



Fleet & Crookham Civic Society

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Newsletter Autumn 2005

**The Annual General Meeting of Fleet & Crookham Civic Society
 will be held on
 Wednesday 26th. April, 2006, starting at 7.30 p.m.
 at the
 Willis Hall, Sandy Lane, Church Crookham.**

*Please support your Society, come along and talk to us about your concerns on
 local issues. Your views matter and the Society is here to help.*

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Chairman's Introduction.

As you will all know from the local press, and perhaps from participating yourselves in various important meetings, the last few months have been very eventful, and may well shape the future of Fleet and Church Crookham. They will certainly provide significant problems for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to attempt to resolve. As you might have predicted, these problems all concern planning and development matters.

The most highly publicised event was the meeting of the Hart DC Planning Committee, held at the Princes Hall, Aldershot on 14 July 2005, to discuss the Council's response to the various planning applications submitted by Taylor Woodrow Developments to re-develop the Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) site. The fact that an earlier meeting, scheduled for the Harlington Centre, was abandoned owing to inadequate space and the resulting need to move the meeting to the Princes Hall, speaks volumes for the local interest in these development applications. In fact, the Princes Hall was barely large enough to contain the members of the public who turned out to show their concern regarding this issue; even the overflow hall was full and it is estimated that more than 700 people attended the meeting.

The status of the Civic Society within the community was confirmed when we were asked to lead the group of public speakers opposing the planning applications. Colin Gray, our Honorary Secretary, agreed to undertake this task at the meeting scheduled for the Harlington Centre, but had other commitments on the new date, so I substituted for him. The opposition had a total of 21 minutes, since 7 planning applications were under consideration with each allowed 3 minutes, so we fielded 9 speakers in all. Listening to them, there was certainly a very strong case for refusing this proposed development, and this was the attitude taken by most of the councillors present; not one spoke in favour of the plans before them. At the end of the debate, the Committee voted to refuse the proposed crucial mitigation measures to potential impact of this development on the nearby Special Protection Area (SPA), and therefore the plans to build more than 1,100 houses also fell. There were no votes in favour of the main proposals, but a few councillors abstained from voting.

Members will recall that the local SPA consists of most of the land between Fleet and Church Crookham and Farnborough and is the habitat of several rare birds. For their protection, it has this special European designation. At the QEB meeting, the rules governing development in areas close to the SPA were not entirely clear, but it was known that any proposed mitigation measures aimed at preventing additional harm to the SPA must guarantee "beyond reasonable doubt" that no damage to the SPA would occur. The plans before the Committee could not provide this guarantee, it was concluded, so the decision was inevitable, without really considering in detail the adverse impact of all these proposed houses on the infrastructure of our towns.

While English Nature had clarified to some extent the implications of the SPA at a meeting held in late June with the Council, and minuted by English Nature on 29 June, further guidance was clearly required. This came from the ODPM on 16 August in a document of 88 pages and it had an immediate effect at the Planning Committee meeting held the following day. There, the Council's Solicitor read out extracts from this document, which proved to be decisive in the subsequent discussions. This guidance indicates that the regulations are now much more restrictive than just a few weeks earlier. Basically, if it cannot be conclusively *proved* that a development *will not* have an adverse effect on the SPA, it cannot be allowed.

Several councillors at this meeting were of the opinion that this would prevent all future development in Fleet and Church Crookham, including the QEB site. Indeed, when considering an additional one-bedroom flat in Fleet Road, the advice of the Solicitor was, in effect, not to allow it. However, common sense prevailed and it was allowed - but another application for 5 additional dwellings at 11 and 13 Oakley Drive was turned down, primarily because of the SPA.

So, paradoxically, we may have the European Union (EU), the ODPM and English Nature all on our side in preventing the eventual ruin of Fleet and Church Crookham through over-development. Of course, this all presents the ODPM with a major problem, as mentioned above; ODPM directs us to build thousands of houses in Hart (and thus in Fleet) yet, at the same time, is implying that the Council cannot allow any of them to be constructed!! This will probably result in an interesting internal conflict within the ODPM, and we must hope that the EU and English Nature win.

Of course, we still have the proposed development at Hitches Lane to worry about, but further evidence concerning past flooding of this land has come to light, which will add weight to the need to refuse this application. You may recall that the Inspector at the Public Inquiry into this planning application concluded, amazingly, that it should be allowed, but that the Deputy Prime Minister did not agree. The developer took the matter to the High Court, which over-ruled John Prescott on a technicality and passed the matter back to

his Office for reconsideration. This flooding issue, plus the new rules concerning the SPA, may permit the ODPM to confirm their earlier decision; we must hope so.

So it looks as if we are winning at the moment, but we cannot relax, especially where smaller, but perhaps equally damaging development proposals are concerned. They, in aggregate, can do as much damage to our quality of life as the large proposals, so vigilance remains necessary, backed up by a readiness to participate actively in any relevant campaign. Keep up the good work, and please do come to the next AGM to let us know your views.

David Fearn

Acronyms that you will find in this Newsletter.

DLA	Defence Land Agent or Agency	pSPA	Proposed Special Protection Area (for nature conservation) the “p” will be dropped when approved under UK legislation.
FACC	Farnborough Aerodrome Consultative Committee	SSSI SINC	Site of Special Scientific Interest Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
MoD	Ministry of Defence	PDSG	Peter Driver Sports Ground (in Church Crookham)
PAG	Fleet & Church Crookham Planning Advisory Group	PC	Planning Committee
PI	Planning Inspectorate	QEB	Queen Elizabeth Barracks
		DE	Defence Estates
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	SEERA	South East England Regional Assembly
GOSE	Government Office for the South East	PCT	Primary Care Trust

New Committee Members.

Some of you may have noticed the list of committee members on the front of this newsletter has grown since the last edition! Stuart Bates joined the committee at the April AGM and has filled the previously vacant position of Treasurer. Andrew Dodd has recently agreed to be co-opted to the committee to spread the workload on planning related matters. Andrew joins the committee having gained 1st hand knowledge of the planning system by way of organising the successful campaign against the proposed high density flatted development in Victoria Hill Road. The Society welcomes these two committee members and all other members which have joined the Society this year.

Diary of Events 2005

17 February Re-development of 84-86 Crookham Road. The Society objected to this proposal to replace two bungalows with a terrace of 4 houses and a block of 6 flats.

28 February Fleet Christmas Festivities. The Society has several members on a Committee set up to organise the 2005 version of the Christmas Festivities Evening, which was so successful in 2004. The first meeting of this Committee, which is chaired by Sue Collen, the Town Centre Manager, was held on 28 February, and the date to put in your diary is 23 November.

1 March Appeal; Re-development of Spring House, Branksomewood Road. The Society was represented at this appeal and spoke against the proposal to replace this house by a block of 13 flats. Spring House is situated within the North Fleet Conservation Area, where flatted development should be strongly resisted.

2 March SEERA Consultation. The Society was represented at a consultation meeting called by SEERA to discuss their plans for the development of SE England (we view these plans with dread, since the only options on offer are how many houses can be accepted **beyond** the levels built in the recent past).

