

Joint public meeting held by West Clandon Parish Council and the Clandon Society on the Guildford Local Plan

Held 8.00pm on Tuesday 28th June 2016 in the Village Hall.

92 registered attendees including:

Parish Councillors Terence Patrick, Jonathan Murphy, Chris Dean, Rob MacDonald, Carol Roberts and Stephen Meredith,

Borough Councillors David Reeve, Jenny Wicks and Matthew Sarti,

Surrey County Councillor Keith Taylor

Keith Meldrum of the Merrow Residents' Association

Councillor Terence Patrick welcomed residents to the meeting, which had been jointly organised by the Parish Council and the Clandon Society to object to the proposed development at Gosden Hill and Garlick's Arch in the draft plan. Objections need to be with Guildford Borough Council by 18th July. He welcomed Borough and County Councillors to the meeting and Keith Meldrum of the Merrow Residents Association and introduced Jonathan Murphy and Chris Dean.

The meeting would be chaired by Jonathan Murphy with contributions from Chris Dean

Jonathan Murphy then outlined the agenda and said he would call on Chris Dean, Borough Councillors, Terence Patrick, Christopher Barrass and Keith Meldrum from Merrow Residents Association before opening the meeting to questions and comments.

Chris Dean (CD)

CD wished to set out the Parish Council and Clandon Society view on the context of the local plan and the serious problems with it including consequences for the whole of Guildford.

Guildford Borough Council (GBC) hold that all 22,000 objections from the previous draft plan have been dealt with and will not be reconsidered so any objections this time need to be different. GBC have little intention of making changes as they have had advice that this is a 'regulation 19' consultation in that there are no major changes from the previous draft.

It is however important to make your objections as they will be placed in front of the inspector who will be vetting the plan. The language used in objecting therefore needed to be suitable for this purpose. Inspectors are civil servants and act in terms of clear guidance. They must decide if the Plan is sound, positively prepared and meet objectively assessed needs. It must be justified, be the most appropriate strategy and consistent with sustainable development.

The Plan must be deliverable over the plan period and must include cross boundary working on strategic priorities. It must be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and must accord with policies in that framework. The NPPF states that policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and allow for changes in economic circumstances.

We have not therefore concentrated only on backyard issues. The UK has undergone a dramatic change s in circumstances which will likely decrease inward migration and economic growth at least

in the short term. The Government has tried to limit inward migration from outside the country. In Guildford's plan inward migration is people coming into Guildford. Will this continue under likely future economic circumstances? GBC might consider that this event is beyond their control. However their aggressive push for growth has led to a plan which is likely to be deeply defective.

We submit that the Plan is not sound as it is based on development and infrastructure which is no longer supportable and it is doubtful whether it can now be delivered. It does not comply with NPPF policies to protect the greenbelt. The plan will result in a loss of green belt which is now almost certainly not appropriate. Almost certainly as it has been difficult to get any detail on the assumptions which underpin the numbers.

Our objections to the Cuckoo Farm proposals resulted in a proper review of the site which has now been removed from the plan. This indicated that it is worth objecting.

Government guidance suggests that exceptional circumstances must be demonstrated if land is to be taken from the green belt. Housing need is not regarded as an exceptional circumstance of itself. GBC has increased the housing need since the draft plan. It now proposed building 693 houses per annum, a total of 13860 over the plan period. This is referred to as the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN). The NPPF allows for constraints such as green belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty but GBC have not applied any constraints to the OAN which is odd as they have consistently claimed that we have 80% Green Belt. It is odd that every site displays exceptional circumstances.

Turning to the individual developments, Gosden Hill (GH) includes slip roads to the A3, 2000 houses, a primary and secondary school, travellers' pitches, commercial space, a park and ride and community facilities.

In spite of turning down Wisley Airfield on 14 grounds, one of which was inappropriate development in the green belt, it remains in the plan.

Blackwell Farm has been reduced, but new sites in Normandy and Garlick's Arch have been introduced. Previous proposals for the Ewbanks Auction Site in Burnt Common have been removed.

