

Discussing the future of Fleet Town Centre

It seems that the most controversial local issue of the past year has been around Fleet Town Council's (FTC) plans for the Harlington Centre.

In doorstep discussions with residents on the issue last spring, the Community Campaign Hart (CCH) committed to push for a **public vote** on the plans to build on Gurkha Square.

We duly supported the requirement for FTC to seek a mandate from the residents of Fleet before Hart would consider releasing **Gurkha Square** for this purpose – and we were the first group to place a motion in front of Hart councillors to accept the result of the two votes undertaken in the summer.

Following these votes, FTC withdrew their planning application, but the question remains: If FTC don't **build a new Harlington** on Gurkha Square, what happens next?

Options and Funding

With little doubt of the need for a facility for public **performances** and **community events**, the CCH initiated the move to **overturn** Hart's original stipulation that FTC should only consider Gurkha Square – and to encourage FTC to look at options for either **refurbishment**, or to seek a suitable **new build** location on **Victoria Road** car park.

We are delighted that FTC are going to undertake a thorough professional **structural survey** of the existing facility, to get a detailed costing of what is involved in **refurbishing** it. We also look forward to seeing if they can draw up a **new proposal** for a **replacement Harlington** which can achieve a broad consensus of approval.

The Community Campaign would like to achieve cross party support for Hart District Council (HDC) to step in and match fund whichever Harlington project gets the go ahead.

This would more **fairly distribute the cost** of such a project across all of the District and lessen the overall burden for the residents of Fleet. Unfortunately, as this would involve a £10 rise in yearly district council tax (but giving **Fleet residents** an overall reduction) the council will need to undertake a district-wide

referendum, which could only be successful if politics is taken out of the debate – hence all parties would need to be on board.

Future Regeneration

The Harlington is not the only challenge facing Fleet. Some form of **sympathetic** regeneration of the 'civic quarter' is also required to make better use of that area, to encourage visitors to come, enjoy themselves and spend money with **Fleet's retail businesses**.

We are therefore looking to use this year's council budget setting process to add a new 'commercial development manager' post in Hart. One of their key functions would be to look for inward **investment opportunities** and to find developers interested in an ambitious town centre regeneration project.



It is widely proven across the country that to have **thriving retail shops** in town centres there must be some form of **community destination** to draw people in from a broader catchment area.

In order to have a successful project which the majority of people will welcome or even be excited to see, it is critical that the **views of the people** in the local area are included in the early stages of formulating any such proposal. The project will not be about dropping **high density developments** of flats over soulless shopping parades. Key features of any such regeneration project would include **open space**, community provision and attractive retail facilities, with **adequate parking**.

The Community Campaign look forward to further Hart engagement with **local people** and community led groups, as well as Fleet Town Council to enable them to lead on and deliver an **innovative** and **positively designed** scheme. ■

How many more pupils at Calthorpe Park School?

by James Radley
JamesR@cchart.org.uk

Those with children at Calthorpe Park School (CPS) will be aware of the consultation to expand the School – but you may be wondering why there is a new proposal, so soon after the most recent expansion was completed.

The problem stems from considerable new housing development in the area. In seven years to April 2018, **1,837 new dwellings** have been built, while Hart's Local Plan identifies over **1,000 additional** homes in the **Fleet area**, plus another 1,500 at **Hartland Park**.

'Family Planning'

Families that move into new estates almost inevitably have young children; **For every 100 new dwellings**, it's anticipated there will be **40 primary** age children and **28 of secondary** age. Often, a development proposal includes a new or expanded primary school, such as **Tweseldown Infants** at **Crookham Park**.

Timing new schools and the expansion of existing schools is not easy. After considerable lobbying by local Councillors and parents, **Elvetham Heath Primary School** was built, originally as 'single form entry', subsequently expanded to three form entry.

Planning additional secondary school places is much harder. While it may be possible to build a relatively small new primary school, a **new secondary school** is only viable if it can grow rapidly to 7 form entries or 1,050 pupils (the size of CPS in the early 2000s).