2 March Appeal; Worton, Beecroft and Ventura, Branksomewood Road. The Society wrote to the Planning Inspectorate, supporting the decision made by the Council to reject plans to replace these three houses with 24 retirement flats. Here, retirement is defined as over-55, and people of this age are assumed by the developer to not wish to own or drive cars!!!

3 March Listing of Old Houses in Church Road. The Society wrote to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to support the listing of some of Fleet's oldest houses, clustered around All Saints' Church. These include the original Fleet School and the associated Headmaster's House.

5 March Development at 32 Ryelaw Road. The Society objected to this proposed development, in which two large detached houses were intended to be squeezed into a back garden.

8 March Tweseldown Racecourse. The Society wrote to Defence Estates (a part of MoD) concerning the unsatisfactory situation as regards public use and the appearance of Tweseldown Racecourse. The questions posed included the following, with the replies, received on 12 and 27 May, in brackets:

- i. Did the MoD influence the decision made in 2002/2003 to exclude the Racecourse from the "Right to Roam" areas of Hampshire when the Society requested that it be included? (*No – but we doubt this, from information passed to us from someone involved with Defence Estates.*)
- ii. Why was the car park adjacent to the Racecourse on Bourley Road blocked off? (*A reason was not given, but it was stated that Defence Estates had agreed to the closure.*)
- iii. Why was the above car park blocked off with building rubble and old lorry and tractor tyres? A fence was added much later. (*No answer given.*)
- iv. What is the huge heap of road "shavings" doing at the south end of the racecourse? (*Stated to be for resurfacing, with the approval of Defence Estates.*)
- v. Did Defence Estates authorise the extensive destruction of bushes, trees, etc in the centre of the Racecourse? (*Yes – and it was stated that this was with the approval of English Nature.*)

10 March Possible Unitary Authority. An article appeared in the "Basingstoke Observer" suggesting that Hart DC may combine with Basingstoke and Deane to form a Unitary Authority, with a combined population of about 236,000. This would allow them to jointly take over many of the activities currently the responsibility of Hants County Council. The Society raised this at the PAG meeting on 21 March, and was told that this article was merely journalistic speculation. However, we do wonder, as this amalgamation would benefit those interested in "empire building" – but not necessarily local residents, who would be further from the "seat of power".

11 March Appeal; Re-development of Spring House, Branksomewood Road. The Society was notified that this appeal has been dismissed, due to the bulk of the proposed block of flats, the impact on the street scene, and the adverse effect on the conservation Area.

14 March PCC Meeting at All Saints' Church. The Society was represented at this meeting to discuss the impact of proposed developments in the vicinity on the setting of the Church. The need to list important old buildings in the neighbourhood was also discussed.

14 March Special PAG Meeting on Youth Problems. The Society participated in this special PAG meeting, called in response to concerns about increasing anti-social behaviour in Fleet and Church Crookham. Few obvious solutions to these problems became apparent.

24 March Appeal; Re-development of 50 Gally Hill Road. The Society wrote to the Planning Inspectorate, supporting the decision made by the Council to reject plans to replace this house with 7 flats.

30 March Re-development of 172 Reading Road South. The Society objected to the considerable enlargement of this house to provide effectively 7 flats, with resulting problems of access and parking.

5 April Appeal; Hitches Lane. The Society wrote to the ODPM to support the Secretary of State's earlier decision to dismiss the Hitches Lane appeal. We summarised the evidence against this development proposal and suggested that he again dismisses the appeal.

6 April Pyestock Industrial Development. The Committee met with the representatives of the developers, who explained their proposals and pointed out the benefits of this concept, as compared to that put forward earlier by QinetiQ. In particular, the maximum employment potential is 2150 rather than 4000. Bearing in mind that this site **will be developed** this seems to be the best option on offer, since it will strain the local infrastructure the least, especially as most workers are expected to be on a shift system and are likely to come from Basingstoke via the M3.

11 April Forestry Work South of Tweseldown. The Society wrote to English Nature about the extensive tree felling operations in the woods to the south of Tweseldown; this is occurring at a time when it presents the greatest danger to nesting birds (such work is not allowed at Fleet Pond later than 28 February). It is also taking place in an area protected by the SINC status. An unsatisfactory reply was received on 15 April, which merely suggested contacting Defence Estates.

12 April Conversion of 240 Fleet Road into a Pub. The Society objected to this proposal, since there are already too many pubs in Fleet town centre. In addition, this proposed conversion breaks the Local Plan criterion for the percentage of such establishments permitted within a specified distance along Fleet Road.

13 April Annual General Meeting. This was quite well attended, although a booking duplication led to the last minute move to the Harlington Centre (thanks to Cllr Jenny Radley). The meeting included a short presentation by representatives of the Pyestock Industrial site developers. Their plans received reluctant support from the members present, who were able to compare these proposals with the current alternatives.

13 April SEERA Consultation on the Development of SE England. The Society wrote to SEERA to complain about the blatantly “loaded” questions contained within the consultation document “Your Shout”.

21 April AGM of the local Patient and Public Involvement Forum. Two Society representatives attended this public meeting. Also present was the Chief Executive of the Blackwater Valley and Hart PCT, who answered questions on a number of local issues, including Fleet Hospital.

25 April Pyestock Industrial Development. The Society wrote to the Council concerning the most recent proposal for industrial development at Pyestock, as discussed at the AGM. It was pointed out that these proposals are about the best that can be expected, bearing in mind that this site will eventually be developed for some industrial or commercial purpose, and that the aim should be to minimise the impact on Fleet and Church Crookham. The Society therefore recommended acceptance of these proposals, with very strong environmental conditions applied and an investigation of a rail link to minimise the impact on local roads.

26 April Blackwater Valley and Hart PCT and North Hampshire PCT Joint Board Meeting. Two Society representatives attended this meeting, at which the Board decided to implement its plans for Fleet Hospital.

28 April Re-development of 84-86 Crookham Road. The Society objected to yet another proposal to replace two bungalows with a terrace of 4 houses and a block of 6 flats. This proposal is no better than those rejected previously.

28 April Development at 104-122 Reading Road South. The Society objected to this proposal to build 12 flats here, with the possibility of impinging upon a badger set and with an effective density of 108 dwellings per hectare. This is no better than an earlier proposal, to which the Society also objected.

11 May Forestry Work South of Tweseldown. The Society wrote to Defence Estates, repeating the questions put to English Nature on 11 April, but adding a further request for an explanation of the land clearance being undertaken at the south end of the Racecourse, which has caused a major loss of habitat for several important wildlife species.

13 May Appeal; Hitches Lane. The Society received from the ODPM copies of correspondence regarding flooding which has occurred in the past on the land proposed for development. This information included very striking photographic evidence; this should be a serious impediment to development.

20 May Public Meeting regarding Basingbourne Road. Several Society representatives attended a lively and well-supported public meeting about antisocial behaviour problems in the Basingbourne Road area,

including noise, vandalism and speeding. Police representatives, a number of local councillors and our local MP attended the meeting, which was organised by local residents.

23 May Police Liaison Meeting (Church Crookham). Two Society representatives attended this meeting.

24 May Blackwater Valley and Hart PCT and North Hampshire PCT Joint Board Meeting. A Society representative attended this meeting. Matters discussed included a letter from the District Auditor setting out her concerns about the PCTs' financial standing and their ability to meet future financial targets.

