



Fleet & Crookham Civic Society

Chairman : Dr. David Fearn, Fleet 615924
Secretary : Mr. Colin Gray, Fleet 616183 e-mail colin.gray5@virgin.net
Treasurer : Vacant position
Executive Committee : Lt. Col. Bob Osborne Fleet 621046
Membership Secretary : Mrs. Pat Constantine
Co-opted members: Phill Gower, Maddy Gayler, Fleet 624506

Newsletter Spring 2003

**The Annual General Meeting of Fleet & Crookham Civic Society
will be held on
Wednesday 9th. April, 2003, 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.***

Chairman's Introduction

I would like to commence the Introduction to this Newsletter by thanking those members who responded so generously to the appeal for additional funds, which accompanied the previous edition. Due to their great generosity, we moved from a position which was close to bankruptcy to one in which our future, at the present rate of expenditure, is assured for some time to come. Although the exact sum raised has yet to be determined, it is of the order of £540, which is truly magnificent; full details will appear in the Accounts to be presented at the AGM.

This outstanding response was aided by the subscriptions paid by several new members, who are welcomed later in this Introduction. They were recruited largely through the efforts of Phill Gower and Maddy Gayler, who have recently joined the Society and have been co-opted onto the Committee until the forthcoming AGM. They are very enthusiastic and are active in many different ways. They have added considerably to the ability of the Committee to respond to the many problems facing our community at the present time. We are extremely grateful to them for their work on behalf of the Society and hope that they will be joined by others in the near future.

These new members are very welcome indeed, since the greater the membership of the Society, the more we can influence the ways in which Fleet and Church Crookham develop in the future. They are (in alphabetical order), at the time of writing (early March 2003):

Ms G Barnes Mrs B Brown Mr and Mrs M Clark Mr D R Ede Mrs J Garrioch Ms M Gayler & Mr P Gower Mr G S Goodrich	Miss S Hicks Mr P V Humphreys Mr and Mrs P Martin Mr S Morris Mr J L Mullen Dr K Mundy Mr G Peake	Mr and Mrs R Wantock Ms J M Wiggins Mr J M Wood Mr. & Mrs. J. Radley Mr and Mrs R Rowley
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In respect of Development Control issues, it is good to be able to report the successful outcome of a campaign waged by the Society, even if this represents only a temporary reprieve. I am therefore very pleased to confirm that the appeal against the Council's refusal to allow re-development of 50-52 Gally Hill Road, Church Crookham, was rejected by the Inspector. As some members will know, the developer in question proposed to demolish these houses and replace them with two large blocks of flats, totalling 14 dwellings. We wrote several letters opposing this development, for a variety of reasons, and also spoke extensively at the Appeal. Our main reason for objecting was the overpowering impact that these blocks would have had on the neighbourhood; they would have been totally out of keeping with the local urban environment. The Inspector agreed with this assessment and this was the main reason given for rejecting the appeal. This result confirms that it is possible to influence the way in which official decisions are made.

As a response to a similar planning application to replace 40-42 Kings Road with blocks of flats, which is now at the appeal stage of the planning procedure, the Committee decided to produce a set of Planning Guidance Notes to assist local residents who wish to oppose such proposals. These Notes cover the multiple steps by which planning applications are dealt with by the local Council and also describe the appeals procedure. They then outline the different mechanisms, which permit affected residents to comment on such applications and suggest planning reasons that may be used in opposing unreasonable development plans. These Notes are available via any member of the Committee.

Finally, although the hard work of the Committee has been rewarded with recent successes, I must emphasise that this has, as always, required much time and effort. It is clear that we could achieve much more if this available effort was not spread so thinly; for example, it would be very helpful if representatives of the Society could attend many more Council meetings. So, if any member would be prepared to assist in this or another way, even if only for a few evenings per year, please contact any member of the Committee. All contributions will greatly assist in our efforts to ensure that Fleet and Church Crookham remain pleasant places in which to live.

David Fearn

The Aims and Objectives of the Society

As we now have a very welcome influx of new members, it has been suggested that an account be given in this Newsletter of the aims, objectives and role of the Society. In doing this, it may also be helpful to differentiate these from the equivalent features of other organisations with which we are closely associated.

As will be apparent from any of our past Newsletters, we are, of necessity, primarily concerned with the development process and the way in which this is affecting the overall environment of our urban area and, as a consequence, the quality of life of the residents. We consider these two factors to be of paramount importance and do not accept that they should be sacrificed to enable developers, or anyone else, to make large profits. As a result, we support environmentally

“friendly” proposals and strongly oppose those, which will adversely affect either the environment or the quality of life, or both. The Committee of the Society therefore studies as many proposals as possible and comments upon them according to their merits, as judged from these perspectives.

