

Finchampstead Society

Environment Report 2016/17

Arborfield Development

- Crest Nicholson are well into their house building programme on the garrison site. The Merino Family Trust, however, have only recently received planning permission for their proposed development and have not yet started building.
- Crest Nicholson have sold part of their land to Redrow Homes, who are now preparing a planning application for about 182 dwellings.
- Bohunt secondary school opened in temporary premises in September last year and will move into their new purpose built school in September this year, which will eventually accommodate 1,200 pupils. There are also plans for two new primary schools.
- Associated with the Arborfield Development were plans to improve traffic flow at the California crossroads. This work has now been put on hold until 2019/20 at the earliest as Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) are focussing resources on other major road projects.

Other Housing Issues

- Gladman Developments Ltd have submitted a planning application to WBC to build 250 dwellings on land to the east of Finchampstead Road on the approaches to Wokingham. The same company have also expressed an interest in building another 100 dwellings on land adjacent to the Sand Martins Golf Club.. There is no further progress to report on either of these developments at this stage.
- As part of the procedure for updating the Local Plan beyond 2026, WBC invited proposals for land potentially suitable for housebuilding. In response, a group of Finchampstead landowners have submitted a proposal in respect of land at the bottom end of Longwater Lane to accommodate in the region of 350 dwellings. This is just one of about 40 proposals in Finchampstead, but is the one which has come to our notice because of the concerns of local residents. Work on updating the Local Plan is at an early stage and will go through a number of stages before proposals are approved or rejected.
- In September, last year, Reading Football Club issued proposals for a housing development of up to 200 residential units at their training ground on Park Lane. This has not reached the planning application stage and has been included as a proposal in the WBC Local Plan.

Cemex Sand and Gravel Workings

- The dispute with Cemex over their request in 2014 for planning extensions at their Manor Farm and Fleet Hill Farm sites has finally been satisfactorily resolved. They will vacate the workings in 2019 and RSPB will take over the sites. With the onset of spring, Cemex are now planning to start restoration work at Fleet Hill Farm.

Surgery and Car Park Extension

- Work at the surgery has started at last, with improvements to the car park being dealt with first. Improvements to the surgery premises in the first instance will comprise 8 new clinical rooms, a staff meeting room, a larger waiting area and a new entrance.

California Country Park

- WBC submitted a planning application in December last year for improvement work at California Country Park. This will involve improved access for pedestrians and vehicles, improvements to the car park, an extension to the car park to provide an additional 152 bays and changes to the café area. Residents have raised a number of concerns, but the major one appears to be the potential impact of the car park extension on the Scout Group activities. The planning application has recently been approved and we don't know what reassurances WBC have given regarding these concerns.

To finish my report on a positive note, some of you will no doubt have heard or read about the recent Sunday Times survey on the best places to live in Britain. Finchampstead has been chosen as one of the fifteen best places to live in the southeast region.

Gordon Wrigley
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