

## LOCAL PLAN Special edition



### The Vision

We aim to keep Hart as a green, rural hinterland in Hampshire – page 3



### Development

Where and how much development will take place – pages 4-5

## Local Plan – your chance to comment on Hart's future development

# Planning for Hart's future

### What is the Local Plan?

THE HART District Local Plan will determine how future development will shape your community.

It sets out the broad spatial strategy to guide future development and growth in Hart over the next 15 years, and will be used as the basis for deciding what proposals will receive planning permission over that period.

### Why does the Plan matter to me?

The Plan will matter to you for a number of reasons. For example:

- if you are concerned about the availability of affordable housing for you and your family;
- if you want to protect the environment and prevent the sprawl of development into the countryside;
- if you want to see better public facilities, such as schools, health facilities and leisure provision;
- if you are concerned about traffic congestion, or about existing public services being overloaded;
- if you are concerned about the economy, the availability of jobs, and the prosperity of business;
- if you want to see thriving town and village centres in the district and want to protect the most attractive aspects of our built environment.

The Local Plan is about making choices for the future of all the communities in Hart, and different people will make those choices in different ways. Not everyone will agree with what the Plan says, as it tries to strike a balance between competing points of view. If you feel strongly about any of the issues in the Plan, it is important that you make your views known. We have explained how you can do this on page 8.



### Why do we need a Plan?

Councils like Hart are required by the Government to produce a Local Plan. The Local Plan is meant to ensure that the future needs of the residents of Hart are met as sustainably and efficiently as possible.

The Government has produced a policy framework (called the National Planning Policy Framework or NPPF) and the Local Plan has to sit within that framework.

The NPPF requires councils to plan for sustainable growth, designed to meet the needs of their area and to contribute to the economy of the country in a sustainable way – this means that it should meet the needs of the present without compromising

the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

One of the most contentious issues in the Plan is the question of how much housing growth is required to meet local needs, and whether this can be accommodated in a sustainable way.

Under the NPPF, if councils wish to control the amount of development that can take place in their area, and to decide where that development should be located, they need to have a Local Plan in place. The Plan needs to demonstrate why growth should be restricted, and why the particular locations for that growth have been chosen. Without a Plan the Council and local people will not have that

control.

In Hart, that would probably mean a much higher volume of development would take place, some of which would be in locations that local people would think unsuitable.

The Local Plan therefore is the principal means by which local people and communities can control development in their areas.

### Why must we plan for growth?

The Government has identified economic growth and development as one of its top priorities, and the NPPF makes plain that councils should plan for local growth, providing it takes place in a sustainable way.

The Council has estimated the level of development in the District required to meet local needs. Because Hart is primarily a rural and residential area, the major type of growth included in the Plan is in housing numbers, with some 2,300 additional dwellings needed between 2014 and 2029.

This level of growth is needed to house the natural growth of the Hart population, and assumes that the numbers of people moving into and out of the district are broadly the same, thus cancelling each other out. This is called the Zero Net Migration model of housing need.

Some people will think that the figure is too large; others will say it is too small.

In addition to housing growth, the Plan tries to ensure that adequate land is available for the development of businesses and other employment uses, and also for public facilities such as schools, health facilities, and leisure facilities.

Continued on page 2

## Hart District Local Plan

# Planning for the future

From page 1

## Where should the growth go?

Having decided on the overall level of growth needed, the next question is where it should take place.

Most people would agree that the first priority should be to use land which has been previously developed ('brownfield' land) and the Council agrees with that view.

Unfortunately, there is not a lot of brownfield land available in Hart District. This means that, inevitably, a proportion of growth will need to take place on previously undeveloped land ('greenfield' land).

Under the NPPF, development has to be 'sustainable'. This means that, so far as possible, it should take place in locations which minimise the impact on public facilities, on the local environment and which consumes least resources in the building and use of the houses.

Hart's Local Plan aims to locate re-development on the edges of existing population centres. This is because this approach allows residents of the new houses to use community and economic facilities that already exist, rather than having to build new ones.