Since development and other proposals are submitted for consideration within a framework of National, Area, County and Local Plans, we are also heavily involved in the procedures leading to the formulation of these documents. Although the influence that we exert is less than desirable, the Committee expends a great deal of effort in commenting upon these various Plans and, on occasion, in suggesting alternative approaches. As in the case of specific planning applications, the aim is always to maintain, and enhance where possible, the local environment and the quality of life of residents.

In our work, we frequently collaborate very closely with the Fleet and Church Crookham Residents’ Association, which has very similar objectives. If there is a significant difference between our two organisations, it is perhaps in emphasis only. The Residents’ Association is, naturally, very concerned with the way in which the County Council and Hart DC spend our money, and wish to ensure, as far as is possible, that this is done in a fully cost-effective manner. While the Civic Society endorses such principles, this has a slightly lower priority in our deliberations than the environment and the quality of life. While amalgamation of the two organisations has often been suggested, these differences are important and fully valid, so we have, to date, concluded that we should remain separate, but collaborate very closely where appropriate.

We are affiliated to the Civic Trust, which is the “umbrella” national body co-ordinating the activities of civic societies and similar organisations. It provides the general framework within which we operate, together with guidance and advice where required. Through this body, we are sometimes consulted on important issues and can therefore make our views known at national level. The Trust also provides copious literature on matters of relevance to the Society and organises frequent meetings and symposia on current topics of interest.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) is another organisation with which we have close ties. In this case, there are no differences in aims and objectives, although the CPRE is, like the Civic Trust, a national body, which has, on occasion, the “ear of Government”. Apart from this major difference in scope, we differ in that our Society is concerned primarily with the urban area of Fleet and Church Crookham, whereas the CPRE concentrates mainly on the countryside. However, we overlap when considering many matters, such as transport, the location of housing and industry, the development of greenfield sites, the importance of strategic and local gaps in planning, and so on. As a result, we collaborate very closely with the local branches of the CPRE.

David Fearn

Summary of Recent Activities

Somewhat unusually, we had some very helpful feedback from members following last Autumn’s Newsletter. One comment concerned our normal practice of providing fairly comprehensive coverage of selected issues, while perhaps neglecting others. In response to this, we have decided to introduce a summary, in diary form, of all the activities in which the Society has been involved, since the publication of the last Newsletter. We hope that this will keep members informed in a better way than hitherto. It should be noted in passing that this account will not include routine events, such as attending Development Control Committee, Policy

Review Panels or Planning Advisory Group meetings, unless they contained some special feature or decision.

Sept to Nov 2002; Council Finances

The Society supported, by sending several letter to the local MP and Government Ministers, the opposition by Hart DC to the proposal to *extract* funds from the Council, rather than provide the grants, which are received by nearly all local authorities in the UK. Responses from the MP, Mr Arbuthnot, were very supportive,

24 to 29 Sept; Redfields Garden Centre Appeal

This appeal was conducted by a DoE Inspector into the refusal by Hart DC to allow Redfields Garden Centre to be re-located to Bowling alley, near Crondall. At the start of the appeal, the Society spoke in support of the Council and local opposition to this move (which would permit re-development of the present site), following earlier extensive correspondence with both the Council and the Planning Inspectorate, in which it was suggested most emphatically that this planning application should be rejected.

17 Oct 2002; Hart Voluntary Action Group

Officers of the Society attended this day-long meeting, which concentrated on the effects on the voluntary sector of the recent Human Rights legislation. A recurring theme in discussion was the difficulty being experienced by most organisations in recruiting volunteers.

30 Oct 2002; 40-42 Kings Road

The Society opposed in writing the application to re-develop 40-42 Kings Road by building 12 flats and two semi-detached houses. The Council later refused this application, and it is now the subject of an appeal.

6 Nov 2002; Redfields Garden Centre Appeal

This appeal, started in September, was concluded.

25 Nov 2002; "Right to Roam" Legislation

The Society responded to an invitation from the Countryside Agency to comment on the draft maps that they have issued showing the areas of countryside covered by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000. We suggested that the whole of Tweseldown Racecourse should be included, plus most of the Army Training areas to the east of Fleet and Church Crookham.

2 Dec 2002; Housing Density

According to a new directive from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, all new developments with an area of greater than 1 hectare should have a density of more than 30 dwellings per hectare. The local authority must notify to the appropriate Government Department all cases, which contravene this ruling.

