

Minutes of Romsey Forum

7th September 2005 held at

Romsey Town Hall

Present:- c.41 people including:- Chris Amery, Steve Lees, Tom Gould, John Mason, Joyce Mancey, A. Tindall, G. Penney, Janet Sturgess, Pent Barnes, M.J. Kyte, J. Diane Hargreaves, Phil Sands, S.M. Aiken, W.J. Aiken, Roger Langton, Alison Langton, Rod Simpson, K. Whiteman, F. Beauchamp, S. Beauchamp, Mary Hill, Lynne Lockyer, Denise Foster, Mike Richardson, Julian H. Jones, Sheila Smith, Tony Smith, Steve Cosier, Paul Marke, Helen Murray, Phil Evans, Euan Russell, Ruby Hatch, Keith Parker, Mike Gray, Jan Gray, Jenny Fakes, Alex McArdle, Henry Maddick.

In the Chair:- Phoebe Merrick. **Clerk to the Forum:-** Mark Cooper.

Item 1:- Apologies:-

Barbara Milburn, Sandra Gidley M.P. Sue Hough, Sarah de Sigley, Anthony de Sigley, Elizabeth Bell, Peter Phillips, Carolyn Nixson, Neil Crawford-Jones, Neill Beasley, Kate Clark, Dorothy Baverstock, Denise Amery, Paul Gardner.

Item 2:- Minutes of the Romsey Forum 8th June 2005

Having been circulated electronically and in hard copy at the meeting, were approved.

Item 3:- Matters Arising.

The Chairman referred to the Town's (economic) Healthcheck meeting at the Crosfield Hall on the 13th September, the exhibition of the two RDS sculptures at King John's House and to the Open Day at Romsey Botley Road Cemetery.

Item 3a:- Canal Walk Housing Development on Hampshire County Council land.

Ian Parker, Head of Estates at HCC made a short presentation. The HCC land at Canal Walk is subject to development proposals submitted by the County's preferred purchaser, Barratts Southern, who have been chosen by HCC Policy and Resources Portfolio holder from a number of different submissions. Land sales such as this one would relate to the building of a nursing home such as the planned 80 bed facility at Thatchbury Mount.

Julian Jones, Technical Director of Barratt Homes and **Simon Cooper**, the architectural Consultant addressed the Forum. The new housing was based on the 'Homezone' concept, with a 20 mph speed limit. Building would hopefully start early 2006 with an 18 month build time. JJ lives on Fishlake Meadows. There would be 60no. 2 to 2 1/2 and 3 storey units. 24 (40%) are to be Social Housing. Six units for the discount market, 3 units for shared ownership and 15 units for subsidised rent; the partner is Western Challenge Housing Association. The 36 private units consist of 16 x 4 beds; 13 x 3 beds; and 7 x 2 beds. They are designed to reflect the Romsey urban vernacular. The whole site is 3.56 acres and 1.8 acres is open space. The open space is overlooked by housing; the roads are block pavements; the houses are higher than standard quality and £300,000 is available for the open space and the play equipment.

Item 4:- The South East Plan.

Steve Lees, TVBC, updated the Forum on the Regional Assembly's SE Plan. In July 2005 the Assembly agreed that the scale of development in the South East between 2006 and 2026 would average 28,900 homes per annum. In Hampshire this would mean 1,300 per annum in North Hampshire, 800 p.a. in Central Hampshire and 4,000 p.a. in South Hampshire (ie 80,000 in the 20 years) which includes southern Test Valley. Hampshire CC has set out to consult on these figures. The 80,000 could be distributed as 11,000 that already have permission, 38,000 on 'brownfield' and urban capacity sites and 31,000 on 'greenfield' sites. Of this 31,000, 12,000 were shared by TV and four other Districts. Three options were offered in southern Test Valley in the public consultation on greenfield sites ie 2,500 or 3,250 or 4,000. To give an idea of this scale Valley Park, east and west, is about 3,000 homes. The public should make their views known to the County by Trafalgar Day. The County will agree its response on the consultation on 8th December 2005 and advise the Regional Assembly of its preferred options. The Assembly will finalise the South East Plan and submit it to the ODPM in March 2006. After other consultations final approval is expected in 2008.

Chris Amery, of the Romsey and District Society made a statement on the consultation process and the impact of large scale development on the setting of Romsey and the impact on the environmentally sensitive land that made up much of southern Test Valley.

Item 5:- Romsey Hospital.

A report was given to the Forum on the consultation process relating to Community Services for Older People by **Denise Foster** Director of Adult Services at the PCT Alliance (New Forest PCT and Eastleigh and Test Valley South PCT). The focus was to provide more care in people's homes and to reduce the need for hospital admissions. At present many hospital beds were occupied by patients who did not need that level of care and by investing in more community based services fewer hospital beds would be needed. Thus the Alliance was proposing to close between 27 and 105 community hospital beds and was opening an additional 44 beds at Lymington Hospital. There had never been a specific proposal to close Romsey Hospital beds. There was potential to develop services at Romsey in line with views of the League of Friends and the local G.P.s. The consultation was about older people and the need to reduce admissions to hospitals.

Jean Denham, spokesperson for the Romsey Hospital League of Friends addressed the Forum. She asked whether care at home could be better than we have now bearing in mind that many people need 24 hour care. There was a shortage of nursing staff and carers making it difficult to achieve care in the home. Romsey Hospital might be safe for the moment but there are moves to close Wards with an elderly focus in the New Forest and at the General. The key concern of the League of Friends was that any revised service must be at least as good as, or better than, at present because we were dealing with the elderly, the ill and the vulnerable and how we did that was a mark of a civilised society.

There followed a question and answer session with contributions from Lynne Lockyer (Chairman of the Alliance PCT), John Parker, Diane Hargreaves, Jane Brambley, and Henry Maddick.

Item 6:- Romsey Allotments and a proposed new Surgery;-

Steve Dennett of the Romsey Allotments Association addressed the Forum. There were strong feelings about the potential development of the allotments by those who worked the site. But the allotments were important to the whole of Romsey; they are designated 'countryside' and any development would breach the town's southern boundary. Developing one part of the site would compromise the rest of the land which may eventually go for development. Allotments have become more popular lately but they are often a prime developer target. There are 143 plots controlled by the Association and 119 by the Town Council and there is a waiting list.

He recognised there may be a need for a new surgery site but allotments are an important part of the town's open space. RAA will follow all legal routes including the 1908 Act. Chris Amery, Stuart Aiken, John Mason and John Parker spoke in support of the allotments remaining undeveloped.

Steve Lees said there was no planning application so could not comment on the allotment site. The Forum needed to remember that the SE Plan required between 2,500 and 4,000 new homes in southern Test valley so there will be change. The key issue was how to manage that change. TVBC cannot buy land such as the Canal Walk site to protect it as open space because it would have to pay the full development value, in this example about £2 million.

Item 7:- Dates for 2006.

The dates proposed for next year are 15th March, 21st June, 21st September, and 29th November all at 7.30 on Wednesday's in Romsey Town Hall.

Item 8:- Any other business:-

The Chairman asked people to come forward if they had used the White Horse path over a 20 year period as she was seeing whether it was possible to claim it as a right of way. The travellers' sites issue will be on a future agenda.