There are, however, complications to this approach. Large parts of the District are given special protection because of their ecological importance and/or landscape value. This means that these areas cannot be used for significant growth, with a result that other areas have to take a larger share of the total.

The map on the centre pages explains where the Local Plan proposes to place the new growth.

## Would it be better to go for a new settlement?

Some people have argued that the District's housing growth should be concentrated in a single new settlement somewhere in the District. They say that this would prevent extra strain being put on the existing roads and community facilities.

The Council disagrees with this approach, because to be sustainable, a new settlement would require a much higher level of growth than is currently forecast. A new settlement would require much larger resources for its construction and the provision of roads, sewage systems, etc, than is likely to be available from the num-

ber of new houses proposed.

Unless Hart is willing to take even more new houses, the new settlement approach is not considered a viable one at present.

## Will the new houses put pressure on existing public services?

Although it may seem obvious that more housing means more people and therefore more pressure on public services, that isn't necessarily the case.

Families are getting smaller, and more people are living on their own, than in the past. This means that more houses are needed even if the overall population numbers – and therefore the demand for public services – remains static.

In addition, developers of new housing can be required to contribute to the cost of providing the additional public services required to meet the needs of the people who live in the new homes. The Plan requires the developers of new housing to pay these contributions, which will be pooled and used to fund the provision of new or improved facilities such as roads, schools, health and leisure facilities.



It is therefore difficult to predict exactly what the net impact of new development on public services will be. Some facilities, such as schools and leisure facilities, will probably improve, providing the council is able to secure the required payments from developers.

Traffic congestion on the roads, however, is harder to tackle, not least because road improvements tend simply to attract more traffic – so the beneficial effect of any particular improvement on congestion is only temporary.

However, traffic studies undertaken for the Council suggest that the housing growth in the Plan will not cause any major congestion problems that cannot be resolved.

Where there are particular difficulties, it will be possible to use developer contributions to pay for improvements, although the number of cases where this happens will probably be small.

## What is happening in Fleet town centre?

In Fleet town centre the Local Plan builds on the Fleet Vision, a study undertaken in 2009/10. It found that the centre was in danger of going into decline, with fewer people doing their shopping in the town, and with shops and public facilities needing modernisation or replacement.

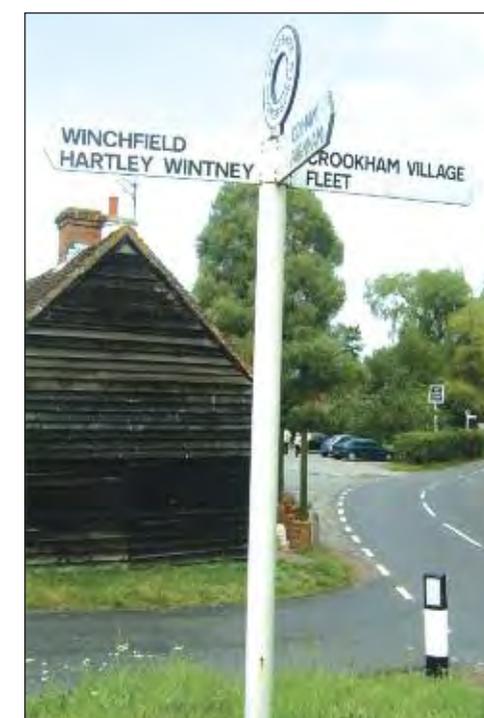
The Vision also highlighted the problem of empty office premises which were unlikely to be reoccupied in future, due to declining demand.

The Local Plan proposes that more

housing be developed in the town centre, principally to replace the empty office accommodation and to bring more vitality to the centre. It also proposes the replacement of the Harlington Centre, Fleet's main public hall and community space, with a new combined community hall and library.

On shopping, it identifies an opportunity to provide an additional superstore to draw more trade into the town centre. Further feasibility studies are taking place on this proposal.