The settlement area for W Clandon has been extended and a settlement area for E Clandon has been defined without consultation. This allows limited infilling.

The proposed rate of building is at least twice that of recent years. It is unlikely this can be achieved in current circumstances. Skills will also be an issue.

There are infrastructure proposals in the plan. They are generally very sketchy and few are committed. Many are outside the control of the Borough and lie with the Government and Highways England.

The Guildford Tunnel and the 4 way junction at Burnt Common are regarded as aspirational. It is true that the widening of the A3 through Guildford is at the study stage and construction is at least 5 years away. The study may decide that widening is not viable. There is no land earmarked for a tunnel and approach infrastructure.

GBC believes it can insist that infrastructure is provided before construction takes place. Developers' business models however depend on creating cashflow throughout the life of the project. At best

the infrastructure is likely to lag behind developments - increasing traffic and disruption. The NPPF states that GBC cannot impose costs on developers which would make a development non-viable. The park and ride, the infrastructure, the station, community facilities etc could be removed by the courts.

A traffic impact study was released at about the same time. In almost all scenarios congestion would get worse before and even after all infrastructure is built. Most of the strategic sites are along the A3.

What are the implications for the Clandons?. Proposed new developments are starting to surround West Clandon.

It has been suggested that it is possible that the Onslow Park development may be added to the plan at some stage. This is now a personal attempt by Lord Onslow to promote this development.

The Guildford Urban Area is getting close to the boundaries of West Clandon.

The Street in West Clandon faces the prospect of much more traffic from Garlick's Arch and Gosden Hill. A new junction at Burnt Common is likely to encourage more traffic through the village. The Street is quite unsuitable as a major road and we would face increased pollution, danger to pedestrians, and damage to existing properties and reduced quality of life. In addition there is the prospect of development on land being allowed within the new boundary. The policy on rural exception sites can be used for necessary local housing and can also be used for market housing and traveller pitches. We could face some development of this nature in the immediate area.

We all believe that this plan is significantly unsound and could result in a high rate of development taking large chunks out of the green belt at a time when the prospects for the economy are much reduced.

We hope that you will respond to this plan. How you respond is up to you but Chris Barrass and CD will provide notes to help with your response that you can cut and paste with a view to putting views in front of the inspector.

Councillor David Reeve

David Reeve supported CD's talk. DR had calculated 65% of the housing proposed was being put in the green belt. There were problems with the strategic highway assessment (SHA) relevant to traffic through W Clandon. The SHA quotes average peak hour figures between 7-10am which smooths out some of the most congested times.

The SHMA and the OAN were produced by GL Hearn. The production of this figure is opaque and an FoI request has been turned down. DR believes this to be part of a deliberate strategy. Even as a councillor he had to fight to get the info. A spreadsheet had now been provided but the formulae were redacted. DR believes the way to challenge is in front of the inspector as GBC are unlikely to make changes. DR does not believe that the OAN has been examined properly by anyone in GBC. This should be referred to in submissions to the inspector.

There are two places in the SHMA- Table 27 in which the increase in the number of jobs is referred to as 78,000 in appendix F 2 years later the figure is 89,000. This illustrates a decent editorial job has not been done to ensure data consistency.

In another area the modelling comes up with a result of an 18% increase in households and an increase in jobs of 37%. The ratio is implausible. DR believes we can ask sensible questions and undertake sensitivity studies which will get us in front of an inspector. Last time we had a local plan the projections at that time on population growth drove the need for houses. This time the ONS have reduced them. Accordingly GL Hearn has reduced their number, but at the same time the economic projections have been pushed up so we are looking at more housing this time around. Do we exist as employee fodder for employers or the other way round? DR believe that we have got the balance wrong and the Plan is driven by economic development.

Jenny Wicks (JW)

Fewer responses this time around would indicate a greater degree of acceptance.

Clandon Golf is not in the current plan. If the Plan goes to the inspector relatively unchanged Lord Onslow's representatives may try to get it in at inspection stage. It is likely that there would have to be a further consultation at that stage. We should therefore concentrate on what is in the draft plan at this stage which do affect W Clandon.

