

Newsletter 72 from North West Farnham Residents Association 2024

Dear Members and Local Residents, first of all I do hope that you can come to our AGM at 8PM on the 2nd of July at St. Francis Church Hall, Three Stiles Road, Farnham GU9 7DE – an invitation is with this Newsletter. It's an excellent time to catch up with what the NWFRA has been doing as well as being able to ask questions of our local councillors in an open forum. Any questions regarding your concerns are welcome and I look forward to seeing you there, but if you are unable to attend, then please send your questions to me at dave.king@clodenconsulting.com and I will ask the councillors on your behalf. You may then see their answers in the Minutes of the AGM which will be posted on our website www.nwfarnham.org.uk Please do visit the site from time to time as we try to keep it up to date with the latest points of local interest. If you are attending, please give us your email address, so we can keep in touch on urgent matters. We have a voluntary subscription of £5 per household per annum, which could be paid in cash or cheque at the door, or by Standing Order – please contact David King for details.

Outline planning permission has been put on hold to further develop the 'Greenfield' site of the Beavers Road Hop Fields by Waverley Borough Council's Joint Planning Committee. Members of the North West Farnham Residents Association (NWFRA) have been pointing out for years the dangers of what can happen if there is no local plan in place at Waverley. What is happening now is exactly what we were worried about. If there were a plan in place then there would be a requirement that brown field sites and greenfield sites with lower amenity or agricultural value (i.e. NOT the Hopfields) should be used first. With no plan then ANY green field site in Farnham can be the subject of an application despite the fact that there are more suitable sites which could be used both in Farnham and elsewhere in Waverley and also the development is outside the Town boundary as shown in the Farnham Neighbourhood plan. Because of government rules the fact that the Local plan is not in place the validity of the Neighbourhood plan as a planning document is being called into question and so the land in question is not as protected as it could be. Your councillors Graham White and David Beaman will be working on your behalf to stop this development but you can support their case by writing to state your views on the proposed development or anything else in the area that you wish to bring to the councils notice. They will be there at the AGM to hear your views so please attend so that they can hear and help with your concerns if they can. This development WA/2023/01467 was supposed to be submitted to the Waverley Planning Committee on the 8th of May but was withdrawn at the eleventh hour about concerns over a suitable SANG (Suitable Alternative Area of Natural Greenspace). The developers had submitted their SANG plans intending to use Farnham Park, however all the area there had been previously allocated. Added to this there are the grounds of the clear unsuitability of the land proposed as Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) in Church Crookham. There are also concerns about surface water drainage, bearing in mind that Abbey View has had major flooding problems and it is felt that the proposed development would not only have the same problems, but also exacerbate the existing Abbey View problems.

Let's consider the facts regarding the granting of permission:

The hop fields area has been designated in the past as an area of strategic visual importance bordered by ancient track ways and footpaths which is at present **outside** the settlement boundary of the Town. It is widely used by residents in the surrounding area for walking and dog walking. Although the present owners of the site itself have not regularly used the land as farming land, it is considered Grade One Agricultural Land for the growing of hops. The land all around is being farmed at the moment and much of the area is thought to have been part of the old deer park of the Castle.

The pressure of the proposed prospective extra dwellings on the already overstretched infrastructure of Farnham is widely accepted yet time and time again Councillors at the meeting stood up and made the point that the development is 'sustainable' on the grounds

that it is near the centre of Farnham. NWFRA among others has pointed the development is **not** sustainable on the grounds of traffic and especially pollution. In combination with the 250 extra dwellings in East Street and the prospect of other Greenfield and brown field developments with at least one other also right in the centre, the situation is definitely **unsustainable**. Farnham is unique in that there are two major roads through the centre where narrow roads and the conservation area mean that there is no way to increase the flow of traffic which would anyway increase the pollution even more. There is also a lack of school places, an old sewage system and a treatment plant which is over design capacity already. Given all these facts you have to wonder **what would have made a difference?** There is a huge Brownfield site at Dunsfold which could take a large number of new dwellings with none of these problems so why is this happening here in Farnham?

What should have happened is that the JPC should have rejected this and other speculative applications, until the local plan is in place so that the planners can actually plan.

We would like to encourage all members to continue to write to our local government representatives to urge them to place some protection on all the areas of North West Farnham that are under threat under these new conditions. Our historic green spaces make Farnham a green and pleasant town and we must fight to keep it that way.

The other major proposed development is at Coxbridge Farm, to be built by Cala Homes – no sign of a school being built though, as SCC consider that Farnham can take the strain.

The FIP (Farnham Infrastructure Plan) has been given the go ahead and work is expected to start in September. There is going to be a lot of disruption in and around the town, but the outcome of the recent Farnham Board Meeting held on the 14th of June, was that no roads in the Town Centre would be closed in the run up to Christmas. Meetings would be held by the three SCC Councillors with residents and businesses on the roads that would be closed, to review their issues and concerns and potential mitigations that can then be shared with the Project team to develop the final strategy.

Working with a local resident we have been able to secure funding to provide a new VAS (Vehicle Activated Sign) for Crondall Lane – to replace the previous one which was removed last year after failing some years before. The NWFRA is active in many areas, assisting a neighbour in stopping an intrusive burglar alarm in the UCA for example, as well as reporting back on overgrown footpaths.

We are urgently looking for new committee members, people who really care about our community – and are willing to be proactive and can give up a couple of hours every 2 – 3 months or so to attend our committee meetings.

The NWFRA website continues to attract many hits every month, so please use the 'Contact Us' tab to tell us about the issues which matter to you. You can help keep the site current by sending your comments or observations and suggest items for inclusion in our committee agenda.

We look forward to meeting you at the meeting.

David King & Penny Marriott