



## We Heart Hart Campaign

For immediate release – 1 May 2015

### **Top QC says Hart Council’s position on Local Plan is “hopeless” and council refuses meeting to discuss**

Top QC in planning law, Peter Village, has submitted an opinion<sup>1</sup> to Hart District Council saying that their position on the Local Plan is “**hopeless**” and likely to be unlawful. The opinion was commissioned by We Heart Hart and Winchfield Action Group as they became increasingly concerned that the Local Plan project was off track and going in the wrong direction. Despite the seriousness of their position, Hart District Council has refused a meeting to discuss how the Local Plan process can be put back on the path to success.

The essence of the opinion is that Hart Council’s position is hopeless because its Public Consultation in the autumn of 2014 was based on a plan which only addressed housing options and did not consider other vital issues such as employment, retail, transport and infrastructure. Hart now intends to proceed directly to a Draft Plan for Final Inspection without further public consultation, and that is likely to be unlawful because Hart is required by Planning Regulations to consult publicly on all elements of the Plan.

“It is worrying that the consultation to date has not considered important matters such as employment, retail, transport or infrastructure. It is of great concern that Hart is not seeking to protect our environment by refusing to offer a consultation on not meeting the full housing requirement. Peter Village also notes that the capacity for brownfield development could be much greater than the 700-750 dwellings Hart have identified and that Hart have not consulted on the demands from Rushmoor and Surrey Heath that Hart take 3,100 of their unmet need” said David Turver who set up the We Heart Hart campaign. “We have set out a five point plan<sup>2</sup> to help get the Local Plan back on track but Hart is refusing to discuss it.” he added.

The five point plan contains:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://wehearthart.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Peter-Village-QC-Opinion-On-Hart-District-Local-Plan.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/04/how-to-make-a-better-local-plan-for-hart-district/>



- Create a medium growth scenario with a lower housing requirement than the current high growth scenario to give an option to reduce the environmental impact of development.
- Create a formal brownfield option and invite a competition to design the best way of using our brownfield land
- Do the work and consult upon the additional elements of a proper Local Plan such as employment, education, transport, retail and other infrastructure
- Consider the Environment and Landscape by carrying out proper habitat studies and landscape character assessments
- Fix the management and governance problems within Hart Council that have resulted in the past failure and current hopeless position.

Tristram Cary, spokesman for Winchfield Action Group (WAG), expressed his dismay with Hart's position. "It is clear from our research that the vast majority of people from all over Hart want the council to preserve Hart as a rural district and to maintain the character of its countryside and rural villages. By abandoning this vision and promoting a New Town as its preferred option, Hart has given up its best defence against accepting over 3000 overflow houses from Rushmoor and Surrey Heath. We are confident that a proper public consultation which clearly spelt out the overflow risks associated with Option 4 would result in a different housing strategy which would concentrate on Brownfield development for the benefit of us all. It is very disappointing that Hart has refused to discuss the conclusions of the Legal Opinion which demonstrates that its planning process is unsound."

Ends



For further information, please contact: David Turver at [wehearhart@gmail.com](mailto:wehearhart@gmail.com)

#### Notes to editors

- 1) Peter Village QC is one of the top barristers on planning law in the country, being recognised by Chambers and Partners as their 'Planning & Environment Silk of the Year' in 2012.  
<http://www.39essex.com/barrister/peter-village-qc/>
- 2) The objectives of the We ♥ Hart campaign are:
  - a. To reduce the overall housing allocation for Hart District
  - b. Demand that the Council develops a vision and strategy for Hart that retains its role as a rural, green hinterland for NE Hampshire that respects the separate character and identity of Hart's settlements and landscapes and preserves the green spaces as amenity space for the urban settlements.
  - c. To require that the housing need is met by building on brownfield sites and increasing density in our existing urban areas
  - d. To request that future housing stock reflects the needs of the changing demographics of the district.
  - e. To demand the council and government do not plan for any new settlement in Hart that will act as a sink for the unmet housing need in neighbouring areas.
  - f. To hold Hart Council to account to ensure the process is legal and transparent and properly consults all of the residents of Hart.
- 3) More detail can be found at: [wehearhart.co.uk](http://wehearhart.co.uk) and <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/we-hart>
- 4) Social feeds: @WeHeartHart and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IHeartHart>
- 5) We ♥ Hart logo can be downloaded from here <http://wehearhart.co.uk/home/get-involved/>
- 6) More details about the Winchfield Action Group can be found here:  
<http://winchfieldactiongroup.org>