

Summary of Planning Activity in 2018

by Len Amos, Chairman of Planning Group

In the absence of the newsletters that provided regular updates, I thought it would be useful to give a summary of what has happened over the past year.

We continue our planning activities via email, since nobody has requested a meeting. However, where I felt it necessary, I have met with planning officers at RBC for clarification and additional information.

Some of the proposals we have considered over the past year are listed below:

Hawley Park Farm was sold on, with proposals for an additional 126 homes. The Farnborough Society objected on the grounds of traffic volume, inadequate medical services and danger associated with the Hawley Lane entrance point.

Proposals for a supported retirement village at La Fosse House on the Farnborough Hill estate were refused by the Development Management Committee and the plan was abandoned. It was regrettable because a development of this kind would have filled an important strategic housing need in Rushmoor.

Barbara Hurst put forward a proposal for RBC for a Green Space Strategy and this is now under development. She ~~was~~ has also secured agreement for Conservation Assessments to be conducted, something that The Farnborough Society could assist with.

The Farnborough Society opposed plans for an extension to Kingsmead, from the former Debenham's store, on the grounds of insufficient parking. To date, work has not commenced, and RBC will exercise its 'step-in rights' if St Modwen fail to begin work within the time limit set by conditions.

A proposal for a development comprising entirely studio flats and one-bedroom flats at The Crescent, in Southwood, was refused by the DMC; The Farnborough Society had objected on the grounds of over-development of the site, traffic and incompatibility with planning policy. It is worth noting that an earlier application (by the same developer) was granted, for much lower-density, mixed, housing.

The Ham & Blackbird site was sold on several times before work commenced. Problems with a sub-contractor brought things to a halt for many months but work has now resumed.

A retirement development in Victoria Road was initially turned down by the DMC but subsequently approved following significant ~~alteration~~ alteration.

After changing hands a number of times, development began at Thomson House according to the original plans for a total of 145 units.

Plans to redevelop 117 Farnborough Road, to the rear of The Convent, were refused by the DMC on the grounds of massing and proximity to The Convent. The developer has appealed

the decision. The Farnborough Society had objected on the grounds of access and traffic volume.

The Farnborough Society also objected to plans to build seven family homes on land to the rear of shops in Cove Road on the grounds of over-crowding of the site and dangerous access. DMC refused permission.

Southwood Golf Course closed suddenly when its operator, Mack Trading, went into voluntary liquidation. It was due to close anyway in Spring 2019 to create SANG (Suitable Alternate Natural Greenspace), to provide the mitigation necessary to allow redevelopment of Aldershot town centre. Without this guaranteed SANG, the Rushmoor Local Plan, then at an advanced stage of development, would have been found unsound because Natural England would have refused to give their approval.

For several months throughout the Summer, no planning applications for new buildings could be granted due to lack of SANG. Following agreement with Hart DC to share their Bramshot Farm SANG, the backlog was quickly cleared, but this served to highlight Rushmoor's difficult position with regard to SANG provision.

Tim Mills was appointed the new Head of Service for Economic Development, Housing Strategy and Planning at RBC, following a radical reorganisation of the Council.

Plans for the redevelopment of Meudon House, in Meudon Avenue, were approved, to deliver a mix of flats and town houses. Following viability assessment by the District Valuer, no affordable housing is included.

Planning permission was granted for a new Gulfstream maintenance facility at the airfield, which will eventually bring 500 jobs, plus training opportunities, to the area.

During the annual Focus on Farnborough presentation by Paul Shackley, he offered The Farnborough Society our own workshop on the Civic Quarter redevelopment, which focussed mainly on the activities that the town centre needs. Facilitated by GT3, the architects commissioned to develop the masterplan, this was part of an extensive public consultation exercise.

Proposals for an extension to the Giffard Road Surgery were turned down by the DMC. Regrettably, it means that funding for the project has been withdrawn and the practice may have to close its list because a smaller extension would not be viable.

The Rushmoor Local Plan is due to go to Cabinet for approval on 5th February and to full Council on the 21st February. This is the result of several years' work and is a significant achievement. It will ensure local control over planning issues; the lack of a Local Plan leaves councils vulnerable to challenge, with decisions made by the Government's Planning Inspectorate.