

## **North West Farnham Residents Association**

# **Annual General Meeting and Councillors Forum**

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2015 at 8 pm**

**St Francis Hall (off Three Stiles Road)**

Dear Members and Local Residents

You are invited to this year's Annual General meeting which will be followed after a short break by a chance to ask questions of your local Councillors. Councillors Paddy Blagden (Farnham Town and Waverley Borough Councillor) and Pat Frost (Surrey County Councillor) are attending as is John Williamson our brand new Town and Waverley Councillor and member of the committee.

Anyone who would like to come but needs some extra help or transport can phone the chairman, Penny Marriott, on 01252 714489.

### **Chair and Committee Report**

#### **Speed Watch**

The Association continues to support the Speed Watch volunteers who continue to brave all weathers to man the speed gun on Crondall Lane. Police figures have shown the presence of community speed watchers does act as a deterrent to speeding motorists and many thanks go to Chris Clelland, who organises the volunteers. Any new recruits would be welcomed and would help keep the pressure off those doing the work at present.

#### **Website and Facebook**

The NWFRA website continues to attract many hits every month, so please use the 'Contact Us' tab to tell us about the issues which matter to you. You can help keep the site current by sending your comments or observations, and can suggest items for inclusion in our committee agenda. As usual we would welcome some new photographs of local events for our photo page, and of the hop fields to remind people of what we will lose. Also don't forget our Facebook page which you can access via the link on the website. Just to remind you the address of the website is **nwfarnham.org.uk**."

#### **The Hopfields**

It is with great sadness that we have to report that outline planning permission has been granted to develop the 'Greenfield' site of the Beavers Road Hop Fields by Waverley Borough Council's Joint Planning Committee. Members of the North West Farnham Residents Association (NWFRA) have been pointing out for years the dangers of what can happen if there is no local plan in place at Waverley. What is happening now is exactly what we were worried about. If there were a plan in place then there would be a requirement that brown field sites and greenfield sites with lower amenity value (ie NOT the Hopfields) should be used first. With no plan then ANY green field site in Farnham can be the subject of an application despite the fact that there are more suitable sites which could be used. The only good news is that following all the pressure against the application, including all those letters of objection written, the permission was granted on condition that around 50% of the land area (the Northern top field and the South West side strip) will be open space (the NWFRA is still working to ensure that the intention indicated in the agreement that this should be permanent is followed through in the legal agreement).

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

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

The pressure of the proposed 120 prospective extra dwellings on the already overstretched infrastructure of Farnham is widely accepted yet time and time again Councillors at the meeting stood up and made the point that the development is 'sustainable' on the grounds that it is near the centre of Farnham. Unfortunately there was only one Farnham Councillor present who failed to point out that this is one of the reasons that the development is **not** sustainable on the grounds of traffic and especially pollution. In combination with the 250 extra dwellings in East Street and the prospect of other Greenfield and brown field developments with at least one other also right in the centre, the situation is definitely **unsustainable**. Farnham is unique in that there are two major roads through the centre where narrow roads and the conservation area mean that there is no way to increase the flow of traffic which would anyway increase the pollution even more There is also a lack of school places, an old sewage system and a treatment plant which is over design capacity already.

Added to this there are the grounds of the clear unsuitability of the land proposed as Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) in Church Crookham even if Natural England seemed to feel that it made sense that you should drive through the area you were trying to protect in order to walk your dog!

The neighbourhood plan would not have helped even it had been in place since in its draft form it proposed the site for development. However it was the only proposed site for which a majority (in the consultation) disagreed with any development – because of this we would have argued to remove it from the list, but with outline permission given this will not succeed.

Given all these facts you have to wonder **what would have made a difference?** There is a huge Brownfield site at Dunsfold which could take a large number of new dwellings with none of these problems so why is this happening here in Farnham?

What should have happened is that the JPC should have rejected this and other speculative applications, until the local plan is in place so that the planners can actually plan. The situation is almost entirely due to Waverley's incompetence and now the date for producing the plan has been put back for a further time. You got us into this Waverley it is now up to you to give us and others like us the protection we deserve.

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

If you have any other matters you would like to raise at the meeting please let us know and I am looking forward to seeing you all on June 10th.

**Penny Marriott**

**May 2015.**