7/8 June Appeal; Cadogan Cottage, Adcote and Linden House, Branksomewood Road. The Society was represented throughout this two-days appeal, which concerned a planning application to demolish these three houses and replace them with 33 retirement homes. We were particularly concerned about the impact of this proposal on the North Fleet Conservation Area and spoke in support of the Council's rejection of the application, and also presented written evidence.

13 June Rubbish Collection and Recycling. The Society was represented at a meeting called by Hart DC to discuss the various options available to improve the rubbish collection service and, most importantly, to increase the amount of refuse which is recycled; the latter is mandatory. Whatever option is selected, there will be increased costs, which will have to be passed on the council taxpayer.

19 June Licensing Hours Increase Requested by The Wyvern, Church Crookham. Following representations made by several members, the Society objected formally to the proposal to extend considerably the licensing hours of this public house.

20 June Development at Victoria Hill House and The Fieldings, Victoria Hill Road. The Society objected to the plan to build 78 retirement and care-home dwellings in the grounds of these two houses in the North Fleet Conservation area. The proposal resembles a motel!!

22 June Re-development of 172 Reading Road South. The Society objected to the re-development of this site to provide 6 flats, with resulting problems of access and parking. On this occasion, the developer proposes to demolish the existing house.

28 June Blackwater Valley and Hart PCT and North Hampshire PCT Joint Board Meeting. A Society representative attended this meeting.

29 June Extended Opening Hours. The Society presented to the Council a blanket objection to the concept of extended opening hours, on the grounds of increased noise disturbance to neighbours and the possibility of additional anti-social behaviour.

29 June SPA; Meeting between Hart DC and English Nature. This meeting defined more precisely than before the rules governing development in areas within 5 km of the SPA.

30 June Development at 157-159 Aldershot Road, Church Crookham. The Society objected to the construction of an additional house in the gardens of these two dwellings. This concept is extremely cramped.

30 June Development at 30 Kent Road. The Society objected to the construction of an additional house in the garden of this dwelling, which would also be extremely cramped.

5 July Planning Committee Meeting to Consider QEB Applications. This meeting, scheduled for the Harlington Centre, had to be abandoned because too many members of the public arrived and could not be accommodated within the hall.

5 July Housing Forum. The Society was represented at an affordable housing forum called by Hart DC. This was attended by disabled access groups, housing associations and council housing officers from Hart and Rushmoor. Workshops discussed the various aspects of affordable accommodation. FCCS proposed that future policies should close the loophole, which permitted developers to build up to 14 homes without any contribution to the provision of affordable accommodation.

14 July Planning Committee Meeting to Consider QEB Applications. This meeting was reconvened at the Princes Hall in Aldershot, where more than 700 people attended. Two members of the Committee of the Society spoke against the development plans. The Council rejected the applications for the effective closure of the Bourley Road car park, the construction of a new roundabout on Beacon Hill Road and a new car park on Greendane Copse, and the erection of more than 1100 houses on the QEB site.

15 July Appeal; Cadogan Cottage, Adcote and Linden House, Branksomewood Road. The Society was informed that this appeal has been allowed. This was a great shock, and implies that the policy of protecting the North Fleet Conservation Area has been abandoned by the Planning Inspectorate. This was also indicated by the loss of a similar appeal at Roughwood on Pines Road, where the Inspector has allowed a block of flats to be built.

18 July Waste Collection Public Meeting. A Society representative attended this meeting, at which Hart District Council outlined the options it is considering for the future of its waste collection service and invited a response from those present.

23 July Development at Victoria Hill House and The Fieldings, Victoria Hill Road. The Society complained to the firm of solicitors representing the developers, who tried to dissuade residents from objecting by hinting that they might be acting illegally.

25 July Works at the South Side of Tweseldown Racecourse. The Society wrote to the Council supporting the enforcement action that they have taken against the leaseholder of the Racecourse. This has been necessary because he has removed an extensive area of vegetation on the south of the site, without planning consent, and has also resurfaced a very large area with road “scalpings”, again without consent. Considerable damage has been done to wildlife in the vicinity.

26 July Blackwater Valley and Hart PCT and North Hampshire PCT Joint Board Meeting. Two Society representatives attended this meeting.

27 July Licensing Hours Increase Requested by The Wyvern, Church Crookham. A public meeting was held concerning this matter; it was chaired by David King, the Council’s Senior Licensing Officer. The Society was represented amongst a very large attendance by local residents, all of whom opposed the application for extended hours. This opposition appeared to have led to the application being withdrawn.

28 July Development at 50 Gally hill Road. The Society objected yet again to the construction of a block of 7 flats on the site of this house. This is the 4th application for this unchanged proposal.

28 July Development at 5 Alton Road. The Society objected to the construction of 3 terraced houses on the site of this one small house. As it is only 410 m from the SPA, this will be a major consideration in reaching the Council’s decision.

28 July FACC Meeting. See article later in this Newsletter.

1 August Development at 11 and 13 Oakley Drive. The Society objected to the construction of 6 dwellings on the site of these two bungalows. As it is only 590 m from the SPA, this will be a major consideration in reaching the Council’s decision. The application was refused by the Planning Committee on 17 August.

16 August Rules Governing Development Near the SPA. The Council was informed by the ODPM of the recently formulated rules, which aim to prevent new developments of any size from damaging the SPA. If interpreted as written, these rules effectively stop development within Fleet and Church Crookham. As well as considering the impact of each development on an individual basis, the combined effect of all such developments must be taken into account.

18 August Development at Victoria Hill House and The Fieldings, Victoria Hill Road. The Society raised with the Law Society the behaviour of the firm of solicitors representing the developers in this case. As reported above, they tried to dissuade residents from objecting by hinting that they might be acting illegally.

Queen Elizabeth Barracks

The QEB planning applications were debated by the Planning Committee on 14th July. Over 700 residents attended the meeting, held at the Princess Hall in Aldershot. Nine residents spoke in objection to the applications, each dealing with a different aspect and conveying strong reasons to refuse the applications. There is a great strength of feeling throughout Fleet and Church Crookham that the size of development proposed will have a detrimental impact on the environment and quality of life for existing residents. The refusal of the applications was very warmly received!

It is no surprise that the developers have appealed against the refusals. It will now be necessary for residents to maintain their commitment to fighting the proposals. The Planning Inspector will receive all the previous letters of objection and it is hoped that as many residents as possible will also write to the Planning Inspectorate at Room 3/15, Eagle Wing, Temple Quay House, 2, The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS16PN to reiterate those comments, make additional comments or request to speak at the Inquiry. There are six weeks from 24th August to do this. If this deadline is missed the Inspector may allow you to address the Inquiry, however, they will not allow repetition of objections.

It is important to note that the only effective objections are those based on valid planning reasons. It is not sufficient to simply object in principle to the development and the Inspector will not give any weight to such views.