7 Dec 2002; Tree Felling in Support of Civil Use of Farnborough Airfield and Fleet Pond Situation

The further extensive felling of trees to the south of the area cleared previously caused use to write again to the Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) about this and the devastating effect the earlier clearance has had on Fleet Pond. This resulted in an extensive correspondence, which was copied, to TAG Aviation (the Airfield operators), the Fleet News, the MoD Defence Estates organisation, and the local MP. Despite strong support from Mr. Arbuthnot, no organisation will accept responsibility for the potential destruction of Fleet Pond, and no satisfactory explanation has been forthcoming as to why hundreds of additional trees were felled.

Dec 2002/Jan 2003: Airfield Consultative Committee

Several complaints were made to TAG, then to Rushmoor Council, about the lack of representation by residents of Fleet and Church Crookham on the Airfield Consultative Committee, which deals with noise problems, environmental issues, and so on. These repeated complaints have been ignored in effect, although the Society was informed on 2 Jan 2003 that Fleet's interests are covered adequately by the appointment of a representative from Crondall Parish Council.

10 Dec 2002: Redfields Planning Application

Following the appeal, which was concluded on 6 November 2002, the application made by the Redfields Garden Centre to move to a new greenfield site near Crondall was rejected by the DoE Inspector concerned. This validated the great amount of work undertaken by the local opposition group, BRAG, and by the Society.

11 Dec 2002: Hitches Lane

The second application by Berkeley Homes to build on the greenfield site to the west of Hitches Lane was rejected by Hart DC. The appeal concerning the first planning application was rejected by the DoE Inspector in August 2002, so the reason for persisting with the second was unclear. It was rejected mainly on grounds of prematurity, which means it could return at a later date.

26 Dec 2002: Land Supply

It was discovered that the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) had instructed Hart DC, and other councils, to release "reserve" building land for immediate development – despite the fact that these are greenfield sites, and that their development must not occur (according to Mr Prescott, who is ultimately responsible for GOSE) until all brownfield land has been used!!

3 January 2003: Web site

A first draft of a structure for the proposed Society website was passed to committee members for comment.

8 Jan 2003: BT Funding

The Society applied for a grant from BT to purchase new computer equipment and free access to the Internet.

14 Jan 2003: 50-52 Gally Hill Road

The appeal was conducted by a DoE Inspector into the refusal by Hart DC to allow 14 flats to be built on the site of 50-52 Gally Hill Road, Church Crookham. The Society spoke at length in support of the Council, following earlier correspondence to both the Council and The Planning Inspectorate opposing this planning application.

19 Jan 2003: Town Centre Improvements

Although not in favour of the traffic management strategy included in the County Council's plans for improvements to Fleet town centre, the Society recommended that the scheme be implemented immediately to avoid further waste of time and possible loss of funds to other projects. However, it was also recommended by the Society that the outcome be thoroughly reviewed after, say, one year of operation and that modifications be put in hand at that time to remedy any deficiencies.

20 Jan 2003: Planning Advisory Group (PAG) Restrictions

A formal complaint was made about an attempt within the Council to silence members of the Hart DC Development Control Committee who sit on PAG.

23 Jan 2003; Gally Hill Road Bridge

The Society suggested that traffic lights be installed at the Gally Hill Road Bridge over the Basingstoke Canal to aid traffic flow and improve safety.

30 Jan 2003; 50-52 Gally Hill Road

The Inspector's decision to reject the appeal concerning 50-52 Gally Hill Road was announced. This appeal was made by the developer against the decision by Hart DC to refuse permission to build 14 flats on this site.

30 Jan 2003; Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) site

Members of the Society's Committee met with the potential developer of the QEB site and planning officials of Hart DC to discuss in detail the outline development plans. Bearing in mind that re-development of this site is enshrined in the Hart District Local Plan and cannot be avoided, the existing plans are about as good as is possible – apart from the total number of houses proposed, which exceeds the capacity of the local infrastructure.

28 Jan. 2003; Forest of Eversley Workshop.

The Society was consulted on the future strategy for the Forest, the boundaries of which now encompass the land to the west of Fleet and include Fleet Pond.

8 Feb 2003; Hitches Lane and Dilly Lane

The Society complained to the Council about the proposal to prepare development briefs for the reserve sites at Hitches Lane and Dilly Lane. These are *not* needed until the current land supply for development is exhausted.

Early Feb 2003; Hitches Lane

Berkeley Homes distributed a Development Brief for the Hitches Lane site, which implied that the associated work had been done in collaboration with Hart DC. This was not so – the document was written and produced entirely by the developer – and this caused a great deal of annoyance in both the Council and the opposition groups, mainly the Society and FEEDBAC, the local opposition group.

