

Hermitage Parish Council Annual Report for 2013 -14

Furze Hill. This year the Parish has taken on ownership and management of the wildlife site and recreation ground at Furze Hill because it felt that management by people who live nearby was the best option. The Council has been helped with this by members of Pang Valley Conservation Volunteers plus a professional ecologist and an amateur naturalist who both live in the village. To date there have been 6 events involving between 4 and 24 people.

Open spaces. A mystery volunteer laid turf in Pinewood Playground. Members of the Horticultural Society planted field maples, provided by the Council to extend the avenue of trees in the burial ground. Volunteers built the excellent new website, www.Hermitagevillage.com for the village

Events. The Christmas tree event was run, very successfully, by volunteers on the PC's behalf. The Village Walk attracted new faces, but turn out was again weather afflicted. This Annual Parish Assembly is the council's third social occasion of the year and if the last one is anything to go by this will be another convivial evening.

Twinning. A resident of Les Hermites, a town in the Loire, (www.ville-leshermites.fr) visited Hermitage last summer. As a result the newly re-elected Mayor is eager to start a twinning project with our village,

Planning. The council has considered and commented where necessary, on all planning applications in and near the parish including the proposed traveller site on the Hampstead Norreys side of the motorway. Two members discussed the SHLAA (The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) with West Berkshire Planners. During the year Mark Kerry, who had lead on planning, resigned from the Council. Thanks are due to Mark for all his hard work.

Issues raised by the public. Parking and dog mess are frequently raised by members of the public. Councillors can make provision for dog waste but dog owners should deal with their pet's excrement themselves. 2 more dog waste bins are on order. The council has asked West Berkshire to do a survey of parking problems at the school and invited a speaker to the Annual Parish Assembly.

Young people. The Council is aware that more provision is needed for the young people of the parish and is in conversation with Berkshire Youth and Hermitage Primary School about how best to achieve this

Grants. As usual Council has made grants to local organisations to support their work for the village. It is fortunate to have members with professional experience in awarding grants, running projects and auditing them who have helped to ensure the council was diligent in its award of a grant of £0.25 million to the Village Hall Management Committee as a contribution towards the building of the new hall at Furze Hill.

Volunteers. The parish is also fortunate in having a number of residents, other than councillors, who volunteer for the benefit of all members of the parish. The council is grateful to all of them for their time and expertise. Thanks to them, councillors, Mr Lawrence, our grounds man and Bill Goudge, our clerk for all their work during the year.

If you would like to volunteer to help at Furze Hill, with the proposed twinning project or to join the Council please contact ruth.cottingham@btinternet.com or billgoudge@aol.com

SHLAA Consultation Event – Hermitage

Edited comments from HPC

2014

General Comments

The Parish Council raised the issue that despite a significant amount of growth in the village within the last 10 years, there have not been any improvements to the infrastructure

The parish plan showed that residents would prefer properties with larger gardens. This would provide somewhere for children to play and perhaps alleviate the demand for allotments. The areas around the garages at Forest Edge display notices prohibiting ball games.

The remoteness of the new play area means it is not ideal for unsupervised play.

Accessibility and road widths need to be considered which ever sites are taken forward. There must be adequate parking on site.

The parking situation means that children, forced to play in the street when gardens are too small, are in danger from traffic

There is concern about potential increased traffic from developments in surrounding villages, especially Compton.

Hermitage is desperate for allotments, Parish Council has approach the land owners of HER 001/004//011 and 016. This use could be considered on areas not suitable for development

There are no health services in the village, residents have to travel to Chieveley, Compton or Chapel Row. There is a desire in the parish plan to provide some level of health facility (even if only part time) in the village.

Education

The Schools are full; therefore, there are issues of getting children into the local school already which will only be worsened by construction of additional homes Sites.

A potential employment site near to HER001 has not been submitted as part of the SHLAA, the landowner had informed Parish Council that he was in contact with a developer.

HER001 (Land off Charlotte Close) / HER004 (Land to the SE of The Old Farm-house)

This site is seen as being key to preventing flooding in Curridge, via overflow from Faircross Pond, and the surrounding area. A drain runs through the site (from HER001 into HER004). Flooding occurs near to the Priors Court Road Roundabout and the Village Hall has been flooded in the past (flooding particularly occurred in the area in 2007).

HER001. Access to the site could be an issue, especially if access is required from Charlotte Close, where there are already parking problems due to the numbers of staff working in the Priors Court School property..

HER001/004 is not really seen as being suitable, although a few homes off Charlotte Close could be considered. The traffic impact would be less here than in the north of the village.

HER009 (North of Primary School, Hampstead Norreys Road)

Development in this area would ruin the rural aspect of the school. Sites HER009/011 (eastern section) /016, and surrounding woodland are a wildlife corridor, connecting to Furze Hill Local Wildlife Site and woods beyond. Development in the area would break up this corridor.

There are traffic issues associated with the school, and this is likely to get worse if development occurred at this site. The Parish Council have asked the council for a parking survey for outside the school. If this site were to be developed the PC would ask for legal conditions to be made for the provision of off road parking. Generally there are a lot of HGVs travelling through the village.

HER009 is seen as the most acceptable site but would need to improve the road network and have a decent (low) density of development. A Landscape Assessment of the site would be required.

HER016 (Land off Hampstead Norreys Road)

Seen as very close to the motorway, which could cause noise and health problems. The proposed gypsy site to the north of the motorway was objected to by the Parish Council on similar grounds.

In the north of the village there are potential flooding issues around Orchard Close. Some work was done following the 2007 floods, but there is often standing water following prolonged heavy rainfall.

Sewer flooding is also an issue in the area. Thames Water has installed a pumping station, but this is currently at maximum capacity as are the drains running through the village. Since the new homes at Sonnet Place were occupied there have been severe issues with sewage/

HER010/012/013/014/015 (sites around Oare)