It will also be vital for large numbers of residents to attend the Public Inquiry as this is a good way of showing the strength of feeling. It is expected that the Inquiry will take place next summer and to last several weeks. It is not necessary to attend the whole inquiry and you can choose to attend for just a few hours or longer if you can spare the time. It is an interesting process. **Alison Macallan**

Forestry work in Woodland to the South of Tweseldown Racecourse

We know from our contacts with the Fleet Pond Society that their working parties are not permitted to undertake tree felling and similar major tasks after 28 February each year, to avoid disturbing nesting birds and small animals coming out of hibernation. The Committee was therefore very concerned by the massive tree felling operation which took place in the SINC to the south of Tweseldown Racecourse, which started during the winter of 2004-2005 and extended to mid-June 2005. The area involved was to the east of Beacon Hill Road that has SINC status, which should have afforded it some degree of protection from such activities.

Many hundreds, probably thousands, of trees were felled in what appeared to be a thinning operation. Very large machines were used to fell the trees, strip all branches and cut them into lengths convenient for transportation. Despite the dryness of the winter, these machines were so heavy that they ruined many of the tracks within the woods and caused huge ruts in the areas, which remained damp. From the number of scavenging birds on the scene, such as Magpies, we suspect that large numbers of birds and small animals were killed by these operations. It is also of significance that the branches and smaller pieces of wood were left on the ground between the remaining trees, which will increase the overall fire risk in the future.

Ironically, the areas in question were largely those protected by large notices stating "No Admittance. Water Catchment Area". We know of several people who have been threatened with prosecution for walking or running in these areas, so it would seem that Defence Estates, who are in charge of this land, regard someone walking as causing more damage than this extensive forestry activity. This is hard to explain.

We wrote to both English Nature and Defence Estates. We asked, in particular, why the restrictions placed on the Pond Society are not universally obeyed. We also raised the question of the meaning of the SINC status; it would appear from the forestry work undertaken on behalf of Defence Estates that the designation of a piece of land as a SINC has no meaning whatsoever, and that any action within that land is acceptable, no matter what damage it might do to wildlife.

The replies, which we received, were totally unsatisfactory and effectively repeated what we were told some years ago when we complained about a similar situation elsewhere in the woodland around Fleet and Church Crookham. On that occasion, we were told, in effect, that MoD could do as they like and this apparently still applies. As a concession to nature conservation, we were told by Defence Estates that care was taken to avoid disturbing known nesting sites of the Firecrest – but what about all the other species at risk? We were also informed that "the felling operations have been planned with the full *knowledge* of English Nature".

Note that they did not state that English Nature *approved* of this practice and EN made no relevant comment in their letter. We suspect that they were under pressure from MoD to refrain from adverse comments.

We remain unconvinced that this forestry work was an example of “best practice”, as claimed by Defence Estates. We are taking the matter up with the RSPB in the hope that they can provide observations, which will be free of commercial bias.

David Fearn

Anti-Social Behaviour

I am sure that all members will realise that anti-social behaviour is on the increase. We have received many complaints about this and, since several additional pubs have opened in the town centre, many residents have come to regard this as a “no-go” area in the evenings, especially on Fridays and Saturdays. There are numerous reports of mindless vandalism on roads adjacent to pubs in the town, but this has now spread to open areas where youngsters tend to congregate. Drink plays a large part in these deteriorating standards of behaviour and one suspects that drugs are also involved. Of course, the pubs are not necessarily responsible for the problems experienced in many areas of the town; the alcohol consumed there often comes from supermarkets and off-licenses.

The Police, although they readily acknowledge that it exists and that it is getting worse, do not have the resources to cope. They are therefore concerned about the possibility that many pubs will be granted extended opening hours, commencing in November, which will no doubt spread the problem across a greater part of the night. In addition, the powers, which the Police possess, are, in fact, very limited unless they actually witness a crime being committed. All that they can do is move the offending youths on, so they tend to migrate from place to place. For example, if they cause trouble in, say, The Verne in Church Crookham, and are moved on, they can go to the Basingbourne Road area or to the Peter Driver Sports Ground to create problems there.

Of course, if the problems experienced in a given area become very bad, the Police will react accordingly. This happened recently in the Basingbourne Road area, where cars were reported to be travelling at up to 70 mph and much damage was being done to private and public property. A strong Police presence then alleviated the situation and the residents were very pleased – but, of course, the troublemakers went elsewhere.

Why they behave in this way, when their health and possible future careers are at risk, is beyond explanation. It is also hard to understand the lack of parental concern – sometimes this is a *total* lack of concern, even where children as young as 12 or 14 are involved. We have heard reports of such young children being apprehended in the early hours of the morning while causing damage in Fleet town centre and their parents showing no concern whatsoever when informed. The problem is often attributed to inadequate facilities to occupy these youngsters, but it is frequently observed that they are not remotely interested in anything constructive (that organised activity is “boring”) and the evidence would support this view. A special meeting of the Planning Advisory Group was held on 14 March 2005 to discuss this issue, but very little new was raised. Although some additional recreational facilities will possibly divert some troublemakers away from anti-social behaviour, the main problem, driven by drink and drugs, will remain.

The police have made one thing very clear. ***ALL incidents must be reported.*** Even if they cannot respond to each and every report, the fact that the incident has gone on record means that the level of activity in any area is known. This builds a picture of the worse trouble spots to which resources will need to be directed. Make a note of each incident, the date, time and location. If you can, count the number of miscreants, number of beer cans/bottles, litter, etc. It will all help to measure the extent of the problem. Send the report to the police with a copy to Hart District Council.

One positive action taken recently by the Council was to introduce their “Graffiti-busting week”, in which much of the accumulated graffiti in the town was very effectively removed. Perhaps surprisingly, in many places this has not been instantaneously replaced by more graffiti, so the idea may have worked. Unfortunately, the same principle does not seem to operate where litter is concerned – sadly, it is replaced as quickly as it is removed, and the fault here lies with all age groups.

David Fearn

Refuse Collection and Recycling

Hart DC recently organised a series of meetings throughout the District to explain the options available to improve the effectiveness of the refuse collection schemes currently in operation and to recycle more of the waste produced by local residents and companies. Indeed, the latter is now mandatory if targets set by the EU and Government are to be met. Unfortunately, these meetings were organised at short notice, very little advertising was possible before the first was held in the Council Offices on 13 June 2005, so the attendance by members of the public was very small. In fact, councillors and Council officers outnumbered attendees. Nevertheless, it was a worthwhile exercise.

Members of the public who attended was first given an illustrated talk, which covered, very comprehensively, the present system that is apparently one of the best in the UK and the needs for improvement. The latter concentrated on the requirement to recycle more of our waste, which is becoming much more important as the world's readily available resources diminish and as land-fill sites for the disposal of waste become full. Following EU directives, 33% of waste must be recycled by 2005/2006, whereas the current achievement is 23.6%; there is thus a long way to go. This objective is also challenged by the rapidly increasing amount of waste produced by each household, which will reach 1.44 tonnes per year by 2010. By that date it is likely that 50% by weight will have to be recycled.

One solution is to incinerate the unrecycled waste, thereby producing electricity for sale. A state-of-the-art facility to do this is in operation at Marchwood, which appears to be extremely environmentally friendly. Pressure is also being applied to manufacturers to reduce the amount of packaging and to make the remainder better able to be recycled.

Extensive consultation is underway to ascertain the best way forward; these meetings were a part of that process, as was a questionnaire sent to all households in the District (to which the response was only 8.3%). However, the Council gained some valuable guidance from the responses received.

