

New Burnt Common Site added to Local Plan

In a surprise move a special meeting of the Guildford Borough Executive on the 11th May approved a recommendation to remove the land around Burnt Common warehouse on London Road Send (between the A3 Burnt Common exit slip and the A3) and to replace it with a new site, which has not appeared in any of the documentation to date. The new green field site lies between Burnt Common Lane and the A3. The proposed use envisages 400 homes, (an increase of 300 on the previous proposal) and up to 7000 square metres of industrial and commercial space.

Part of the justification refers to land for new slip roads between the A3 and the A247 (Clandon Road). The provision of an 'all movements' junction at this location is probably motivated in part by the expected pressure of the major developments at Wisley on traffic through Ripley. The opening up of slip roads at Burnt Common and Ockham Park would mitigate traffic problems through Ripley but could also make Clandon a more attractive cut-through, exacerbating the traffic problems we already have in the village. The Plan will have reached full Council on 24th May with consultation programmed for 6 weeks from 6th June 2016.

Meanwhile the Parish Council has objected to the proposed development at Gosden Hill in advance of the formal consultation. West Clandon Parish Council objects to the proposals to develop the land of Gosden Hill farm as a settlement with 2000 houses on the following grounds:

- It is green belt land. The Council objects in principle to the taking of green belt land for residential purposes. One purpose of the green belt is to stop the town encroaching on the countryside. Conservative politicians at national and local level have repeatedly stated that "the green belt is safe with us". This seems to need modifying by adding "except when we want to build houses on it".
- West Clandon is a rural parish and the village is washed over by the green belt. Most of the Gosden Hill site is in the parish. The development would extend the built up area of Guildford well into the parish.
- The development site is a hillside sloping down to the A3. Unlike earlier developments along the A3 at Burpham, the housing cannot be screened by bunds and planting. It will therefore detract from the "soft green edge" to Guildford at this point.
- West Clandon will be affected by the inevitable increase in traffic on the A247 caused by the proposed developments at Gosden Hill Farm and by the proposals for development at Ripley/Send, and Wisley Airfield. The A247 through the village is very narrow with tight bends and a very problematic exit from the station. Lorries regularly mount the footpath to pass. This footpath is the only access to the infants' school and the danger is obvious. The evidence base does not include traffic data which takes adequate account of the proposed developments and the plan does not identify the combined impact of all these developments or show how it will be mitigated.
- The A3 is controlled by Highways England, the A247 by Surrey County Council and the railway by Network Rail. Guildford Borough Council does not have control of any of the key traffic elements and therefore there is a high degree of uncertainty about infrastructure provision. The developer will need to generate cash flow by building and selling houses before funding the A3 access roads and the railway station. Residents are very concerned that this infrastructure will be provided only after a long period of disruption caused by construction and residential traffic.

This is intended as a comment on Gosden Hill specifically and does not imply acceptance of the rest of the plan. There are several other aspects of the Local Plan which concern us and which we do not support-for example the unilateral changes to the settlement boundary of the village.