Stretching the Elastic

At present, Hampshire's Children's Services team seem fixated on providing additional secondary places through the expansion of **existing** secondary schools. With **Court Moor School** severely constrained by its site, it cannot be expanded beyond its current capacity of 1,100 pupils. This means that all the expansion has been (and will continue to be) at CPS.

The current proposal is to expand CPS to 1,725 places, although an even larger 12 form entry school 'could' take up to 1,800 pupils. Disconcertingly, this expansion will only cater for children who are **already in primary schools** in the **Fleet catchment area**.

At that size, CPS will have one of the largest year 7-11 cohorts in Hampshire. If it has to be expanded again, it could end up as one of the largest such schools in England.

Alarmingly, despite all this expansion, Fleet's secondary schools will not have the capacity to accommodate the children from all the new housing developments in the pipeline.

Understandably, many parents are very concerned about the eventual **size of Calthorpe Park School**. The Community Campaign has been actively working with HCC Children's Services on **school planning** issues since 2009. We will continue to meet with them at regular intervals to identify problems with **school capacity** and discuss the school places crisis.



To avoid the **continual expansion** of CPS, a brand **new secondary school** is needed. To be viable, it needs a new catchment area of 4,000-5,000 dwellings and a site of about 8 hectares.

The **new settlement** that is proposed in Hart's Local Plan would provide both the site and the children, together with a **£25 million** developer contribution from the new dwellings.

This is one reason that the Community Campaign has argued for a new settlement, over yet more development in Fleet & Church Crookham. ■

Care about where you live?
Join the Community Campaign

Contact our Membership Secretary, Gill Butler
on **786108**, email **GillB@cchart.org.uk**
or you can find out more and join us at:

cchart.org.uk/get-involved

700 houses at Pale Lane

The Planning Appeal

by Katie Davies
Co-Founder SECD



You'll be aware of the fight to save countryside around Pale Lane (adjacent to Elvetham Heath), from a proposed development of 700 houses.

There was overwhelming local opposition from the start, with **over 650 objections** from the public. Fleet Town Council and the 3 adjacent parish councils of **Elvetham Heath**, Hartley Wintney and Winchfield all objected. Hart listened to residents and **refused** the planning application. Despite this, Wates decided to **appeal the decision** to the Secretary of State.

Local group: 'Stop Elvetham Chase Development' (SECD) was formed to represent the many hundreds of residents who opposed the development.

People have asked why we oppose Elvetham Chase; Surely new homes are a good thing? Unfortunately **Elvetham Chase** represents 'urban extension' at its worst. Despite Wates' claims that it delivers 'much needed infrastructure' the reality is that it comes with **almost no infrastructure** at all.

Putting the Residents' Case

With such opposition, we felt it was important to attend the appeal hearing and speak to make sure the **local community's voice was heard**. We identified these key areas to highlight to the planning inspector:

■ **Road capacity** We set out to show that the traffic modelling by Wates' **significantly underestimated** the impact of 700 new houses on traffic congestion.

■ **Child safety** Parents of children who walk to **Calthorpe Park School** are already concerned that traffic levels pose a **risk to children**. With more traffic expected from 2,000 houses in the planning pipeline, the **extra 700 houses** and the Calthorpe Park expansion would greatly increase this risk.

■ **School capacity** We used Hampshire's own figures to show that, to meet demand from Elvetham Chase, Calthorpe Park School would have to be **expanded yet again to over 2,000**; significantly above the 1,725 currently planned. This would make it one of the biggest year 7-11 schools in England.

■ **Fleet Station capacity** Many station users will know how hard it is to park their car after 8.00am. **Wates claimed** there were over **60 parking spaces** available on a typical weekday. We strenuously challenged this claim.



■ **Impact on local GP surgeries** Wates propose to contribute money for the expansion of local **medical centres**. We demonstrated that they are already at **capacity** and practical challenges, such as footprint limitation and staff recruitment issues, mean that **expansion is not a solution** and would result in severe repercussions on quality of **healthcare** offered.

■ **Quality of life** The green fields at Pale Lane would be another casualty as more of our valued **landscape around Fleet is lost** to development.

■ **Democracy** The developer's attempt to overturn Hart's refusal was **anti-democratic**. The local community and Hart DC have all rejected Elvetham Chase. If it goes ahead, it would jeopardise the effective delivery of **Hart's local plan** and would deal a significant blow to local democracy.