Various options had been formulated and were presented in exhibition form to the participants, who were asked for their observations and opinions. As all involved an increase in cost, which was clearly inevitable, there was little apart from finance to differentiate them from each other. Most included the purchase of new collection vehicles to allow more categories of waste to be separated for recycling and there were several options for the frequency of collection. Whilst a decision has not yet been made, it cannot be delayed much longer and will certainly involve an additional burden on the council taxpayer – but that cannot be avoided in our present throwaway society. It is up to us to recycle more of our waste.

David Fearn

Update on Farnborough Aerodrome Consultative Committee

The Fleet & Crookham Civic Society (FCCS) is privileged to have a representative on the Farnborough Aerodrome Consultative Committee. This body meets 3 times a year with the intention of openly discussing issues of concern to those affected by operations at the aerodrome. The Committee is made up of 3 representative groups:

- Aerodrome Users
- Local Authorities (County, Borough & District)
- Local Interest Groups (incl. FCCS)

The Committee most recently met on 28th July 2005. It is fair to say that the meeting highlighted certain concerns rather than resolved them. One unfortunate 'feature' of the FACC is that most members of the committee do not take an active part in the proceedings. This is a great opportunity lost and it is most surprising that District Councillors on the Committee do not get more involved, particularly as the Aerodrome does continue to foster a wide degree of public concern. A Councillor from Waverley Borough Council, Cllr Mrs M. Hunt, even went so far as to suggest that "the committee's discussion was going into too great a level of detail, the effect of which appeared to exclude the public". In fact as a member of the public later pointed out in the public participation section: "The public wished to have full details about operational matters at the airport. While many people had confidence in TAG, it was right that this should be tested through challenge, e.g. at meetings of this committee."

A few major issues were raised at the July FACC meeting. They were discussed but, as is often the case, it will take a number of meetings before they will be resolved. The first issue related to the question of “What exactly is a compliant flight?” The statement that “a flight was compliant” is the standard response by TAG to members of the public who complain about individual movements. It is not clear if a compliant flight is compliant with the noise abatement procedures, the general flight rules for the aerodrome, or compliant by instructions from air traffic control (ATC). As the normal flight rules of the aerodrome and the noise abatement procedures can be over-ridden at the discretion of the ATC, then this might well account for the major discrepancy between members of the public who believe that a particular flight was ‘in the wrong bit of sky’ – and TAG’s response that the flight was compliant.

Another issue raised was about TAG’s reluctance to publish details as to the number of takeoffs & landings on particular runways. As it stands, TAG reports the number of movements on a particular runway. There is one physical serviceable runway at Farnborough, which can be utilised in both directions, thus the aerodrome has two runways. Runways are labelled after the direction that an aircraft is pointing in when using that runway. The runways at Farnborough are 06 (meaning it points towards 60° of the compass). The same runway used in the other direction is known as runway 24 as it points towards 240° of the compass. The issue is that the TAG report uses statistics, which gives the number of movements for each labelled runway. If a runway experiences the same number of takeoffs as landings then this would give a fair impression as to the number of flights which over-fly Fleet & Church Crookham. However it is widely observed that aircraft can land on runway 06 (descending over Fleet & CC) and take off on runway 24 (climbing over Fleet as well). Now, as this is reported as a movement on 06 & a movement on 24, one cannot tell from this data if this was a landing or a take-off and hence you cannot tell if it was over Fleet or Farnborough. TAG is very reluctant to release more informative data to indicate how many actual flights over fly which towns. You might have thought that our two District Council representatives would have waded in to assist Geoff Marks of Farnborough Aerodrome Residents Association (FARA) and me, as we tried to pursue this point. But, no, they just sat in silence as they do for most of the meetings.

There are benefits from having Farnborough Aerodrome on our doorstep. One of these is that local environmental bodies can benefit from the “Environmental Levy” which is made against each commercial aircraft that use Farnborough. The levy is put into a fund, which is administered by Rushmoor Borough Council. I specifically asked for further information about the environmental projects, which would be supported by this fund. Cllr Dibbs, representing Rushmoor Borough Council, reported that the fund stood at £89K and it had been proposed to Rushmoor’s cabinet that £45k should be allocated to the Fleet Pond Society and £40k to the Basingstoke Canal Management Committee.

A sub-committee of the FACC, which includes FCCS member Debbie Moss, has put together a web site on behalf of the committee. This can be reached at www.facc.org.uk. This web-site will provide more information on the FACC for interested members of the public and credit must go to Cllr. N. Lambert for being instrumental in bringing this web-site together.

The dates of the next two FACC meetings will be Thursday 10 November 2005, at 2.00pm, and the following meeting on Thursday 23 March 2006. The meetings are usually held in the BAE building off of the Queen’s Roundabout, which lies between Farnborough and Aldershot. Any member of the FCCS who would like more details about these next meetings or would like to raise matters, which could be suitable for me to bring-up with the FACC, should feel free to contact me on 628751.

Jenny Radley.

Proposed Development at Hitches Lane

Apart from the SPA issue, which is now likely to influence the decision to be made by the ODPM concerning the proposed development at Hitches Lane, another factor makes a positive decision less likely. This concerns possible flooding of the site.

Some members, who attended the Public Inquiry into this planning application, will recall that the Society’s evidence included the comment that this site is very wet and that flooding was likely. This view came from my experience as a Committee member of the local Athletic Club, which for many years held cross-country race meetings on the adjacent farm, owned by the White family. The Club always found the course to be extremely wet and muddy and never seemed to be dry. Clearly a high water table might cause problems for any houses to be built in the vicinity.

We were informed earlier this year that the White family had submitted evidence to the ODPM concerning this matter. This documentation was copied to the Society and included photographs of the land in question completely covered in floodwater. Since then, the developers have employed a firm of hydrological engineers to produce a scheme to minimise this flood risk, but one wonders how effective it will be, especially in view of climate change. If this scheme cannot *guarantee* freedom from flood, any new houses may well be uninsurable. We will see when a decision is made by the ODPM how effective this argument has been.

David Fearn

Housing Completions

Members may be interested in the document reproduced below, which was presented to the Council's Planning Committee on 18 May 2005. This shows that the Council is well ahead of the required housing allocation numbers at present, thanks to the large amount of infilling which is taking place, but that this situation will change as time progresses, especially if the QEB site does not "come on stream". We must hope, therefore, that the SPA issue will fundamentally alter this situation by reducing drastically the number of houses that we are obliged to accept.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report is in response to Members' request for information on the current situation regarding housing completions. In future there will be a quarterly report to update Members.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Housing completions are monitored on a regular basis to assess whether the District is meeting minimum housing targets that are set out in the Hampshire Structure Plan. The Policy H2 baseline requirement under the current Structure Plan is 4,750 additional dwellings to be developed between 1996 and 2011.

2.2 In addition to this there is a Policy H4 reserve requirement of 1,500 additional dwellings allocated to Hart, which is only to be released if the monitoring carried out by the strategic authorities (Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council) indicates that there is compelling justification to do so.

2.3 When annualised, the housing completions target for Hart is 317 dwellings per annum under Policy H2 and 417 dwellings per annum when the reserve requirement is also taken into consideration.