12 Feb 2003; 87 Aldershot Road, Church Crookham

Hart DC's Development Control Committee rejected an application to build 14 flats on the site of 87 Aldershot Road, Church Crookham. This application was opposed earlier in writing by the Society. An appeal by the developer against non-determination of an identical application is to be held on 8 April 2003.

Feb 2003; Planning Guidance Notes

After several iterations, a set of Planning Guidance Notes was completed for issue to anyone interested in opposing (or supporting) a planning application in their locality. They are available from any member of the Committee.

15 and 24 Feb 2003; Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) site

The Society commented in detail (in two letters) concerning the proposed re-development of the QEB site, concentrating on features covered by the Draft Site Development Brief. The main conclusion of the society's observations was that far too many houses are planned for the very limited capacity of the local infrastructure – mainly roads, schools, medical services and drainage.

26 Feb 2003; Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) site

The officers and members of the Society participated extensively in a public meeting called by concerned local residents to discuss the re-development of the QEB site. The Society's Secretary produced copious notes of this meeting.

4 March 2003; Planning Advisory Group (PAG) Rules

New rules were introduced which seriously reduce the amount of public participation possible. The Society asked formally for these to be relaxed on 12 March 2003.

11 March 2003; Rose Farm Dairy

The appeal by the developer into the non-determination of his application to develop the Rose Farm Dairy site was held. The Society was basically in favour of this town centre development, assuming that certain modifications to the plans could be achieved. It is not understood why the Council did not negotiate with the developer to achieve a satisfactory compromise.

Flats – and More Flats

Members will note from the diary entries above that many developers are submitting planning applications to Hart DC to replace ordinary houses and bungalows with large blocks of flats (or apartments!!). This is to take advantage of recent rulings by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister that new developments must exceed 30 dwellings per hectare. However, it is noted that nearly all of these applications stop short of the number beyond which they must provide “affordable” accommodation – this is 15, and most applications are for 12 to 14.

The Society sees no problem in the construction of such blocks of flats, provided that they are suitably located amongst other similar buildings. Indeed, the Committee has supported such ventures on various occasions in the past. However, such large blocks are totally out of keeping with the local environment when they are to be placed in normal residential streets, so we have been obliged to oppose nearly all recent applications of this kind (e.g. 40-42 Kings Road, 87 Aldershot Road, Church Crookham, 1 Aldershot Road, Fleet, 50-52 Gally Hill Road, and so on). We are pleased to record that the Council's Development Control Committee has usually agreed with our view, and that the DoE's Inspector also agreed with us in the case of 87 Aldershot Road. Other appeals are pending, so it will be interesting to see if they are influenced by the latter ruling.

In view of the new regulations concerning density, the main valid objection to such developments is now the appearance of the proposals, judged from the perspective of the existing street scene. We have pointed out on numerous occasions that high density does not require the use of designs, which are unsympathetic to their surroundings. Good design is to be found in Fleet – a notable example is the estate of small houses in Old School Close (site of the Albert Street School) in the middle of the town. If developers would adopt similar principles they could achieve the densities required without constructing ugly and overpowering blocks, which often resemble prisons.

David Fearn

The Hitches Lane Saga

As members will know from previous Newsletters, land to the west of Hitches Lane has been included in the new Local Plan as a “reserve” development site, to be used if the available land supply dictated by Government via the County Council falls below certain limits. As a result of the Inquiry into the Local Plan, this designation was applied to this land, despite the fact that it is

greenfield in character and is in the important gap between Fleet and the villages to the west. Since the Inspector at the Inquiry insisted that it be included, the matter was effectively closed; he considered that it could accept 600 houses.

Following this decision, Berkeley Homes applied to commence building on this site, trying to “sweeten” the application by suggesting the provision of various sporting and recreational facilities on other nearby land. However, this was rejected by the Council as being premature. At the subsequent appeal, to which the Society gave written and verbal evidence, the Inspector agreed with the Council and thus the appeal was lost. Much of the credit for this success must go to the local group, Feedbac, which was formed to oppose these development plans.

The latest strategy adopted by the developer is to issue a Development Brief for this land, implying that it has the approval of the Council. This has caused intense annoyance amongst Council staff and individual councillors, who deny any connection with the production of this document. However, the Community and Environment Review Panel of the Council did vote, on 21 January 2003, to commence production of a Development Brief for this land, which may have caused Berkeley Homes to judge that they could proceed; however, this decision had not been endorsed by the full Council at the time of writing. Berkeley Homes will have received a further incentive from the recent announcement by the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) that “reserve” building land should be released for immediate development, even if the sites in question are in the greenfield category.

