



Hart to Home

By Cllr. John Kennett

Following on from my column last month, when news was just coming in, I now have more information on the overall situation on future planning. Having earlier been quite encouraging about the way the council was proceeding, the Government Inspector has now stopped our plan citing two concerns. The first of these is he wants the Hart to consider the market for housing not just in our District but as a

wider one also comprising Rushmoor and Surrey Heath. Rather surprisingly, he did not include Basingstoke in the wider area to be considered and we can only hope that he or his successor does not add this later. It is not unreasonable to consider the wider area but Hart has long tried to maintain higher standards on planning than some other councils.

As a result the Inspector feels that Hart's plans for future housing numbers are 'insufficiently robust'. As is common in these matters the Government shrinks from actually saying that we should allow more housing development but merely creates, or implies, a climate where officers tend to feel that the Local Plan would have more chance of being accepted if the numbers were increased.

Many people preferred it when life was simpler and there was a quota for houses in Hampshire which was then allocated between districts. The current system of trying to second guess what the Government will accept is very bureaucratic and costly. In addition to the team of planners working full time on getting the information the government demands, in the form it demands it, the council will also have to pay outside consultants in specialties from traffic management to ecology.

It is now reckoned that it will be at least next Spring before Hart has a plan accepted by the Government, and until then the dictum of "the default answer is yes" will apply. The only exception will be if there are grounds for objection because of bird or other wildlife habitat. This is because such matters are governed by European law and is rather ironic when one thinks of the hundreds of millions of migrating birds slaughtered by Italians, Iberians and Maltese which the EU does nothing at all to stop.

If you would like advice on any matter relating to Hart District Council, please do not hesitate to contact me. Whenever I can, I go to the Coffee Pot in Long Sutton and the Tea Pot in South Warnborough, and can always meet elsewhere by arrangement.

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