3. CURRENT POSITION

3.1 Attached as Appendix 1 (*not included here*) are figures, which show the current position in terms of completions.

The housing completion figures for 1996- 2005 show that Hart has so far met its cumulative target for housing completions under the structure plan baseline Policy H2. The cumulative target for this timeframe is 2,850 whereas the actual completions were 3,294. The cumulative target for the reserve requirement under Policy H4 is 3,750, meaning that Hart currently has a shortfall of 456 when assessed against this target.

3.2 For the year 2004-2005, the completions were in the region of 603 against an annual target of 317.

3.3 Figure 2 (*not included here*) indicates the quarterly trend for 2004- 2005. It shows that the number of completions decreased each quarter with the highest number taking place in April -June 2004 (199) and the lowest number taking place in December- March (117).

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The current rate of completions is such that the baseline requirements of the structure plan are being met. This is due in part to the continued contribution from small sites (i.e. less than 10 dwellings), windfall sites (sites for 10 or more dwellings not allocated in the local plan) and also larger allocated sites such as Holt Lane, Hook and Elvetham Heath. These larger sites will be completed over the next 2-3 years and longer term the continued delivery of the Structure Plan

rates will only be achieved by the development of Queen Elizabeth Barracks site, together with contributions from small and windfall sites when these come forward for consideration.

4.2 Under-provision could lead to the release of greenfield sites for development under Policy H4 of the Structure Plan. Ongoing monitoring will continue, with regular reports to the Planning Committee.

David Fearn

Delegation of Planning Decisions to Council Officers

Members may recall that Council officers have often made decisions regarding relatively small and uncontroversial planning applications, to avoid wasting the time of the Planning Committee. However, the number of applications coming forward has increased dramatically in recent years, so that this Committee now has to meet twice each month and, even so, consideration of many applications is being unduly delayed. As a result, it has been proposed that the delegated powers enjoyed by the officers be increased, so that a smaller proportion of applications come before the Committee.

Initially, this proposal went too far and allowed too great a degree of delegation. The Society was among those who complained about this. The resulting compromise is set out below; it was presented to the Planning Committee on 18 May 2005 and was agreed by the Full Council on 23 June 2005. It seems to be logical and straightforward, although section 11 gives cause for some concern. It enables officers to pass minor amendments and variations on planning conditions without consulting councillors; the obvious question is “what constitutes a minor change?”

SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Head of Planning Services be delegated:

1) To determine or decline to determine all applications made, deemed to be made or referred to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990 and any statutory instruments made under those Acts, together with applications for certificates of Appropriate Alternative Development, together with determinations that it is not expedient to take enforcement action unless they fall into i to x categories as below.

i) A District Councillor makes a written request for the application/notice/order to be considered by the Planning Committee.

ii) The Head of Planning Services considers that the application/notice/order should be considered by Committee.

iii) The approval of the application would represent a departure from the policies of the statutory development plan.

iv) The proposal involves the District or Parish Council as applicant or landowner or as interested party.

v) The applicant is a District Councillor or the District Councillor lives in the adjoining property, a property opposite the application site or a property either side of that.

vi) The applicant is an officer who is a Member of the Council's Management Team, a Service Unit Head or a member of staff within Planning Services or any member of staff within the Authority who could be seen as having a direct input to, and therefore influence on, application decisions.

vii) Any application where a Council employee or Councillor is involved in any capacity - e.g. agent or consultant.

viii) The application is for residential development, is to be recommended for approval and proposes 2 or more dwellings (net) (i.e. as present).

ix) The application is to be approved and 5 or more letters of objection from independent sources have been received for applications in the urban settlements and rural centres (as defined by policy URB1) and rural settlements (as defined in policy RUR1), or 3 or more letters of objection from independent sources have been received in other locations (i.e. the open countryside) which ever is applicable.

x) In the event of conflict between the views of the relevant Parish/Town Council or the Fleet and Church Crookham Planning Advisory Group and/or a local Ward Member in whose Ward the application site falls,

and the recommendation of the Head of Planning Services, the application shall be referred to the Committee.

Notes:

Delegated refusals can be made subject to the Parish/Town Council, Fleet & Church Crookham Planning Advisory Group or Ward Member not raising support for the proposal.

A response of "No objections" from Parish/Town Council or Fleet & Church Crookham Planning advisory Group will be treated as a neutral comment, but the standard consultation form will be amended to give the options of "Objection", "No objection" and "Support". Where further comments are given with a response the heading will be determinative.

- 2) In respect of agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
 - a) To determine when to seek such agreements and the terms of them in conjunction with a planning application or enforcement matter being dealt with under the scheme of delegation; and
 - b) To make reasonable amendments to the heads of terms or detailed terms of such agreements if necessary after they have been approved by the Planning Committee or the Council.
- 3) To determine applications made under the Environmental Assessment Regulations as to whether or not an Environmental Statement (including screening and scoping opinions) is required in respect of proposed developments.
- 4) To carry out appropriate assessments under the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994.
- 5) To add, delete, or amend the conditions to be attached to the grant of planning permission authorised by the Planning Committee or Council.
- 6) To determine the reasons for which planning permission would have been refused where this is relevant to appeals against the non-determination of applications.
- 7) On a without prejudice basis:
 - a) To suggest appropriate conditions to be imposed on planning permissions; and
 - b) To approve/make comments on the terms of Section 106 Agreements or unilateral undertakings in relation to appeals in the event that the Secretary of State or the appointed Inspector is minded to grant planning permission.

These additional clauses go to number 21 and cover very detailed matters. If any member is interested, the Society can provide him/her with a full copy of the whole document.

David Fearn

Licensing Regulations

Members will have seen a lot of public debate in the local press about the government's proposed extension to licensing hours. The police have, understandably, expressed serious concerns, as have the many people whose lives are already disrupted by the binge drinkers. A good source of information on all the issues related to this controversial subject can be found on the web site: www.licensingaid.org.uk.

Here can be found guidance for both the landlord who seeks to have more flexibility in opening hours and for those who wish to oppose applications.

SEERA and the South East Plan

Well we were "consulted" with SEERA's remarkably biased questionnaire and, you guessed it, they totally ignored the result anyway. Public response was overwhelmingly for the lowest annual housing figure for the South East of 25,500 (considered too high at that level by many). SEERA plumped not for 25,500 or even their second "choice" of 28,000 per annum. They have decreed that we shall accommodate 28,900 per annum. Surprised? Hardly.

This was the bad news from the SEERA consultation period. There was a crumb or two of good news, although it will not be to the benefit of Fleet and Church Crookham. The following is an extract from part of Hugh Sheppard's piece in the Hart & Rushmoor CPRE Newsletter:

“The last (H&R CPRE) Newsletter listed our main recommendations on the South East Plan, put forward in concert with the neighbouring North Hampshire Group and colleagues in West Surrey. First and foremost was that the ‘Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley sub-region’ should not extend ‘beyond the M3 to the South, with a green wedge maintained in rural Hart’.

CPRE had countered SEERA’s draconian proposals for this vast economic growth area by coordinating activities for the five counties involved. Locally we lobbied Parish, District and County Councils, MPs and Assembly representatives to ensure that significant countryside across the north of the county was removed from the sub-region and redesignated as part of the predominantly rural ‘Rest of Hampshire’.

