

## Securing a better future through our Local Plan

Anyone traveling around the rural fringes of **Fleet**, **Church Crookham** and **Crookham Village** cannot fail to notice the developments currently underway along both **Hitches Lane** and **Redfields Lane**.

These major intrusions into our valued countryside were refused by Hart, but given the go ahead on planning appeal by the Government – because at the time Hart, under the Conservatives, had not yet renewed its 1996 Local Plan.

A Local Plan should last several years, but as time passes, changes in local needs and Government policy leave it increasingly exposed to legal challenge and its 'evidence base' in need of a refresh.

There is a clear lesson here; unless a Local Authority has an up-to-date Local Plan, developers are able to call the shots on where they want to build, to the benefit of their bottom line, not local preference.

### Working with the reality

■ The Government calculates how many new homes they mandate Hart to build. This is not a figure set by residents or Hart District Council, this is an imposed target that we cannot avoid. Over the period covered by the plan, this will amount to thousands of houses.

■ If Hart can't show a watertight plan for where these new homes should go, developers are effectively given permission to build wherever they have land. Recent examples of this are **Grove Farm** (Hareshill) and near **Watery Lane** (Albany Park), where nearly 750 houses are currently being built.

■ Hart now has a **Local Plan**, thanks to the efforts of the Community Campaign. This has already saved us from losing yet more green fields, including at **Pale Lane** (land south west of **Elvetham Heath**).

However, we know that as our current Local Plan ages and national planning rules change, its strength as a defence against **inappropriate development** will naturally weaken again.

Given that it took many years to produce the current plan, we in the Community Campaign are keen that Hart District Council should be ready to start work on the next version of our Local Plan soon.

**Government imposed housing will need to go somewhere. While brownfield is the preference, current studies show that the supply of available and deliverable sites on brownfield land will yield fewer than a hundred new homes.**

So near, so rural: A scene along Pale Lane on the edge of Fleet, saved by the Local Plan



So if or when the government impose more housing, thousands of sites will need to be found from one or more of: **Urban Intensification** (high-rise flats in Fleet and more office block conversions); **Urban Expansion** (Redfields Lane and Pale Lane being first on the list); or a separate new **Garden Village**.

### Which approach would you favour?

The Local Plan process will take account of how many new homes the government want Hart to build and it will evaluate all the pros and cons of each of the options outlined above.

At least with a Local Plan renewal, the details of all three options can be fully assessed and analysed. Then in the **public consultation** phase, local people can express their views as to which of the approaches they prefer (or probably more correctly, 'least dislike').

Hart may 'get lucky' and the number of houses we are told to build in the future may be low. However, it would be naïve – almost to the point of recklessness – to adopt that as the excuse not to do the preparatory work on the options.

The Community Campaign say; start the Local Plan review, compare the options – and let all residents **have a fair say** as to how Hart should address the demands of housing provision, if and when the government compel us to accept more. ■

# Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) tackled head on

Ahead of this year's school summer holidays, the CCH Ward Councillors representing **Elvetham Heath** were very concerned about the increasing number of ASB reports, most relating to one small group of youths.

Just as the holidays began, a **task force** was set up by Councillor Ange Delaney. This included the new Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), members of the Parish Council and Hart's Community Safety Team.

We are pleased to say that following the introduction of regular patrols; dialogue with the individuals; an information desk at September's Farmers Market and postcards delivered to all houses on EH detailing measures to report ASB or any crime, reports of ASB ceased within a couple of weeks.

## A job well done

This success has been gratefully received by Elvetham Heath residents and measures will remain in place to limit the chance of re-occurrence.

We'd like to thank PCSO Sam Page, Marilyn Robson & Jan Hyatt of EHPC and HDC's Community Safety Officer, Rachael Wilkinson, for their active support. ■

## When the going gets tough: CCH on budget challenges

Like many councils, Hart has been experiencing drastic cuts to the amount of funding support it receives from central government. Other financial challenges, such as a severe reduction in the money generated by recycling, will combine to have a significant impact.

Hart has been able to offset some of these reductions by proactively investing in commercial opportunities and finding other sources of income, such as a new development of affordable key worker homes on Edenbrook. Even so, more savings are now needed.

**The Community Campaign will work with our partners in other parties to agree further savings which, as far as possible, don't have a material impact on front line services.**

Initial savings will come from restructuring and looking for cost savings by sharing the management of council services with neighbouring authorities.

However the challenge is likely to become much more significant in future years, as UK central government looks to balance their own finances in the post pandemic recovery. We will keep you informed... ■

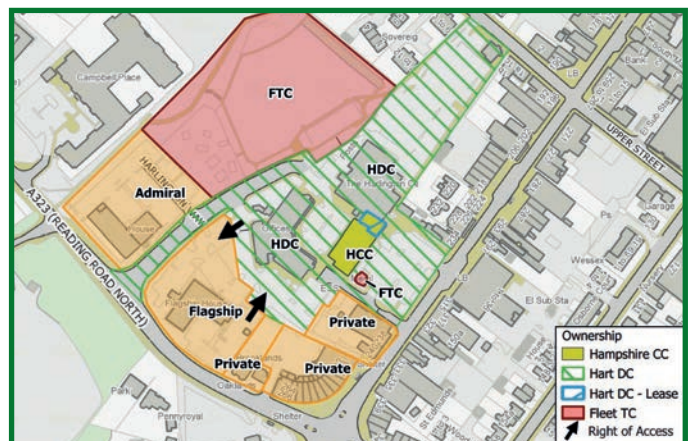


## CIVIC QUARTER REGENERATION

**Any suggestion to make changes to Fleet town centre will always produce some controversy. However, if we are to rejuvenate the town and draw in outside investment, Hart Council should play its part.**

This is why Hart will soon be running a 'community engagement' exercise, to see what Fleet area residents think would improve the area where the various civic buildings are located (striped below).

