

SURREY HANTS Star Courier

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Opposition mounts to new town

by Stephen Lloyd

HART could become a dumping ground for homes earmarked for neighbouring Surrey Heath and Rushmoor boroughs, campaigners have warned.

The We Love Hart group is worried that, as Rushmoor and Surrey Heath have stated they cannot meet government-imposed housing targets, Hart will become a 'sink' forced to take their excess under a 'duty to co-operate'.

The group said the housing allocation for the plan period calls for between 1,800 and 2,400 homes to be built at Winchfield but a 'vision document' by developer Barratt Homes suggests a proposed new town could entail 5,000 new houses.

"By pure coincidence, of course, Surrey Heath and Rushmoor need to find space for about 3,000 more houses

in their districts," warned the group on its website. "Building a new town in Hart opens up the strong possibility we will be forced to take this additional requirement from bordering areas.

"We run the risk of building the wrong type of housing in the wrong place to cater for the excess housing needs of Rushmoor and Surrey Heath without meeting the needs of Hart, and concreting over our green fields in the process."

The group said Hart is 'reacting to events' and not setting out a vision for the future.

"This means, if we are not careful, we will end up with piecemeal development that will damage the very things that make Hart an attractive place to live," the group states.

The organisation, which has started a petition calling on the council to change its planning policy, warns Hart's actions could lead to Hartley Wintney, Hook, Fleet, Dogmersfield, the Crookhams, Winchfield and Odiham 'coalescing into a sprawling conurbation'.

"We need to challenge this mindset of building a new town all over our green fields and force a re-think of the whole development strategy, with a much stronger focus on building on brownfield sites and increasing building density in the existing settlements," says the group.

Brian Burchfield, deputy group leader of the Conservatives in Hart, said one of the reasons the council approved plans for 126 homes at Hawley Park Farm was to 'fend off' 750 extra homes from Rushmoor and Surrey Heath. "What we were able to secure from the

Hawley Park Farm development was an additional suitable alternative natural green space, which both Rushmoor and Surrey Heath can use to support development in their areas," said Councillor Burchfield. "We have protected Hart from taking on an additional 750-plus houses from Rushmoor and Surrey Heath, keeping them on the other side of the border."

Cllr Burchfield said the council has had to take many decisions on development, which take the entire district into account, including around 700 homes at Hook and more than 1,000 in Odiham, Fleet and Church Crookham.

"The case of Hawley is another instance where we had to take a decision for the greater good of the district as well as look to distribute houses across the wards proportionately as best as we can," added Cllr Burchfield.



RESIDENTS have shared their concerns with a would-be MP over a pint.

Ranil Jayawardena, who hopes to take over the North East Hampshire seat from fellow Conservative James Arbuthnot in the May general election, listened to concerns in Fleet's Oat Sheaf pub on Saturday.

Topics under discussion included the NHS, the economy, education

reforms and foreign policy, while more local concerns included Hart's local plan and Fleet's controversial 20 mile per hour speed limit trial.

Cllr Jayawardena said: "It was great to meet local people informally over a pint, talk through the values we share, and outline my commitment to North East Hampshire."

"Residents told me that it was great to

see energetic, local people involved in politics, engaging people in new ways.

"Their views on policies from education and health to policing and immigration chimed with me."

Fleet town councillor Alex Gray, who co-hosted the event, said: "It is all well and good being on a website or leaflet but it can never replace face-to-face conversation - especially over a pint."

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WEEKEND WEATHER
Saturday Sunday
7° 7°

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not just for lovers!

14/02/15

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And join us at the Foresters,
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