Although not part of the Local Plan proposals, the Council would also like to encourage the owners of the Hart Shopping Centre – who, despite the name, are nothing to do with the council – to refurbish it.



## Hart News

Hart News is published by Hart District Council, Civic Offices, Harlington Way, Fleet GU51 4AE.

Tel: 01252 622122

Editorial: John Walton:

Tel: 01252 774461. E-mail: hartnews@hart.gov.uk

Designed by:

Deep South Media Ltd. www.deepsouthmedia.co.uk

Printed by: Newsquest Media (Southern) plc

Hart News is printed on paper from sustainable forests.

# The Vision

## What the Vision means for Hart

The vision is key to what Hart is trying to achieve in the future.

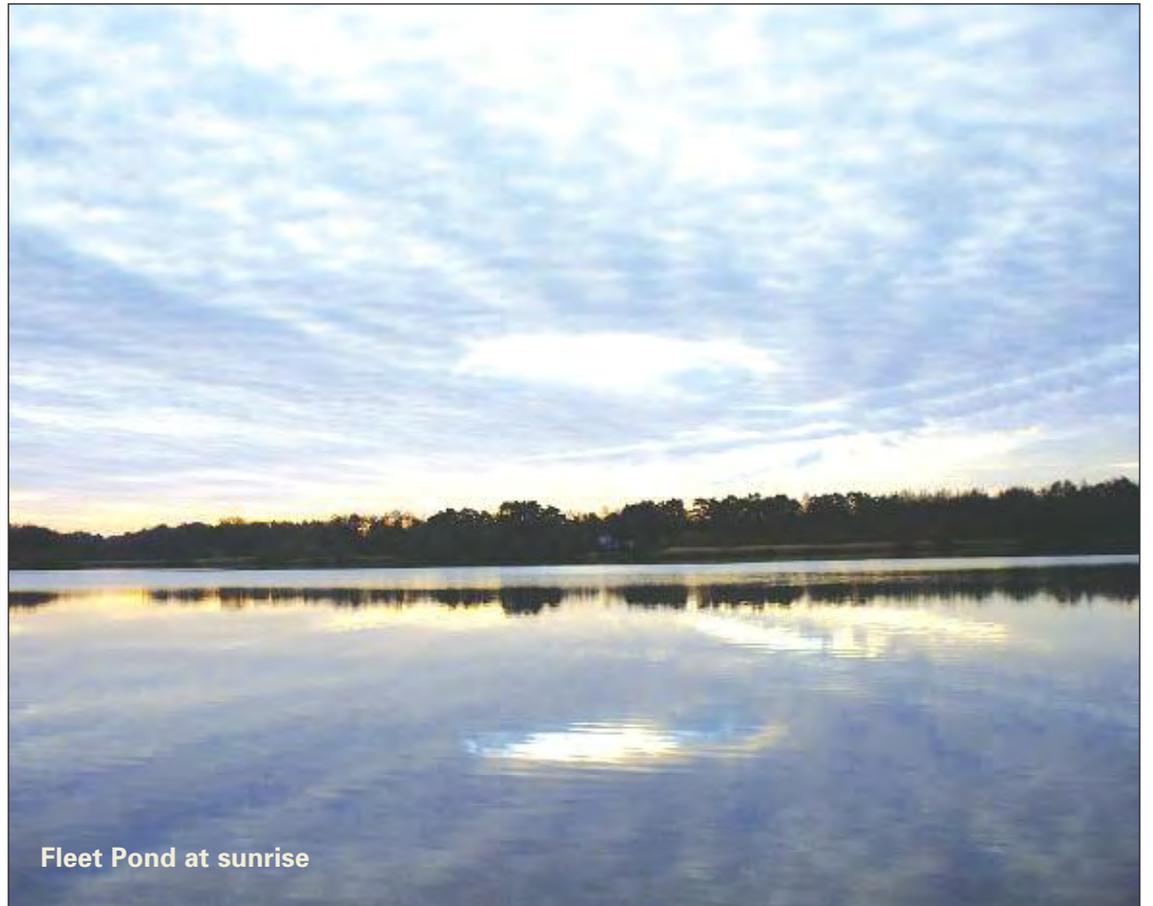
The vision is for Hart to keep its role as a green, rural hinterland for North East Hampshire and the Blackwater Valley.

