

Why Clandon? – more details emerge on School proposals

Keith Taylor, Chairman of the Planning & Regulatory Committee at Surrey County Council and County Councillor for the Shere Division which includes West Clandon has written to residents throwing some light on the thinking behind the proposals for a new secondary school in the village.

“Ever since 2001, the number of children being born each year in the Guildford Borough area (and indeed across the whole of Surrey) has been steadily increasing. For obvious reasons, extra births result in an increased requirement for primary school places about 4 years later and for secondary school places about 11 years later. We have already therefore been having to respond to an increasing demand for primary school places for several years now. In my County Council role, I am in the front line of the biggest school building programme (extending existing schools and building new schools) that the County has seen for many decades. It is only this year that secondary schools have really been affected for the first time. For September 2014, the number of applications for secondary school places was 5.7% higher than in September 2013. From the number of children coming through primary schools in each year group, we know that the demand for secondary places will further increase in every year for the foreseeable future. For West Clandon and the other villages in my County Division (see list below) most children have historically gone to George Abbot for their secondary school, with some also going to St Peter's (RC) or Christ's College (CofE). The same is true for some of the other villages on the Eastern side of the Guildford Borough area. e.g. Ripley and East Clandon. This year, however, these schools are all oversubscribed, and I have been having to deal with some very upset parents whose children have been offered places at schools right outside the Borough e.g. in Woking. Unless something is done to provide some more secondary school capacity, the number of children in this situation will increase year by year in all of our villages, including West Clandon. I therefore welcome the fact that provision has been made in the draft Local Plan for a new secondary school. “

Councillor Taylor is less sure of the process by which the site at Clandon was identified but understands that the Guildford Borough Planning Officers arranged a meeting to discuss the requirements and possible locations for new school places and some County Education officers attended to advise on this. Having confirmed a clear need for a new secondary school to serve the Eastern villages, they considered a number of possible sites and that north of Meadowlands was judged to be the most suitable.

He adds, “At this stage, this site is only a proposal. It is obviously therefore quite reasonable for local residents to respond to the Borough's Local Plan consultation indicating any concerns that they have about increased traffic etc. It is also possible that some people may respond to the consultation suggesting other sites and if this results in us finding an alternative site that most people regard as more suitable, I will be only too happy. However, for the reasons that I have explained above, it is vital that we do identify a site for a new secondary school in the Local Plan finally approved”.