To spark debate, Hart will share some diagrams of some possible options to gauge public opinion and solicit feedback. Nothing is going to happen unless there is support from the community who cherish the town. Your views are very important. ■



**Hart's 'civic quarter' is a patchwork of ownership around the council offices, library and Harlington**



# The truth about Brownfield land

## Some claim that brownfield sites can absorb all Hart's housing needs. The reality is different.

All councils are required to maintain a 'Brownfield Land Register' of potential sites in their district.

The term brownfield means 'previously developed land', which is (or was) occupied by a permanent structure, excluding agricultural. For a brownfield site to be counted against Hart's housing targets, government rules mandate that the site must be:

**Available:** the relevant landowner(s) have already expressed an intent to sell, or develop the land.

**Achievable:** residential development must be achievable on the site within 15 years.

**Suitable:** regarding any adverse effect on: the natural environment; the local built environment including on Heritage Assets; local amenity; and harm for future occupants and/or neighbours.

## Don't fall for Fool's Gold

Prior to the 2021 Local Election, Hart Conservatives including their District Councillors, MP and Facebook support group 'We Heart Hart', alluded to all future development for Hart over the next 20-30 years being delivered on brownfield sites, IF they regained control of Hart District Council.

We recently analysed Hart's Brownfield Land Register, formulated in accordance with Government policy, to ascertain exactly how much brownfield land in Hart is currently available for residential development:

In summary, the land that was Available, Achievable, and Suitable equated to delivery of **just 77** dwellings.

Almost 70% of land on the register is either already built for housing, or is being built. Of the remaining 30%, most of the brownfield sites fail on one or more criteria of Availability, Achievability or Suitability. In simple terms, any developer with a viable brownfield site is building, or has already built housing on it.

Everyone would choose brownfield over greenfield development, but sadly, in Hart, we just don't have enough viable brownfield sites left. If we all look around us in the area we live, we can see this to be the case. The greatest opportunity, Pyestock – a large area of disused brownfield, is already being built out.

Cllr Sara Kinnell (Fleet West) says; "So ask yourselves the question; Where would the Conservatives build thousands of required new homes, if they are banking everything on limited brownfield sites?"

"The truth is that they will protect the Tory heartlands in Hart's western parishes, at the expense of the valued fields around our main settlements – in other words, yet **more urban expansion** in this area.

"They still plan to build on **Pale Lane** and the fields around **Fleet West** and **Crookham Village**, the very same reason that I left the Conservatives in 2016." ■

**Hart needs a more flexible strategy for the volume of new homes that may be needed**

## Green Waste Update

The shortage of HGV drivers has impacted many sectors of the economy including waste collection.

Hart offered to subsidise the contractor Serco to pay more to attract new qualified drivers, but recruitment and retention has proven a challenge. In order to maintain the collection of black and blue bins, green waste collections had to be suspended.

Hart's green waste contract is managed by Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council and after considerable efforts, contracts will be automatically extended to cover periods of cancelled collections.

We expect green bin collections to resume in late November, subject to external pressures, including the trajectory of the pandemic. ■



# Supporting local residents

**Whether you're new to our community or a long standing resident, here's a little about who we are as a Group, what we stand for – and most of all how we can help you.**

The Community Campaign was born in 2003 out of a concern that the then proposed development on the QEB (Crookham Park) site in Church Crookham would fail to deliver necessary infrastructure for the area.

Local residents James and Jenny Radley started a campaign to draw attention to the inevitable impact this would have on the existing neighbourhoods – and soon decided that the best way to influence local decision making to residents' benefit would be to stand for election to Hart District Council. The 'Community Campaign (Hart)' was registered with the Electoral Commission as a Residents Group.

The Community Campaign (Hart) set out its principles, the main one being that the Group stood for local issues and not national politics. This meant that we promised that we would never be affiliated to any national party, nor follow any party political agenda and would exclusively represent the concerns of the community we served. After nearly 20 years, we still stand by these principles.

## Putting your interests first

Now with 10 councillors, the Community Campaign forms part of Hart's administration. While it is easier to sit on the side-lines in opposition, we must step up to take responsibility for dealing with the big issues that face our district. Those of us elected to represent residents in Hart's main urban areas, which cover the majority, must put our residents' interests first, as opposed to Hart's Tories, who appear to focus most of their efforts on protecting the interests of a small number of voters in certain rural villages.

by Gill Butler [GillB@cchart.org.uk](mailto:GillB@cchart.org.uk)



While all Councillors have a responsibility to make decisions on district-wide issues, the Community Campaign believe that our primary responsibility is to represent those local communities who elected us.

## We are your neighbours

Our focus is to get involved to preserve and enhance the quality of life of all our fellow residents – and to resist inappropriate development that would have a detrimental impact on our local area. Please support us and help us to do so.

Your Community Campaign councillors can easily be contacted (see below), so please get in touch by email or phone with any local issues that concern you. We all prefer the more personal approach where possible, meeting residents face-to-face, listening and then advising or doing what we can to help resolve issues of local concern. ■

## Contact your local ward Councillor

### For Fleet Central

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### For Crookham West & Ewshot

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