Hart's essential characteristics will remain unchanged.

Quality of life in Hart will be maintained or improved.

Where new development takes place it will:

- respect the separate character and identity of Hart's settlements and landscapes;
- be accompanied by improvements to local infrastructure;
- contribute towards the social, economic and environmental well-being of Hart's communities.



Fleet Pond at sunrise

# The key issues

Hart is a great place to live and work. We are officially the area with the lowest level of deprivation in the entire UK, our economy is buoyant even in the current climate, we have excellent levels of educational achievement, excellent health standards, and extremely low crime rates.

We also have relatively few social problems and a beautiful environment. According to the Halifax, Hart is the best place to live in the UK.

But we also face some issues and challenges over the next 15 years. There is a need to:

- provide the new homes needed in the area, including specialist accommodation particularly for older people and/or the disabled;
- encourage further economic growth taking into account Hart's role within the economically buoyant

Blackwater Valley and its proximity to Basingstoke;

- provide for local shopping in town, district and local centres to serve the needs of Hart residents and to maintain the vitality and viability of those centres;
- ensure that the impact of new development on infrastructure, (including transport, education, and community/leisure facilities) is effectively managed;
- protect the separate character and identity of Hart's settlements and landscapes;
- protect sensitive ecological areas;
- make sure new development brings with it good design with safe communities.

There will be continuing pressure for further development right across Hart, but any development must be sensitively handled to ensure

the district continues to be a desirable place to live, with lively and attractive towns and picturesque and vibrant villages, surrounded by beautiful countryside.

The population will continue to grow, but the Council wants this growth to be carefully managed through sensitive redevelopment of suitable land within the towns and villages and through limited releases of additional land. The Council specifically wants to limit the scope for 'garden grabbing' to stop our towns and villages becoming too cramped and congested.

Infrastructure needed to support growth must be delivered, and affordable housing provided to meet local needs, in mixed communities united by a strong local identity.

The aim is to make sure that

people in our towns and villages continue to have a high quality of life with good access to education, jobs, services, shops.

The local transport infrastructure needs to be improved and there is a need for better management of congestion and better access throughout the district, with improved pedestrian routes and cycleways.

The Council wants everyone to have the chance to lead a healthy and active lifestyle benefiting from improved access to sporting and leisure facilities, high quality open spaces and open countryside, including country parks.

Everyone has a role to play in meeting the challenges of an ageing population. This can be done by encouraging younger people and families to stay in the district

(through the provision of an appropriate range of affordable housing in terms of size and tenure), who will help support the older communities. Older people can also be supported through increased investment in accommodation for the elderly.

The strategy aims to provide some new growth (approximately 500 new homes) in the rural areas to support the objective of a living, working countryside.

It is important that the development needs of rural communities are met, and that the vitality and viability of rural communities (village shops and pubs for example) is supported.

Throughout the Plan there remains a commitment to protecting the overall character of the villages and to ensure good design for all new development.

# Where will growth take place?

The Council needs to find enough land for a further 2,301 homes over the next 15 years to meet Hart's local needs.

The overall strategy is to maximise the opportunities for using land within existing towns and villages. (There are opportunities to provide more homes within Fleet town centre, and there is scope to release land currently designated for employment use both within Fleet and Hook.)

However, these opportunities are relatively limited and so some land on the edge of towns and villages will also be needed.

The strategy aims to provide some new growth (approximately 500 new homes) in the rural areas to support the objective of a living, working countryside. It is important that the

The current proposals envisage land being released for an additional 2,301 new dwellings in the district between now and 2029, located as follows:

Fleet Town Centre	250	Rest of Hook	100
Land West of Fleet	170	Hartley Wintney	220
Rest of Fleet, Church Crookham and Elvetham Heath	221	Odiham and North Warnborough	180
Yateley	160	Rural settlements, and previously developed land in the countryside	500
North-east Hook	500	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,301</b>

development needs of rural communities are met, and that the vitality and viability of facilities like village shops and pubs, for example, are supported.