At the eleventh hour, our campaign paid off; we achieved the only re-aligned boundary to the eight proposed sub-regional growth areas across the South East of England! OUT came TWENTY Hampshire villages south of the M3 from Crondall across to Dummer, including Ewshot, Odiham, Upton Grey, Herriard and Ellisfield. Farnham in Surrey came out too.”

“The next phase of the South East Plan is to deal with specific housing allocations at district level; with an opportunity for public consultation in the Autumn before the local authorities report back to SEERA in December. So keep your eyes and ears open for the new edition of ‘Hampshire Now!’ and the proposed consultation period between 5th September and 20th October 2005.

It could be many years before we know the real difference between being on one side of the boundary or the other, but if the Government insists on yet more development in the South East, then, quote: ‘That would have a major effect on whether you’re in or out of the Western Corridor’. And that’s not CPRE talking; it’s an ‘Alton Herald’ quote from County Cllr. Jonathan Glen, who successfully took our proposals to SEERA’s Regional Planning Committee. Thanks Jonathan for adopting CPRE’s point of view.”

The inclusion of Fleet and Church Crookham within the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley sub-region bodes ill for any hope of reducing the level of housing that is likely to be inflicted upon us. If you consult the table of estimated housing allocations in the last Newsletter, the Western Corridor was assessed at a level of 4,900 per year for 28,000 dwellings. This would rise to 5,060 for the 28,900 figures now decreed. We have many battles ahead to try to maintain a reasonable quality of life in our towns.

I have been interested to read how a few of our local councillors have turned this into a political debate, blaming the Labour government, and Mr. Prescott in particular, for the high level of housing that Hampshire is expected to accommodate. They have forgotten the balmy days of Margaret Thatcher and Nicholas Ridley who started the increase in housing allocations to the South East. I recall muttering to a colleague on the FCCS Committee at the time that someone must have convinced Mrs. Thatcher that the next Ice Age was imminent for her to be so keen to encourage everyone to migrate southwards. It was those housing allocations that led to Railroad Heath becoming Elvetham Heath. At the Inquiry into the Hart District Local Plan, in those not-so-far-off days, we were fighting a proposal by the MoD for 1,700 houses at QEB, over twice that number for a new settlement at Bramshill and 1,700 for Railroad Heath. We lost the greenfield site to the Elvetham Heath development. Considering what we are now facing, this was possibly the least worse of the options? It clearly shows, however, that the idea that we can protect one site by releasing another does not work in the longer term. As it has always been, it is the **overall allocation of housing** we must work hard to reduce if we are to protect **any site** in the long term.

Colin Gray

The Annual General Meeting 13th. April 2005.

There is not room in this Newsletter to include the full Minutes. I would be happy to send a copy to anyone who would like one. The following is a summary of the content and the names of officers and committee members elected at the AGM or co-opted for specific tasks.

The meeting started with a presentation by Michael Sparks of *Michael Sparks Associates* outlining the proposed redevelopment of the NGTE site in Pyestock. The site itself was largely screened by extensive woodland, but the redevelopment would involve a change of use from research and development to a facility for storage and haulage. Concerns had been expressed at the level of job creation, which will eventually, over several years, rise to about 2,150. However, The plans did not now envisage any increase in staffing over that which might result from the re-occupation of the existing buildings and facilities.

Dr. Fearn was pleased to be able to report that increasingly more notice was being taken of the Society and of its aims and objectives. The Society was being consulted on a much wider range of topics than before, which was very pleasing. The past year had again been dominated by the need to oppose a never-ending stream of unsuitable planning applications, most of which were for blocks of flats or so-called retirement homes to replace houses or bungalows set in spacious grounds. While such developments were suitable in some parts of the town, most of the proposals had been totally unacceptable.

Finally, before passing on to other sections of the agenda, Dr. Fearn mentioned the much closer relationship with the Residents' Association. Following earlier discussions, and recognising that we have a very limited number of volunteers to cover a wide range of topics, the two organisations were co-coordinating activities much more successfully than in the past. This was scheduled to be debated later under "AOB", but he felt that it was another positive change from 2004 and was certainly aiding the overall effectiveness of the two organisations.

Dr. Fearn gave the Treasurer's Report and said that the financial situation of the Society had continued to improve. This was mainly due to the generous help of a member in the free production of the Newsletter. Affiliation to the Civic Trust had been retained as the Society benefited from their advice and the range of literature available from them on relevant local and national issues. Affiliation with CPRE had been reinstated at the beginning of the present year, as their support and advice was valued on local planning issues.

A copy of the Accounts and Balance Sheet is available on the website: www.fccs.org.uk or is freely available on request from Stuart, David or Phill – please ask any committee member if you require a copy.

Members of the Committee and co-opted members then gave their reports.

Farnborough Airfield Consultative Committee and Airfield-related matters by Jenny Radley, local community health matters by Judith Sutherland, Planning matters by Phill Gower, Fleet Town Centre Improvements scheme and a Fleet Pond update by Colin Gray.

There was then the Election of Officers and Executive Committee. The following are the officers and Committee elected for 2005/06: Chairman: Dr. David Fearn, Secretary: Mr. Colin Gray, Treasurer: Mr. Stuart Bates. Members of the Executive Committee: Mrs. Alison Macallan, Mrs. Judith Sutherland and Mrs. Debbie Moss.

The following Society members were co-opted for specific tasks during 2004/05, but were not full Committee members, and would continue in these roles for 2005/06:

Cllr. Jenny Radley – Representative on Farnborough Airfield Consultative Committee.

Mr. Phill Gower – Planning advisor and website co-ordinator for the Society website.

Fleet & Church Crookham Health Check

Recognising the lack of consistency and infrastructure created by the almost random pattern of piecemeal development within Fleet & Church Crookham, the Society has agreed to take stewardship of the Fleet & Crookham Health Check. This community run program is intended to identify the existing values and future needs of Fleet & Church Crookham, as seen by the people that live and work in the towns. Once these findings are analysed, the information will be used to underpin and shape planning policy within the area. For further information see the webpage www.shapingfcc.org.uk or contact Andrew Macallan on 01252 668076

The Health Check program was instigated by the Fleet Town Centre Group www.fleet-tcg.org.uk. As the group's constitution was limited to Fleet only, it was decided that the Civic Society, which represents the interests of both towns would be a more natural host for the project. The Society continues to support the Town Centre Group, and has representatives that attend their committee meetings. The program requires input from the local community, and we therefore welcome your views which will help to shape the future of the towns.

Society seeks assistance to marshal junction for Christmas Festivities – Wednesday November 23rd 2005

In support of the Community and the Fleet Town Centre Group, the Society has agreed to marshal the Fleet Road/Church Road Junction for the afternoon and evening of the Fleet Festivities – Wednesday November 23rd. The duty is simply to assist with the safe passage of pedestrians across the Church Road junction for the duration of the road closure 3pm – 9pm. Last year's event was a fabulous success with an estimated 9000-10000 visitors to attractions and street market along the entire length of 'the High Street'. The event included the official switching on of the Christmas illuminations.

Volunteers last year were a little sparse, so if you can spare an hour or so to don a marshal's jacket, Phill and Colin will be very pleased to hear from you.