What Next

We felt the inspector genuinely listened to our concerns and noted the level of local opposition to this development. That is all we could hope.

In the next few months, he will forward his report and recommendation to the Secretary of State for the final decision on Elvetham Chase.

This has been a team effort and we're extremely grateful for the valuable support we've received from Elvetham Heath Parish Council, Fleet & Crookham Environment Is Threatened (**FACE IT**), Hook Action Against Over-development (HAAO), Hart Cllrs Ange Delaney, Sara Kinnell and Tony Clarke of the Community Campaign (CCH) and local residents. ■

Our County Council: Letting us Down

The split between District and County Council responsibilities seems arbitrary and irrational.

For instance, while Hart determines **planning** applications, Hampshire (HCC) are the '**highways authority**'. Thus when an application is refused, Hart is often required to defend their decision at **appeal** (see **Katie Davies'** Pale Lane inquiry report inside), while we rely on the resolute support of HCC when challenging a development on its **traffic impact**.

Cash for Pale Lane?

In the case of Pale Lane; HCC had been concerned from the outset about the impact on **local roads**, especially **Fleet railway station** roundabout, which can be gridlocked at peak times, causing frustrating **delays** and a serious **risk to safety**.

However, just a few days before the appeal, HCC withdrew their objection. Apparently, a significant new **financial contribution** offered by the developer seemed to sway their resolve. As you may recall from previous newsletters, Hampshire tend to spend more money keeping consultants busy with feasibility studies, than actually improving our roads.

At the same time as dismissing how dangerous and congested this junction is, **HCC are cutting the school bus** from Ancells Farm, through Pondtail to **Velmead Junior** and **Fleet Infants**. This will only add yet more car chaos to our already overcrowded roads and exacerbate the parking issues along **Velmead Road** at peak school run times.

An additional concern is that, to save money, HCC will not be replacing **school crossing patrols**. Crossing patrols to support the earlier expansion of **Calthorpe Park School** (CPS) never materialised.

New Street Parking Charges

HCC are statutorily responsible for **on street** parking; while they can impose 'roadside' parking charges, Hart are responsible for enforcing these regulations for them. Hampshire have already started making **plans to introduce parking charges** on many residential roads **around Fleet** town centre.

This will have the joint effect of discouraging shoppers, while **increasing costs for residents**. The cost of on street **parking permits** are likely to go up considerably as HCC look to 'monetise' on street parking in our town centre. We urge local residents to **object strongly to these schemes** when HCC finally come clean and reveal publicly the full extent of their plans.

School Places Timebomb

HCC's approach to **Calthorpe Park School** is also of concern to many parents. Their strategy for tackling the dramatic increase in pupil numbers is to keep expanding the school. It is now threatened with being **expanded again to take 1,725 pupils**.

It is of deep concern that HCC have still not stated where children from **1,500 houses** on **Hartland Park** will go to school. As explained, Hampshire's refusal to bite the bullet and **build a new school** is stoking up serious challenges for the up-coming generation of **secondary age** school pupils.

What is disappointing is that, as a member of HCC's Conservative administration in Winchester, Fleet's county councillor Steve Forster, is not fighting harder for the interests of Fleet residents on these matters. ■

Contact your local CCH Councillor:

For Crookham East ward

Chris Axam 626341 ChrisA@cchart.org.uk
Gill Butler 786108 GillB@cchart.org.uk
James Radley 628751 JamesR@cchart.org.uk

For Crookham West & Ewshot

Simon Ambler 625808 SimonA@cchart.org.uk
Tony Clarke 627547 TonyC@cchart.org.uk
Peter Collings 418320 PeterC@cchart.org.uk

County Councillor: Church Crookham & Ewshot: John Bennison 850447 JohnB@cchart.org.uk

cchart.org.uk



For FLEET Central

Alan Oliver 679235 AlanO@cchart.org.uk
Wendy Makepeace-Browne 621657 WendyM@cchart.org.uk

For FLEET West

Sara Kinnell 693509 SaraK@cchart.org.uk
Ange Delaney 819505 AngeD@cchart.org.uk