Throughout the Plan there remains a commitment to protecting the overall character of the villages and to ensure good design for all new development.

Hart District Local Plan

# Where and how much deve

**T**he map on these pages shows where and how much proposed growth will take place in Hart.

New housing will be spread around the district towards the best sites at each settlement. Best use will be made of previously developed 'brownfield' land so that greenfield development is minimised. This includes the re-use or redevelopment of redundant offices for housing.

Two sites are specifically identified for growth – one at North East Hook (adjacent to the junction of the Reading Road and A30 London Road) and one at West Fleet (south of the Edenbrook development, Hitches Lane). Both of these developments will bring with them improvements to community infrastructure and leisure/ recreational facilities.

All developments will need to provide the necessary improvements to roads, schools and other infrastructure.



**HARTLEY WINTNEY** will retain its attractive historic centre. There will be a modest level of housing development with 220 new dwellings. Otherwise, the green heart of the village will remain unchanged.

**HOOK** will see a new residential district to the north-east of the village. This will provide:

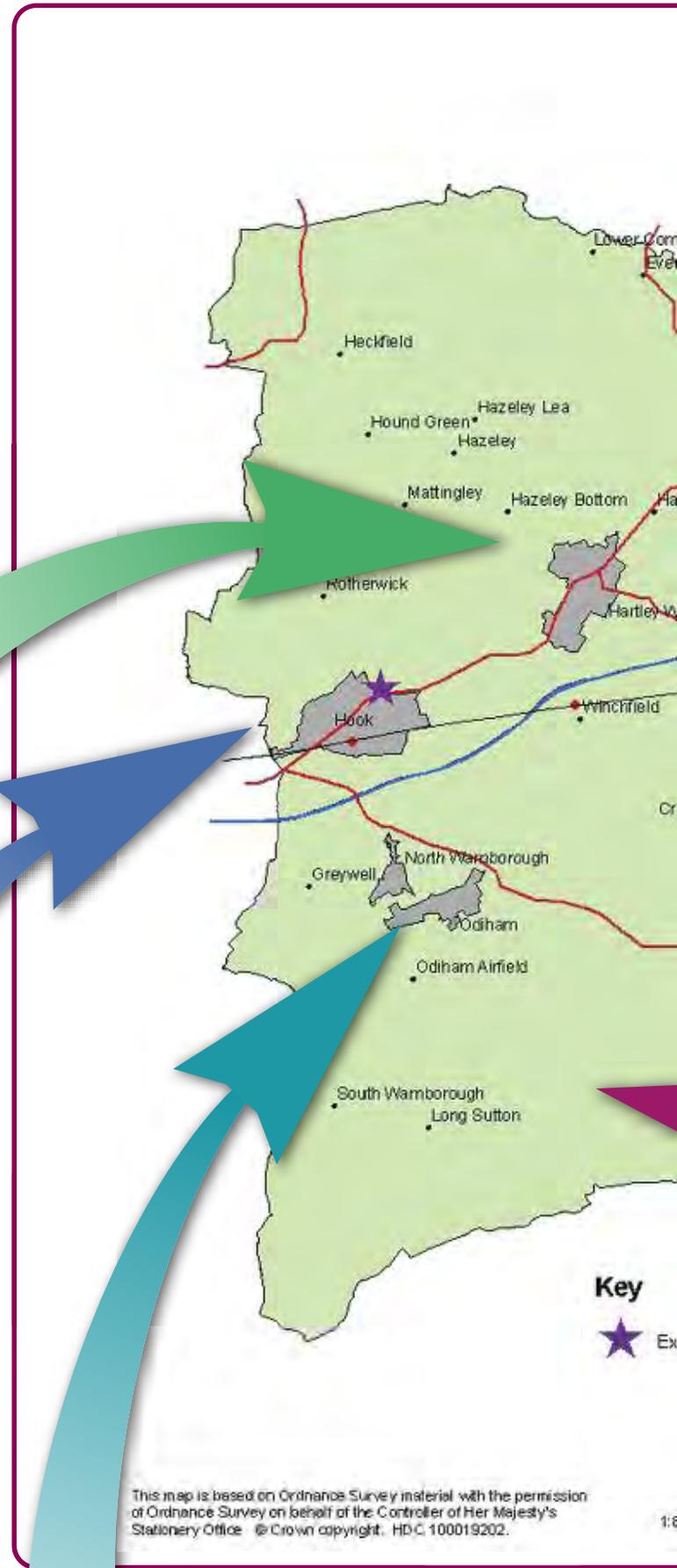
- 500 new homes, including affordable housing and homes for the elderly;
- new green open space, including additional sports pitches and changing facilities, and children's play areas;
- an indoor community / leisure facility;
- potentially some new retail facilities, provided they do not detract from the vitality and viability of the village centre;
- improved waste water infrastructure;
- local highways and cycle path improvements.