There is thus considerable pressure for development of this land (all with the objective of making large profits). Whether and when it will happen is open to doubt at the moment, but one thing would seem to be certain – the release of this land will precipitate further applications for the development of additional land in the gap separating Fleet from Crookham Village, Dogmersfield and Winchfield. An unfortunate precedent will have been set. *David Fearn*

Editor’s update:

A recent report from Hampshire County Council declares that Hampshire is meeting all its housing requirement within the current planning period and there is no need to release reserve sites. Although Hart district is lagging slightly behind (meeting 88% of its individual target) the reserve sites apply to all of Hampshire, not the districts. So Hitches Lane cannot be released. At least we hope not. A recent declaration by the office of the Deputy Prime Minister saying that all areas in the South East must look to release reserves immediately, as well as going against all housing policies so far, spells threats to several areas in Hampshire, not least Hitches Lane.

A recent development in the Hitches Lane saga is a report to Hart Council by Berkeley Homes referring to the redevelopment of Queen Elizabeth Barracks. Berkeley Homes claims that there are so many constraints on the redevelopment of the Barracks site that it cannot possibly come forward for development in the current planning period. The conclusion made is that the Hitches Lane site must be released in order that Hart would meet its requirement.

This process by which one developer challenges the ability of another to deliver in order to achieve their own ends is not new. If Hart were to accept such a claim it would inevitably lead to the development of *both* sites. QEB is designated for 550 dwellings in 1996 to 2006. This cannot be changed, even if Hitches Lane was to go ahead.

There is a great temptation for local people affected by one of these sites to favour the other as a way of relieving the impact on their personal lives. This is a totally wrong approach. These development threats affect us all and we can only fight effectively if we all fight together.

Central government imposes the overall housing figures that lead to these unacceptable levels of housing development; it is the housing policies we need to fight to change. *Colin Gray*

Development Brief for Queen Elizabeth Barracks and Wakeford's Copse

The Committee have considered the initial outline proposals for the redevelopment of the QE Barracks site. In general, much as we would have preferred the site to revert to parkland and playing fields, bearing in mind that this is partially a brownfield site, that its redevelopment is included in the recently adopted Local Plan and that Hart needs to provide a considerable area of land for new housing, **it must be accepted that this site will be developed.** The outline concept, presented in the Development Brief, (which in this case, unlike those for Dilly & Hitches Lane, is co-sponsored by HDC planners), appears to be reasonable. Certainly, it could be very much worse and has met some of our major objections that were put forward during consideration of the Draft Local Plan.

Our detailed comments, which have been made to Hart planners, are as follows:

1. Before accepting the concept, as currently proposed, we must emphasise that **we are assuming that the development will not extend, now or in the future, beyond the boundary of the brownfield parts of the overall site**, apart from the very minor changes already noted in the Development Brief. **This must be guaranteed by watertight legal agreements.**
2. The varied nature of the scheme, together with its emphasis on the retention of local character, promises that the result could be very acceptable, insofar as the quality of life of the new residents is concerned. However, no matter how the scheme might be improved, there is no doubt whatsoever that the **quality of life of the existing residents of Church Crookham will be seriously degraded as a result of this development.** This is mainly due to the inevitable increase in traffic in the locality and to the greater pressure on the already overstretched infrastructure. These factors lead us to suggest that **the number of houses proposed should be reduced to 700.**
3. The potential increase in traffic along all local roads and through the nearby villages is likely to cause serious rush hour and school delivery and collection problems. This will be particularly so at the various "pinch points". These routes, designed for Victorian levels of traffic, are incapable of major improvement and this burden on already congested roads throughout Fleet is a very cogent reason for a substantial reduction in the number of housing units. **Early detailed discussions must take place with Hampshire Highways Authority to investigate ways of further ameliorating these conditions.**
4. The mixture of housing types is commendable, as is the proposed layout, with more densely populated areas towards the centre of the site. The level of "affordable accommodation" is also welcome, since this is where most provision is required, both nationally and locally. However, despite our approval of the layout, we do not favour the location of the larger and taller blocks on relatively high ground, since they will be too prominent. We have suggested that **they be reduced in height and bulk, or moved to lower ground.**
5. We approve of the retention of lines of trees to denote the various aspects and character of the proposed building types. The retention of woodlands, particularly those areas designated *SINCs, is strongly supported. Similarly, every effort must be made to retain as many as possible of the individual trees not located in these linear groups and the actual woodland. We also strongly approve of the retention and renovation of the Memorial Orchard.
6. The proposed acquisition of additional recreational land to the south and west of the site, to draw walkers away from areas, which require environmental protection, is to be commended. However, some additional measures might be needed, as the development

