as Edenbrook in Fleet, Hart may then be in a position to argue that it has its required 5-year land supply and so it could look to reject unwanted and unnecessary development. This position was however questioned in a recent planning appeal which highlighted where the Government inspector questioned the inclusion of the 550 houses in NE Hook in the land supply calculations because it did not yet have planning permission.

Hart recently tested it's saved policies on the Hop Garden application to build 48 house on the western edge of Hook. On the basis of including the 550 houses in NE Hook, Hart refused permission for the proposed Hop Garden development. However, without the 5 year supply to support us, arguments against this and other development across the district would be given lesser weight.

So what are your District Councillors doing to give us a good chance of stopping other unwanted development around Hook and Rotherwick? All three District Councillors, Brian Burchfield, Rob Leeson, and Mike Morris as well as Hook Parish Council are supporting a recommendation that Hart's planning committee makes a firm commitment to grant planning permission in principle on the land at NE Hook for the 550 houses. Yes, we do know that the NE Hook application has a number of technical issues associated with it. These are not being glossed over and they will need the same amount of detailed attention and satisfactory resolution before permission for building can be given the go ahead. These technical issues will come forward under another planning application when lengthy work has been carried out to resolve all these problems. This will also not jeopardise any proper planning process or negotiations with the developers to ensure Hook gets the best infrastructure facilities. For example, one of the infrastructure issues as we are all well aware of is the sewerage problems at the Crooked Billet pumping station. We are

pleased to inform you that Thames Water have replaced the 3 inadequate pumps with 3 new, much more powerful pumps.

So how does this help Hook 'fend off' overdevelopment? By bringing the NE Hook application forward to the September planning committee and adding the 550 houses to Hart's land supply balance it allows Hart to use saved planning policies from the previous Local Plan to defend our boundaries. A case in point was the Brown Croft development. We did NOT have a 5-year land supply at the time this application was submitted so saved policies could not be used to prevent this application from being passed or risk losing £100,000s of pounds on appeal.

You will soon be seeing publicity concerning the first round of consultation on the new Local Plan. This publicises the research leading to the determination of numbers of homes that the Local Plan must deliver to meet Government approval and then goes on to deal with options about how this 20 year housing demand can be distributed across Hart. The Plan will in fact cover the period 2011 to 2031, and so current permissions will form part of calculations; the developments in and around Hook are already part of Plan. This illustrates that there is no one answer to the housing distribution question and that some mixing of options is bound to take place. Your District Councillors want you to have all the information that is now available and encourage you to learn more about the Local Plan via the Hart web site (<http://www.hart.gov.uk/Emerging-planning-policy-guidance>) or from the Hook Parish Council (01256 768687), and then to attend the Local Plan consultation drop-in at the Elizabeth Hall, Raven Road, Hook on 9th September from 10:30 -19:30. However, this consultation is only the first public step in the Local Plan process and it will take many months before the new Local Plan will come into force.

The Local Plan drop-in session gives an ideal opportunity for residents to find out more about the Local Plan and the short term measures that we are proposing, and to discuss your views with Council officials and Councillors. Views expressed will directly inform the discussion at the Planning Committee on the 10th September.

Hook has also now embarked on the creation of a "Neighbourhood Plan" which will be enable Hook to give force to how it wants to develop in the future; it will be developed in unison with the District Local Plan; it will be written by Hook people for Hook. Representatives of the team getting the Neighbourhood Planning work off the ground will be at the drop-in session on 9th September, when you can find out more, and learn how you can be involved in the process and contribute in your ideas.

In addition, residents may wish to contact their District Councillors directly:

Brian Burchfield brian.burchfield@hart.gov.uk 01256 767946

Rob Leeson rob.leeson@hart.gov.uk 01256 762578

Mike Morris mike.morris@hart.gov.uk 01256 763313

And/or attend the Planning Committee in person at the Council offices on 10th Sept at 19:00. Whatever you choose to do, please do get involved.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Burchfield *Rob Leeson* *Mike Morris*