There will also be improvements to the village centre, including the redevelopment of some



employment land south of the railway. A further 100 dwellings

will be provided on other sites mainly from small scale infill development.



# Development?



**YATELEY, DARBY GREEN, FROGMORE** and **BLACKWATER** are particularly constrained from development and so will remain essentially unchanged. In total, 162 new homes are proposed.

## FLEET and CHURCH CROOKHAM

will continue to be a suburban town with a renewed town centre and an expanded range of shops and facilities.

The previous draft of the Local Plan, which was subject to consultation in 2011, proposed a large new development of 450 dwellings at Grove Farm, to the west of Fleet.

Following consultation responses, that proposal has now been removed from the Plan. There will still be some housing development in this area, although on a smaller scale (see West Fleet, below).

Some 170 homes will be built at Edenbrook, 250 homes in Fleet Town Centre, and a further 233 homes will arise mainly from small-scale infill development.

- West Fleet will provide 170 new homes, including affordable housing, on land adjacent to the Edenbrook site currently being built on Hitches Lane. The new country park will be reconfigured and land will be reserved for new leisure facilities which could include a replacement leisure centre. New allotment land is also to be provided and there will also be local highways and cycle path improvements.
- Land is also to be reserved to enable Calthorpe Park School to expand, to provide a total of 400 additional school places in two phases. This expansion is needed to meet an expected growth in the number of secondary school students in the wider Fleet area. The Plan also envisages the possible relocation of the Hart Leisure Centre from its current site, across to the other side of Hitches Lane, which would also free land for the school to expand. This is subject to adequate funding becoming available.
- In Fleet town centre, the Civic Offices and Harlington provide an opportunity for redevelopment to include enhanced library and entertainment facilities. Additionally, redundant offices between Fleet Road, Kings Road and Albert Street will be redeveloped, predominantly for housing, to lift the quality of that area and reduce the need for greenfield residential development.



New homes at Church Crookham



In the **RURAL AREAS** the vision is for a 'living and working' countryside, with some new housing and economic development on a scale that respects the rural landscape and character of villages.

Commercial development appropriate to its context, scale and purpose may be allowed in the rural areas where it is essential to support rural enterprise and business.

**ODIHAM** will also retain its attractive character, with a modest level of housing development planned of around 180 new dwellings.

The historic core of the village will remain unchanged and all its listed buildings protected. Land will be safeguarded at Robert Mays School to enable its expansion.

## Hart District Local Plan

# From jobs to countryside – other



## Affordable housing

Hart is an area of high property prices compared with the typical level of household income. As a result, many local people have difficulty accessing suitable housing on the open market.

Housing is important not just in its own right, but also has widespread implications on health, education, and employment opportunities. The Council wants to make sure that 40 per cent of all new housing development is provided at affordable prices or rents.