Gosden Hill is agricultural land in the green belt mostly in the parish of West Clandon and marking the edge of urban Guildford. Owned by a developer for many years development was refused about 35 years ago- too long ago to be a material consideration. The current Plan proposes a larger site than the previous plan with 2,000 houses, 8 traveller pitches, a 500-1,000 space Park & Ride compared with only 300 spaces in Merrow, a primary school, secondary school, shops and local facilities and link road to the A3.

West Clandon would be separated from the development by Highcotts Wood, Cotts Wood and Frithy's Wood and a small strip of agricultural land likely to be uneconomic to farm.

Exceptional circumstances are necessary to justify development in the draft plan. Do we care enough to convince the inspectors that the development should not go ahead?

At the previous draft plan stage there were more objections to the School proposals than the GH site. Local councillors have tried to get the draft plan amended, but we have not been successful as the whole council votes on the plan. There is a large concentration of development in the area inc Wisley and Garlick's Arch. It was desirable that as many people as possible should submit objections to policy A25 and other policies and support the buying in of professional support as other parish councils and residents associations are doing.

Matthew Sarti (MS)

All local councillors have spoken against the local plan, it is now down to you to raise objections where you have them but also to support issues you may wish to support, eg seeing the infrastructure put in place before the plan is implemented.

The Council's use of the SIMTRAM system of major highway modelling takes no account of local junctions etc. The 3 hours allowed for rush hour will average out the peak periods in Clandon.

You need to state if you object or support specific sites. There are large areas out to the West which are not Green belt. It is absolutely down to us to respond.

Garlick's Arch includes 700- sq m of industrial space, 400 houses on green belt and ancient woodland and was announced just before publication of plan.

Put forward as an enabling development by the land owners who will donate land for slip roads which will enable other aspects of the local plan to be delivered. The developer will pay for the building of the slip road. This is welcomed by GBC as it will ease some of the congestion and it will enable Garlick's Arch (GA) and Gosden Hill and support Wisley as there is a concern over access to the A3. There is no timescale but it is likely to affect W Clandon which has the closest station. There is no additional infrastructure within GA as it is not a major development.

GH proposal does talk about a train station. As yet Network Rail have not agreed to service this station. Every member of the household should respond positively or negatively on the local plan.

Terence Patrick (TP

2 years ago as borough councillor for Send TP and Keith Taylor got GA removed from the local plan. It now has to be removed again. As a councillor TP had visited GH and the access arrangements are very poor and major money needs to be spent with a big traffic impact on Burpham, Merrow and Clandon.

The Street in Clandon has been a major issue for some years. It is unsuitable to heavy traffic. A bypass is no longer an option.

Christopher Barrass (CB) drew attention to the extension to the Guildford urban area and the closeness of Clandon if developments go ahead.

CD and CB working with other groups will distil down the objections and prepare a template and guidance notes. He invited members of households to object to individual policies with a view to increasing the number of individual objections. Objections can be sent by email or post. If you make your objection on line you will have to go through every element of the plan. GBC have introduced the concept of broad questions in the hope that they will get positive responses. Model answers to this will be provided in particular the question as to whether the Plan is sound.

JW and MS deserve recognition that they have stood up to council leadership pressures. CB also recommended objecting to other sites to show support for other areas. Email addresses of ministers etc will be provided so they can be made aware of objections.

CD pointed out that although they are working with the Guildford Greenbelt Group in some respects this does not imply political support by West Clandon Parish Council or the Clandon Society of the GGG party or any other political party.

Keith Meldrum of Merrow Residents Association (MRA) added the following points:

OAN is far too high. MRA have put money into the pot to pull this to pieces and the number is being recalculated and expected to be significantly lower. The figures will also have to be re-examined

following Brexit as destinations of international students are a significant feature of the calculation. Clandon Golf is unlikely to go in the plan without further consultation.

MRA is particularly concerned about Gosden Hill which will have a significant traffic impact on Merrow. Under current proposals northbound traffic will have to go through Burpham. MRA believes the four way junction is essential. GH includes common land in the Burpham Neighbourhood Plan which needs to be protected. The narrow bridge on Merrow Lane is also a potential constraint.

