# Application to redevelop the GP Surgery at 1 Stevenage Road

The future of Knebworth and Marymead GP Practice at 1 London Road has been uncertain for a considerable time. Various proposals for it moving have been discussed without any coming close to fruition. A number of residents were surprised to read about an application to redevelop the surgery into eight one-bedroom flats, submitted by the owner of the site.

As I understand it, this application was submitted to protect the position of the owner in the event the surgery gives notice to quit. The practice may do so at short notice under the current tenure, which, so it is understandable that the landlord should enact some contingency plans. The current surgery is outdated and unsatisfactory in a number of ways: it would clearly be better if more modern premises were available, whether on the current site, or another one. To find out more about the options available I will be meeting with the surgery and a number of interested parties in the second half of October.

# Knebworth Park Cricket Club

Of the order of sixty people turned up to the PC Planning Control Committee on Monday 13th October to hear it consider the application for a new clubhouse and two pitches on Jubilee Fields, to the east of Park Lane opposite the Alms Houses and Mulberry Cottages in Old Knebworth. Feelings ran high, with strong arguments on both sides. The committee decided to oppose the application. A date for it to be considered by NHDC has not yet been set. I am sure that when a date has been set there will be a big turnout at the Council Chamber in Letchworth. You can be sure that I'll be present and will be writing about the decision.

# Bulwer Lytton application

The developer has submitted an application to develop thirteen detached houses on the site of the former care home, Bulwer Lytton House. Some of these houses are close to neighbouring properties, they occupy a large part of the plan of the site, and the plan allows for the retention of fewer trees than the previous application, for outline planning permission, submitted on behalf of HCC which owned the site. I will be trying to persuade the Planning Control Committee at NHDC to reject this application at its meeting on the 16th October.

# 111 London Road Application

The long awaited amended application for twenty-six one-bedroom flats on the site of the former boy's home at 111 London Road was submitted and reviewed by the Parish Council last month. The Planning Committee were not persuaded that the changes addressed any of the grounds on which they objected to the application the last time it was considered.

# Pondcroft Road, Milestone Road, Gun Lane Draft Traffic Regulation Order

The consultation about introducing a Controlled Parking Zone in some roads near Knebworth railway station finished in early October. Unfortunately too early for me to draw attention to it in the previous edition of this newsletter. I have not received any indication of the results of this consultation from NHDC, as of today, but to the extent that I received any feedback the balance of opinion was opposed to the proposals, albeit with a number of residents being enthusiastic.

At the same time, although not part of the TRO, a preliminary consultation to reduce the amount of parking in Watton Road took place. I received one or two calls, but not enough to be confident of gauging the general mood of residents in the road, which does suffer a great deal as a 'rat run' to parts of Stevenage, as well as being the main route to the A602 south.

# Solar Farms

The planning application for the proposed Solar Farm at Swangley’s Farm has not yet been scheduled to come before a Planning Control Committee, but the protestors continue to challenge the application. As I understand it, an attempt is being made to challenge the decision to dispense with an Environmental Impact Assessment as part of the application. I expect that the application will go before NHDC this month.

There is a second application to build a solar farm, this time on land south of Three Houses Lane, north of Codicote. There was a lively discussion about this application at the Parish Council Planning Committee which was held on Monday 13th October. Although this is a sparsely populated part of Knebworth Parish, a number of residents took part in the Public Participation. The Parish Council decided to object to the application on the grounds that it felt it was inappropriate for the Green Belt.

# Fly Tipping

I have had a number of reports of fly tipping around Knebworth, made directly to me. North Hertfordshire District Council treats fly-tipping very seriously and will prosecute anyone caught fly-tipping waste. Fly tipping is irresponsible, dangerous and expensive to clear up. There is a form on the NHDC website (just search for ‘fly tipping’) or feel free to contact me.

Fly tipping on private land is not the responsibility of the local authority, but on the public highway it is. For larger scale fly tipping the Environment Agency has a statutory duty to investigate fly tipping when the waste may pose a serious threat to the environment.

# North Hertfordshire Local Plan

The Local Development Scheme has now been published. It can be viewed on the NHDC website (under Planning, Planning Policy and Projects). This sets out a timetable for the development of the Local Plan. This process includes several rounds of consultation, including one on the ‘Preferred Options’ and on the submission itself, before it is formally submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in April 2016.

As far as anyone can tell, writing in mid-October, we are still on course for submission of the preferred options paper, including the potential housing sites, to Full Council on 27th November 2014. Consultation on this paper is scheduled for the fifth of December to the end of January 2015. Formal submission of the final version likely to take place in Summer 2015.

If you are interested in finding out which parts of the District are likely to see residential growth in the ‘plan period’ to 2031 please check the Council’s website for the Full Council agenda which should be available online from around mid-November.

There have been reports recently of extra clarification from the current Secretary of State which appears to give priority to preservation of the Green Belt over the directive to meet objectively assessed housing needs, both ours and those of adjacent authorities. These conflicting messages from Central Government need in my view to be resolved very rapidly. I am joining with a number of my fellow district councillors in urging the planning officers and members at NHDC to press for such resolution.