## Gypsies and Travellers

There is need for at least five more gypsy/traveller pitches to be found by 2017. This target will be updated after 2017. There is also a need for more transit sites and temporary stopping places for travellers.

## Town and other centres

Despite limited provision within Hart itself, the district's residents nevertheless have reasonable access to an extensive range of shops and other town centre services.

The Council believes that it would be unrealistic to try to compete with larger nearby shopping centres. The Plan, therefore, seeks to try to deliver only moderate new growth in shopping capacity to enable residents to shop locally within the district

## Jobs

Hart is not a major centre for employment. It is to a large extent a dormitory to other employment centres beyond its boundaries.

There is significant commuting out of the District for employment (approximately 60 per cent) and Hart has an overall surplus of employment space.

The strategy does not identify any new areas for office or industrial uses. Instead, it aims to protect the best main employment sites and encourage a rebalancing away from offices to other premises for which there is more of a need. Smaller, unidentified premises in industrial use are also protected.

Outside the key employment sites, the strategy is to support the release of surplus office sites to non-employment uses, including residential use, where appropriate (for example, the area bounded by Fleet Road, Kings Road and Albert Street to the north-east of Fleet town centre).

## A Living and Working Countryside

This policy, together with the allocation of 500 dwellings, aims to promote a healthy rural economy and a living, working countryside.

## Major Facilities in the Countryside

There are several major facilities within Hart that are in the countryside, including educational, training and Ministry of Defence establishments. The ongoing operations at these facilities will be supported and, where necessary, some operational development will be allowed.

It is possible that some of these facilities could become redundant and/or available for redevelopment for alternative uses.

Whilst RAF Odiham and Gibraltar Barracks are expected to be needed for defence for the foreseeable future, Minley Manor, for example, is expected to be surplus to defence requirements around 2014/15.



## Infrastructure

Most of the district's infrastructure – the public facilities we all use, such as roads, water supplies, schools and health facilities – are provided not by the district council but by other agencies.

One of the aims of the Local Plan is therefore to give infrastructure and service providers some certainty over where new development is expected to take place.

This plan, therefore, promotes a 'manage and invest' strategy, with priorities for infrastructure investment focusing on delivering efficiency, reducing demand and providing more capacity.

These priorities include:

- school expansion plans and new schools

where necessary;

- improvements to the transport network;
- new and enhanced community facilities;
- the potential for a replacement leisure centre and expanded country park at west Fleet;
- recreational and sporting facilities at Hook;
- green infrastructure;
- improvements to water supply and waste water infrastructure.

## Safeguarded Land

Three of Hart's secondary schools, Robert Mays in Odiham, and Calthorpe Park and Courtmoor in Fleet, are currently at or approaching capacity.

There is no practical scope to expand Courtmoor, so the Council considers it prudent to reserve land immediately adjacent to Robert Mays and Calthorpe Park to allow Hampshire County Council to expand them in the longer term.

Large parts of Hart are covered by a Special Protection Area to protect rare bird species which nest on the heathlands in the north-east of the district. To help in that protection, any housing developments close to these areas will have to make available alternative green space (called a strategic Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace or SANG) for recreational purposes. Land is being safeguarded for this purpose in the north east of the district and also at Hook.

## Transport

The transport infrastructure in some parts of Hart, notably to the east of the district, is under pressure at peak times.

Where additional development puts transport infrastructure under pressure, the Council will seek further improvements.

Improving travel choice is a key way of encouraging people away from single occupancy car use in favour of more sustainable travel, such as walking, cycling, bus and rail or car sharing.



# issues addressed in the Plan

## Water Quality

The United Kingdom has to ensure that there is no deterioration in the status of water bodies, and that all water bodies achieve a 'good' ecological status (or equivalent) by 2027.

The Council will make sure that new development does not result in the deterioration in the ecological status of water bodies, and does not jeopardise the ability for our three main rivers to achieve 'good' ecological status by their target dates.

Sustainable drainage systems will be incorporated into new development wherever appropriate. These can help improve water quality by capturing pollutants that would otherwise run-off into watercourses.



