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## Farewell from the Chairman

### My last report

One of the Articles of our Residents' Association is that the Chairman shall serve for 3 years maximum. Although this has some drawbacks, such as the need to find a new Chairman at least three yearly, it has the advantage of bringing change and the opportunity for a fresh view about which aspect of the Association's role to emphasise. I have enjoyed my period in the job which will finish at the January AGM.

Looking back over the time, it is obvious that we have concentrated on planning issues. This has to some extent been forced on the committee because of the very large number of significant planning applications in Emsworth and also because of the introduction of new planning procedures directed by Central Government. Notable changes are the South East Plan and the revision of the local authorities system replacing District Plans with Local Design Framework documentation and plans.

### What have we done?

Your committee has contributed to the consultation on many of these new systems, partly to try and influence them and partly to understand how they will work. Since many of the documents are several hundred pages long, they take some time just to read, let alone to understand and make sensible comments on. However, I believe that it has been worth doing both for our understanding and for the opportunity to influence the decisions.

I have looked back over the reports I have made in The EMS over the last 3 years and noted key subjects:

- I wrote about **Interbridges East** site in my first article in early 2006. This has now been fully approved by HBC but still not built. We were not able to stop its approval because of the long-standing Outline Permission granted years ago. However, we raised issues to try and minimise its impact on Emsworth. There is still no approved traffic lights scheme for the junction with New Brighton Road.
- We took the decision in 2007 to get professional help with planning applications when we have felt this would be useful. This helped with the planning application for flats in **Bath Road**, eventually leading to the site being sold by the developer and reverting to an individual house. It also helped with the case we put forward at the appeal against **26 New Brighton Road**, which resulted in its being rejected. Although we were unable to prevent the approval of the revised application, the building had to be moved back from Westbourne Avenue and the number of apartments reduced. We were also able to improve our case against the **Oak Tree Drive** development from the point of view of housing density. The plans have currently been withdrawn.

- The **A27 Site** has appeared in my report in every issue of The EMS bar one since I have been Chairman, which I hope you will agree is only right since it will have the most serious impact on Emsworth. We did not oppose the building of the service station and hotel accessed from the A27T and this has now been approved in a detailed plan. The difficulty of opposing the rest of the development is its inclusion in the Local Plan as an employment site. We have been able to raise the issue of the access road using land owned by the Highways Agency which was originally purchased for the protection of Emsworth. We have had legal advice and to date no news of approving the sale of the land is good news.
- The **Emsworth Design Statement** sponsored by the ERA has finally been approved by HBC after more than 5 years of work. This involved members of your committee as well as others in the core team. We are now in the process of informing organisations and residents about how to use it to the advantage of all.

### The Future

In my opinion, the ERA is still a vital organisation for Emsworth. The advent of the Emsworth Community Board (ECB) has meant that some aspects of our activities are shared. The ECB are involved in areas on a routine basis that we only become involved in when particular issues are raised. However, we offer an organisation independent from all Borough Council involvement. This means that we focus on specific objectives which we or residents in general want us to deal with and do not need to put effort into time consuming HBC committees. We shall also still be around if and when HBC decides they no longer want to support Community Boards.

We are able to fund activities which support residents including the use of planning advisers for objections to applications or appeals. We contribute from time to time to help with such local activities as: South Street project, Emsworth Tree Wardens, First Responders, Emsworth Design Statement, operation of the clock above the Greenhouse Café, holding emergency meetings such as that about St Richard's Hospital and many other activities which arise.

Because of the decisions we made to use professional planning advisors and recently a barrister, we can give greater and more informed attention to the larger planning projects which have come up recently and look as though they will arise again.

### Thanks

I should like to thank all those on our committee and members who have supported me over my period in office. With the on going support of residents, the association is well placed to continue its work.

Chris Curry



Interbridges and 'A27' sites, one of Chris Curry's longest running campaigns has been to fight development on these sites. (From The EMS April 2006)

## ERA Response to Changes to the South East Plan

As I wrote in the last issue, the Secretary of State (SoS) has proposed changes to the South East Plan. The ERA has responded with comments about some of the many changes the SoS is proposing, which are summarised very briefly below. The full response is on the ERA website.

**The proposal that infrastructure should be put in place prior to growth development has been deleted.**

At present, there is no evidence in the planning of new housing or industrial developments that Local Authorities review the need for additional public services be they local roads, drains, medical, education, police, etc., prior to the development being completed. If they do review the needs, no action is taken. The matter is considered afterwards only when a major problem occurs.

We had hopes that after the request from the PUSH group, the South East Plan would change to a modern and efficient method of planning rather than the, "wait for a catastrophe and provide" method adopted until now. We would like the original wording re-instating.

### Deletion of the reference to Strategic Gaps

We regard Strategic Gaps as a well-known and understood description of

the green spaces between conurbations, which we do not wish to lose. They are defined and while we believe this definition is not strong enough to protect the gaps, it is certainly better than no definition at all. We ask for the reinstatement of the deleted reference to Strategic Gaps in the overall plan

### The descriptions of the housing levels to be changed from targets to minima

The PUSH group of local authorities made their recommendation for 80,000 houses for SE Hampshire, in parallel with the economic growth projections.

PUSH's own projections have been based on a considerable amount of work by the local authorities and research by their adviser DTZ. The 80,000 will enable the 3.5% growth target to be achieved but the projection did not work out for any significant increase on the 80,000 dwellings.

For this reason amongst others, it is important that the number of houses in the South Hampshire region should be the target not the minimum.

Chris Curry

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