Phill Gower

Conservation Area Status

I recall that the first set of proposals for the Local Development Framework (LDF) included the suggestion that the density guidelines for the North Fleet Conservation Area, contained within the Hart District Local Plan, should be removed. I have not seen any LDF policy proposals so far that include this, and the adopted Plan stands as the guide for density limits. Despite this, a number of applications have come forward for properties within the NFCA that dramatically increase density beyond the HDLP policy. One for Roughwood was won by the developer on appeal. A more recent one for Victoria Hill Road was not contested by Hart DC Conservation Officer on grounds of the NFCA density limits.

I picked up a copy of Hart DC's new information leaflet on Conservation Areas recently. The North Fleet Conservation Area is not listed in this document apart from a brief mention that it is protected only in respect of changes to front boundaries; i.e. gates, fences, walls or hedges. The implication is that Hart has decided to abandon its policy on the density limits for NFCA, despite the fact that existing Council policy sets defined limits.

It is particularly worrying to read some of the comments made by appeal inspectors in cases whereby the appeal has been allowed. In one case, the appeal inspector stated that he had elected to put aside the local policy (limiting density) in favour of National Policy, PPG3, (encouraging higher density). In another case, on the boundary of the North Fleet Conservation Area the appeal inspector's view was that the immediate area within the conservation area had been sufficiently violated by flatted development that he felt the boundary was so indistinct that he allowed the appeal, despite the site falling within the protected zone.

This might not raise any strong objections from those areas of Fleet, like Pondtail for example, where several bungalows and houses have been (and several are currently) subject to conversion to blocks of flats, but it will significantly change the character of the Conservation Area and result in the loss of many trees.

Colin Gray

Local Community Health Matters

Blackwater Valley and Hart Primary Care Trust

Blackwater Valley and Hart Primary Care Trust ("BV&H PCT") is responsible for providing primary healthcare services in this area. Since last November it has been linked in a cluster with the North Hampshire Primary Care Trust ("NHPCT"), with the two PCTs holding joint Board meetings and working increasingly closely together. They are now considering a complete merger.

Both PCTs face considerable financial difficulties. BV&H PCT ended its last financial year (at the end of March 2005) with a deficit of £2.7 million, and NHPCT with a deficit of £900K. This means both PCTs will be penalised by a reduction in their funding in the current financial year. They have undertaken a recovery plan with the aim of saving approximately £20 million between the two PCTs this year. By the end of July, however, they were £3.2 million behind schedule in achieving this target. As the year goes on, there is obviously a risk that they will have to make substantial cuts in services to meet their year-end targets.

The PCT is unlikely to be able to increase the amount of funding it receives. Because this is a relatively prosperous area, the amount the PCT receives per head of population is only 78% of the national average, even though some services are used by a higher percentage of the population.

Fleet Hospital

BV&H PCT held a public consultation from January to March this year about its outline plans for Fleet Hospital, following rejection of the proposals put forward last year. The proposal is to use the 18 beds on Calthorpe Ward mainly for rehabilitation, with some of those beds available for GPs wishing to admit patients. Cox Ward would then be used to house a new consultant led day assessment unit for elderly patients and to extend the outpatient clinics currently provided at the hospital. The idea behind the day assessment unit is that patients would see the consultant and any other relevant healthcare professionals in the course of one visit, rather than having a number of appointments on different days. These plans form part of a larger strategy of aiming to care for patients in their own homes wherever possible, rather than in hospital.

The Society responded to the consultation, supporting the principle behind the proposals but expressing concern about the forecast increases in population in this area, the adequacy of home care facilities for patients, and the parking problems around the hospital.

The PCT resolved in April to proceed with its plans, as the public consultation had not revealed any significant opposition to its proposals. The day assessment unit has not yet been set up, as there is no space for it until certain alterations are made. PCT representatives are meeting architects to draw up plans. The PCT has identified space outside the old Cox Ward, which it proposes to use to provide an extra 10 parking spaces, whilst recognising that this is still insufficient.

Judith Sutherland

Website Update

We would like to remind members that the website has been up and running for some time. In addition to useful information, links and news, the site has a 'members only' area which is updated weekly with all planning application being processed by Hart Council. This area also includes the agenda for the Planning Advisory Group Meetings held twice per month. The page also details all the planning appeals currently in progress. This is the quickest (and cost effective) means of providing you with all of this information on one page. It is there exclusively for your benefit and information, so we hope you will use this free service. For further details please fill in the enquiry form by visiting www.fccs.org.uk or phone Phill on 01252 624506. As a special treat, the site also includes a photo of most of the committee members, together with their contact details!

Phill Gower

Fleet Pond update

We have made a modicum of progress. The contractor employed by the Defence Estates, Entec, has produced an interim report that has some interesting proposals for reducing the amount of eroded soils escaping the Training Lands and silting Fleet Pond. It arrived two days ago and I have yet to look through it in detail and make comments. As it is an interim it has no costs associated with the proposed measures. This is a cause for concern. It appears, at least on first glance, to be a much more modest set of measures than those in the Symonds Report of 2003, but the MoD abandoned that Report as there was *no* money available for *any* of the suggested measures. We can only hope that the campaign of letters to the Minister, combined with pressure exerted by our MP James Arbuthnot, will extract some funds this time around.

Meanwhile the dredging programme looks as though it might take a tentative step forward too. Rushmoor Borough Council has allocated some funds from their Environment Fund accumulated from TAG operations at Farnborough. We hope to be able to use a part of this fund to pay a contractor to draw up a programme and to prepare tenders to be sent out to dredging companies for quotations. The contract would include drawing up a full, costed programme of works to present to grant aid groups and companies like the Lottery Fund and Defra.

You might say that we now have two feet tentatively on the bottom rung of a very long ladder to restoring Fleet Pond to its former glory. We still have to gain approval from English Nature for a dredging operation of course but we can live in hope!

Colin Gray

Please help to reduce the Society's administration costs by paying your membership by standing order:

For existing annual members:

In order that the Society is best able to utilise funds to maximise activities, please help the Society to minimise the cost of membership renewal each year.

The Society would be greatly benefited if you could complete the standing order mandate so that your membership may be renewed automatically.

For New Members:

Please complete the standing order mandate below, and (if after 1st January 2006) enclose a cheque for £5 payable to the 'Fleet & Crookham Civic Society'

Thankyou for your subscription.

Name (please print)	
Address	
Email address (optional)	
Signature	
Date	
Donation (optional)	£ (Please enclose cheque, payable to Fleet & Crookham Civic Society)

Standing Order :

(You may cancel at any time by contacting your bank)

To the Manager :

Bank Name	
Address	

Please pay to the account of :

Fleet & Crookham Civic Society, account number 23013086 Sort Code : 72-00-05 at Girobank PLC, Bootle, Merseyside, G1R0AA,

the sum of £5.00 (five pounds), annually starting on 1st January 2006, until further notice.

Sort Code			:			:		
Account Number								

This bankers order cancels any existing bankers order to the credit of this account.

Signed	
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Please contact any of the Committee members if you are unable to join by standing order and therefore need to renew annually.

Please
Affix
Stamp

Debbie Moss
Membership Secretary
Fleet & Crookham Civic Society
9 Keynes Close
Church Crookham
Hampshire
GU52 8BZ