Brookly Stream (Fleet Pond Nature Reserve) through the changing seasons



## Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is the network of multi-functional green spaces, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Residential gardens can play a significant role. The functions and benefits of green infrastructure include: biodiversity, recreation, health, landscape and townscape character, amenity and mitigation for climate change through urban cooling and carbon absorption.

## Biodiversity

There are a range of sites in Hart designated for their international, national, or local importance, such as Fleet Pond, Odiham Common, Hazeley Heath and Yateley Common. These designated sites will continue to be protected.

## Sustainable Construction

This policy will ensure that the overall sustainability requirements for new-build residential development will increase in line with Building Regulation requirements for energy performance.

Mandatory water credits mean that development built to Code Levels 3 and 4 will also include water efficiency measures in line with those recommended in the Environment Agency's Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (i.e. 105 litres per head per day or better).

Over the life of the Plan it is likely that higher standards of sustainable construction will become viable. The Council will continue to raise its requirements for sustainable construction beyond those set out now.

## Renewable and low carbon energy generation

Development for the generation of energy from renewable and low carbon resources will normally be permitted.



## Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) has been designated because of its populations of three heathland species of birds – Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark.

In determining planning applications, the Council must consider whether planning applications for development are likely to have a significant effect on the SPA. The Council can only grant planning permission for a development after first having made sure that it will not affect the integrity of the SPA.

The Council will seek the most suitable forms of renewable and low carbon technologies in conjunction with any further development.

Hart's Energy Opportunities Plan indicates the most appropriate forms and potential locations where these could be viable.

## Fleet Town Centre

Fleet Town Centre will be the main focus for new retail floorspace in the district. Some of the larger food stores in Hart are overtrading quite considerably, including stores in Fleet.

A large new supermarket in Fleet would give local residents greater choice. Other shops and services in Fleet Town Centre could also benefit.

The redevelopment of the area centred on the Civic Offices/ Library/ Harlington/ Gurkha Square is seen as an opportunity to provide a significantly enhanced community/leisure hub associated with any new development.

The area centred on the vacant and derelict office buildings on Fleet Road/ Kings Road is in

need of regeneration. This area is considered particularly suitable for higher density residential development.



Gurkha Square, Fleet

Hart District Local Plan

# What stage are we at now?

On our website [www.hart.gov.uk](http://www.hart.gov.uk) you will also find the 'evidence base' documents that have informed our work so far. These are technical studies on specific issues such as shopping, housing and employment. Some of this work is continuing.

The Plan is now at the 'Pre-Submission' stage. This is the stage before we submit it formally to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for approval.

The Plan will now be published for at least six weeks of consultation and there is a form below on which you can make any comments you may have. At this stage we should only be considering issues about whether the Plan complies with all legal obligations and is 'sound'.

The tests of 'soundness' are:

- the Plan is founded on a robust and credible evidence base and is the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives;
- the Plan is effective in that it is deliverable, flexible and suitable for monitoring;
- the Plan is consistent with national policy.

Submission of the Plan to the Secretary of State is currently programmed for spring 2013.

There will then be an examination by an independent Inspector early in summer 2013. After receipt of the Inspector's report the Plan should be adopted by the Council in late summer 2013.

## How to make your views known

Please let us know what you think about this Plan. You can do this by completing a response form (below) and returning it to the Council, or by filling it in electronically on the Council's website at [www.hart.gov.uk](http://www.hart.gov.uk)

We would encourage you to use the online form.

Alternatively you can respond by:

- sending an email to [planningpolicy@hart.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@hart.gov.uk)
- writing to the Planning Policy Team, Hart District Council, Harlington Way, Fleet, Hampshire GU51 4AE.

**All comments must be received by us by Monday January 7 2013.**



## Hart District Local Plan: Core Strategy (Pre-Submission Version): Feedback Form

Name: .....

.....

Address: .....

.....

.....

..... Postcode .....

Email address: .....

Comments:

*Do you want to be contacted at future stages of the plan process?* Yes / No