Constraints have not been applied properly across the board. The GH wording is so vague it provides too many get outs for developers. The GRA is producing a leaflet incorporating advice on possible responses.

KM questioned the 13,860 housing figure used by CD, thought to be more like 15,016 when other developments are included

CD responded: 13,860 is in the planning document, but it is admitted that the total proposed in all sites is greater than that as it allows flexibility.

The snake – sustainable access corridor-no detail is provided on this which is the lynch pin to Guildford's transport strategy in contrast to the precise housing numbers.

MS stated that has not suffered any bullying and the leadership have accepted his stance –

Questions from residents

Hazel McGee – Will names and addresses of objectors be published as part of the public response? JW thought they would not be published in a document but would be available to members of the public wishing to inspect the responses made.

Nigel Bushnell. -Is there any infrastructure beyond the aspiration? CD replied that some projects are committed where there is a budget, some are expected as developer contributions would be required and then there are aspirational schemes which are not yet committed.

Kate McKay- The traffic through the street is highlighted as one of the most important issues and GBC has a duty of care to people in the village. The Street is dangerous and it's getting more dangerous. GBC cannot say they do not have a duty of care which is one of the main issues for respondents to say.

Julie Brown (JB) - One issue not so far referred to is the plan of SCC to increase vehicle numbers moving to Newlands Corner. Most of these will come through our villages. JB does not think that this has been taken into account and has not received a satisfactory response from Councillor Matt Furniss. CD responded that the response is likely to be that it hasn't been taken into account. DR invited JB to write to him.

A resident asked for clarification on the 4 way junction at Burnt Common and whether there was any prospect of another road across the estate. MS said that northbound traffic would have to use the existing Burpham junction.

Nigel Bushel- Is there any mention of Guildford hospital in the plan? No but GP surgeries are included.

Keith MacDonald- Can we get together to get a definition to stop GBC playing fast and loose with what constitutes exceptional development. CD: This would have to be decided in the courts but across the country housing developments on green belt land are being allowed as an exceptional circumstance.

Steve Meredith- How should we respond? JW had previously suggested that we should use the online portal so that each response was counted. JW: you need a lot of stamina to fill in all the questions. The danger is that statistical inferences will be drawn which will mask the intended response. Ideally go through the questionnaire but be very careful how you fill it in. People in the Horsleys have tended to send letters which contains their objection ideally with the numbers of the policies.

A resident of Ripley affected by Garlick's Arch reported they are advising residents not to use the on-line portal as it has been constructed to elicit a positive response. Everyone here should encourage others to respond.

Sheila Bunting- We contested the housing in Waterfieds which went ahead and we are now waterlogged and the road has been damaged.

Hazel McGee- Can you put in more than one email? – yes.

Resident – can't we vote GBC out of office? – Yes but this time the administration got a vote of confidence having promised the Green Belt was safe in their hands.

Rob Wood - Are they all executive homes? CD: The mix of housing is a matter for conjecture although there are some figures in the plan for the percentage of 5, 4 bed home etc. The Council wants to have 40% of affordable homes in any site above 10. Developers are not keen on affordable homes as it makes less money. The development at the cathedral for example has reduced the number of affordable homes on the grounds of non-viability.

David Reeve – need to be careful about affordable homes. In planning speak this means houses are sold or rented at 80% of market rate. This means affordable homes will not necessarily be affordable to young people in our Borough.

A resident asked if there are any developments we can support as we do need more housing?

35% of housing is proposed not in the green belt. There may be opportunities in other sites which have been given to retail and industrial development. GBC has turned its back on Brownfield for housing as this is earmarked for office and retail development.

A member of the Ripley Action Group reported £426k is the average price in Guildford so on the 80% calculation these are not affordable. The Burnt Common brownfield site was replaced by Garlick's Arch and hence rejected at a late stage.

CB on timescales – the deadline is 18th July. Guidance will be available after about a week in which we will consider information from GRA on the housing numbers.

JM thanked speakers and those who had attended and wished everyone a safe journey home.

The meeting closed at 10.05pm