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## COMMENT

# Hart must get a Local Plan in place now

IF you're a resident of leafy Hart there's three words which are bound to make you shiver - Local Plan delayed.

Yet that trio so often features in our articles and headlines, as Hart District Council continues to stumble on getting its draft plan published (page 10).

For those unfamiliar with the concept, a Local Plan is a document detailing planning policies and identifies how land is used, determining what will be built and where.

Essentially, it plans how areas will grow to meet housing need.

The plans are shaped by local people, who are consulted by councils and give their feedback, ultimately getting their say on how their community develops and hopefully thrives.

It's a democratic process and one that is so important to those whose lives could change for the better or worse as a result.

Which is why for Hart residents, who have long-awaited their Local Plan, it is becoming increasingly frustrating as developers move in with bids to transform the district before the plan can make its mark.

Without a Local Plan in place, there are very few grounds for planning applications to be turned down - just look at Urnfield in Yateley, which has been granted on appeal despite enormous objection.

We're all for communities evolving, but it shouldn't be at the expense of those already there.

Whilst we know the council probably has its heart in the right place - it 'wants to get the plan right' - in practice, it risks forcing loyal, community-minded residents out as they search for security and structure in the area in which they live. The clock is ticking...

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