- progresses, to deter walkers with dogs from disturbing the *pSPA's .
7. We have always stressed the urgent need to address the serious deficit of formal sporting and recreational facilities in Hart. We were in the forefront of those opposed to the development of the Peter Driver Sports Ground for industrial/commercial purposes. In these contributions, we have emphasised that the provision of recreational space needs to be close to any new development to minimise travelling requirements. The retention of the existing sports fields at the Gurkha Barracks for their original purpose offers an ideal opportunity to redress some of these problems. **Under no circumstances should this land be used other than for recreational purposes.**
 8. **The recreational land and woodland areas to the north and north east of the site must be protected by covenant or other legally binding agreement to ensure that the land cannot be the subject of change of use in the future to any commercial or housing development; this precludes designation as reserve sites.** Similarly, any land acquired by lease or purchase to the south and west of the site, in order to provide footpaths and other recreational facilities, must be protected from all future development by covenant or some other legally binding agreement. The areas devoted to formal sporting facilities must also be protected in this way. As one Council cannot make agreements that will necessarily be binding on subsequent Councils, perhaps of a differing political composition, we insist that a *third party* be included in such agreements to ensure that they are honoured in the future. This should be a nationally recognised body: possibly suitable examples are the CPRE, the Civic Trust and English Nature.
 9. **Subject to the agreement of the present local residents, an offer by the developer to replace the existing Memorial hall(s) with aesthetically better and possibly slightly resited versions might be considered** to facilitate access to the site. However, it is vital that without this proviso the development must not interfere with the Crookham Memorial Halls and the associated car park and open ground. (It must be recognised that this is a War Memorial that belongs to the residents of Church Crookham, and that it cannot be sacrificed to this new development without adequate, acceptable and rededicated replacement). If necessary, access to/from this part of the site may have to be inefficient and slow and the residents of the new estate may have to accept the resulting delays.
 10. A related matter is that, in considering possible new access to the site in the vicinity of the Memorial Halls, note must be taken of the potential for an increased risk of vandalism. It might be necessary to consider a CCTV provision for the Halls; the cost of this should fall upon the developer and not on the local community.
 11. For some years we have expressed concern that the growth in population in and around Fleet has put excessive pressure on the provision of places at the two secondary schools. As a consequence, we believe that **another secondary school could be more appropriate** than a primary school. Many of the proposed houses on the site are more likely to be purchased by families seeking a larger home because their children have grown and will therefore require a move to secondary education. We will be putting this suggestion to the Hampshire County Council Education Authority. If it is decided that this site is not appropriate for such a school, another location should be found, possibly on Elvetham Heath.
 12. We especially welcome the intention to provide medical facilities on this site. This was a serious omission with the development of Elvetham Heath. We were correct in our predictions, in that the congestion generated in Church Road near Fleet Hospital and the increase in waiting times to see a doctor in the town has already shown up the lack of foresight. The same mistake must not be made with this new development at the QE barracks site.

The next part of the process will be the publishing of the Outline Plan for comment. Subject to the detail, we propose that our members should then write to the Hart planning Department stating their views, along the lines outlined above.

Bob Osborne

Editor's Note: Hart Council adopted the Hart District Local Plan, covering the planning period 1996-2006, in December 2002. In this the number of houses assigned to QE Barracks and Wakeford's Copse is 550. It is the intention of the Council to add 600 dwellings to the site for the next planning period 2006-2011 to make up the total to 1,150. The additional 600 was recommended by the Planning Inspector at the Inquiry into the Local Plan and this accounts for the 1,150 sought by Bryant Homes. If we are to reduce the number of dwellings to be built on this site we thus have first to contest the Outline Planning application that Bryant Homes will soon be submitting (possibly in May or June) and follow this by contesting the further Local Plan allocation that will be sought by Hart Council later this year. Vigilance is the word!

Minimum wage?

Despite a barrage of new regulation and policy recently introduced at central office, including the highly controversial minimum wage requirements, the Society would like to point out that it no plans to introduce a 'minimum age' policy for membership of the society! In fact the Society is actively encouraging a wider range of age membership to forward the aims of the Society.

The increasing demands relating to housing shortage and the ever escalating willingness to compromise standards at all levels of government, means that the Society will be increasingly reliant upon the widest possible range of active membership.

Unfortunately the area has a high population of commuter residents falling within the younger age groups and it appears that most in this category are too busy with their working lives to become involved with the society.

Partially as a result of a spate of 'ambitious' planning applications, which continue to threaten our neighbourhood, the Society are pleased to report that several young members have been gained, and that a continued effort is planned to further increase membership in this age range.

Whilst avoiding a danger of becoming too 'high tech' the society plans to release a web site within the foreseeable future for those with computer access, possibly leading to the option of providing newsletters in glorious Technicolor for those members who prefer.

Watch this space!

Phill Gower
New member (age 35½!)

Fleet Town Centre

As Secretary to FCCS I represent them on the Fleet Town Centre Group (the group has dropped the word "Management" from their title for reasons given below). For 14 months the Group has been in intense negotiation with Hart Council, Hampshire County Highways and consultants W. S. Atkins over the proposed improvements to Fleet town centre.

The compromise solution increases the number of spaces for disabled drivers and allocates two taxi spaces on Fleet Road. The number of free, short-term parking spaces has been reduced but not removed altogether as the original plan had proposed. The unloading bays provided in order to take lorries and vans off the thoroughfare will be made available for free, short term parking at

times of day to be agreed. Additional short term paid car parking will be available in Victoria Road car park. New pedestrian access points will be provided into the two main car parks. Vehicular access to Victoria Road car park will be from both Victoria Road (in only) and Reading Road North (in and out). An improved service road for delivery vehicles will be provided to the rear of the shops backing onto Victoria Road car park. Vehicular access to Church Road car park will be available from Branksomewood Road in addition to the existing access from Church Road. This measure will also provide rear access to the shops for service and delivery vehicles to reduce the need to park on Fleet Road.

Raised platforms will be built into Fleet Road at the junctions with Church Road, Branksomewood Road and Victoria Road. These have dual purpose: to slow traffic at off-peak times along Fleet Road (congestion restricts speed at peaks) and to provide a one-level crossing points for wheelchairs and child-carriers. All pavements and road surfaces will be upgraded, a long-awaited improvement to the town centre.

The old Inner Relief Road idea linking Reading Road North through to Church Road has finally been dropped. We welcome this, as it would have cut off most of North Fleet from the rest of the town and created further traffic problems without having any real benefits for Fleet Road.

FCCS Committee favoured the introduction of a one-way system but the Highways authority has said that they have been unable to find a one-way option that would be feasible to operate. We still have our doubts about this and experience of the operation of the new plan might eventually lead to a reassessment of this option.

No one can ever reach a solution that is going to please everybody nor one that will solve all of Fleet's problems. Personally I believe the current proposal has the merit of providing an opportunity to improve the town centre for all users – the regular shoppers, retail and business people and visitors. The proposal will make Fleet a much more attractive and safe place in which to work and shop; it will make good the appalling condition of both pavements and road surfaces; and it will improve access to the car parks for all.

In co-operation with Hart Council, the Town Centre Group has appointed a Town Centre Manager. It was a close contest with six excellent candidates. The final choice was Sue Collen who was Membership & Marketing Officer with N.E. Hampshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry before taking up the post of Business Manager with Lloyds TSB Bank. Sue lives in Glen Road and has a love of Fleet and its people. Sue will have a wide remit; taking control of Fleet Gala and the Christmas lights as well as the tremendous task of “selling Fleet town centre” as an excellent place in which to work, shop and relax. Her experience with NEHCC will help her develop a good rapport with local retail and business owners and managers towards making a visit to Fleet an enjoyable experience. She will work with Fleet Town Centre Group as an initial source of voluntary help (hence the decision to drop Management from the title – this is now Sue's job!). We wish Sue luck in her new role. **Colin Gray**

Fleet Town Centre Group will soon have its own website. In the meantime details of the Group can be found on www.fleethants.com and www.fleethampshire.co.uk.

Do you have a housing development application in your street?

From time to time FCCS is contacted by residents who are concerned at a planning application submitted by a neighbouring property owner to redevelop their land. We have drawn up a

guidance leaflet that attempts to explain the procedure, how you can raise concerns or objections and what happens as the various stages of the planning process as an application is considered.

With announcements by central government and, in particular, the Deputy Prime Minister, housing developments are likely to increase in density. Figures quoted range from a “minimum of 30 per hectare” to targets for 50 per ha. The Hart Local Plan recommends 40 per ha in built settlements and lower in rural areas. This has already led some speculative builders to offer options to buy to householders in order to demolish houses and erect blocks of flats. There are examples in Aldershot Road, Church Crookham, Kings Road, Clarence Road and Albert Street, Fleet. The character of our towns is changing and we need to control this spread of flatted developments to constrain density increases to an acceptable level.

The leaflet cannot guarantee a successful objection, but it should help you to understand the process and to make a reasonable case. This is free to members and a copy can be obtained from the Secretary by post or e-mail on request.

Colin Gray

Fleet Pond – latest news on the silt problem

At the last A.G.M. I gave members an illustrated talk on Fleet Pond and included the difficulties that the activities on Ministry of Defence lands have created in the level of silt deposited in the lake. The Environment Agency has arranged for a meeting to be held between themselves, English Nature, Hart Council, the Defence Land Agency and Fleet Pond Society to discuss solutions and options, both for reducing the amount of silt that enters the lake and for the removal of the existing silt deposits. This is an encouraging step forward and I will report further in our next newsletter.

Colin Gray



Fleet & Crookham Civic Society started life in 1961 as the Fleet & Crookham Amenity Society. It was the only group within the two towns primarily concerned with the provision of amenity for local people. It was upon the affiliation with the Civic Trust that the name was changed to Fleet & Crookham Civic Society. The Civic Trust is a nation-wide movement of over 1,000 organisations working to combat ugliness and to preserve that which is worthy of protection. This does not just apply to buildings and architecture but to the overall quality of peoples’ environment.

It was inevitable that the Society should become deeply involved in the planning process. Too often the planning process gives only brief consideration to the quality of life of the residents of an area, seeking as it does to meet overall planning policies set by a central government far removed from the local scene. In recent years the planning process has come to dominate our work to the detriment of any direct action to improve the provision of public amenity. We no longer have the resources in capital or people to organise activities or take initiative with schemes to improve the environment.

Other issues also tend to take low priority when they deserve more attention. Two good

examples are:

1) The “Brakes Original Estate Offices” in Kings Road. Brakes was responsible for the parcelling and sale of building plots throughout much of the eastern and southern parts of Fleet. Ted Roe, in his excellent book “Old Fleet & Crookham” mentions that Mr. Henry Jesty Brake paid £2,210 for “this large stretch of unbroken heathland”. Ted records that they set the layout and design of much of this side of the town on “the American system” – a grid pattern of roads bisecting at right-angles. The old offices are now boarded up and the future of this historic building (from Fleet’s point of view) is very uncertain. From the point of view of listing of this building, it is not old, dating from the first decade of the 20th. Century, but its importance in the development of Fleet is unquestionable.

2) The Tweseldown Race Course building is another historic landmark. An attractive, early 20th. Century building this is now in very poor internal condition and, like the Estate Office, its future is very uncertain. Its ownership is uncertain. We believe it belongs to the Ministry of Defence, as they own the land on which it stands. However we do not know if the MoD or the racecourse tenant has the responsibility for maintaining the building or what its future might be.

If any member has more information on these buildings, or their ownership and/or if anyone would like to take on a project to compile data on them with a view to ensuring they are preserved, we would like to hear from you. Fleet & District Local History Society would, I am sure, be happy to help.

Colin Gray

Fleet & Crookham Civic Society always welcomes new members. Membership of our Society gives local people a voice on local issues including housing, amenity provision, roads, leisure and community services.

Numbers count

When talking or negotiating with council members or officers, a strong membership counts for a lot in trying to influence their planning and decision making. Please encourage your friends and neighbours to join us.

Letters count.....

Always put your comments or objections on local authority policies and activities in writing. Letters always make more impact. It shows that you are prepared to sit down and put some thought into your comments.

Together we can make a difference.

Contributions to your Newsletter are always welcomed. The Newsletter is issued twice each year, usually in March and September, other important matters permitting. If you would like to include an article, please check preparation deadlines with the Secretary.

Please send letters or articles to the Secretary in good time.

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 enclose a cheque for £5 payable to the 'Fleet & Crookham Civic Society'

Thankyou for your subscription.

BANKERS ORDER

To the Manager,
(name of bank/building society)
(address of bank/building society)
.....
..... Postcode.....

Please pay to the account of Fleet & Crookham Civic Society, account number 23013086 at Girobank PLC, Bootle, Merseyside, G1R 0AA, Sort Code 72-00-05, the sum of £ 5.00 (five pounds) on the 1st January each year until further notice.

Please debit my account number.

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

Signed.

Member's Name

Member's Address
.....
.....Postcode.....

Third fold and tuck second fold in

Please
Affix
Stamp

Membership Secretary,
Fleet & Crookham Civic Society,
c/o 14, Kenilworth Road,
Fleet, Hampshire,
GU51 3DA

Second fold

First fold
