

Parish Council hosts Cuckoo Farm site visit

The main Parish Council hosted a visit to the proposed secondary school site behind Cuckoo Farm Site attended by no fewer the seven representatives of Surrey Highways, the Education Authority and Guildford Planning Department. Visitors were invited to trudge their way round the perimeter of the site from the station car park with its notorious junction with the Street and round to Meadowlands where construction of the new housing development effectively cuts off any thoughts of access from that direction.

It's always difficult to judge on such occasions quite what impressions have been left and there is of course a risk that visitors will view with very different eyes from our own but at the very least planners will have experienced just how difficult it is to cross the Street even on a relatively quiet morning in August and imagine what it would be like with over 1000 children meandering over the road from narrow pavement to inadequate verge.



Aside from access and the broader impact of traffic on the village drainage is the other big issue. It is already known that parts of the site are rated as a significant flood risk. Unfortunately the deluge which swamped the railway station arrived a few days too late for our visitors to experience this at first hand but the points about inadequate sewers, the risks to surrounding properties and the expense of constructing flood mitigation measures were well made and doubtless the resulting pictures of waterlogged Clandon will find their way into a number of consultation responses to help illustrate the point.

Those attending were given a souvenir summary of our arguments to take away, the main points being:

- Safe road access would be very expensive and difficult to achieve.
- The site is low lying with impermeable London clay, large areas of the field are regularly covered in standing water while satisfactory drainage would be expensive.
- Water run-off will be a significant issue.
- A247 is a narrow "A" road with a single narrow pavement which switches sides. Pinch point south of the site is only 14 feet wide – two busses cannot pass without mounting pavement.
- There are no viable "park and walk" sites nearby which could take that volume of traffic arriving and turning. Unauthorised parking locally is already a problem.
- Trees on the site are subject to Protection Orders.
- This is a Green Belt site which is of importance to the setting of the village. There is a history of planning refusals on the site. Cuckoo Cottage (adjacent to the current access) is a Grade II listed 14th century house and the setting needs to be respected.

Detailed assessments of the site including drainage and traffic are expected to be published towards the end of September, probably too late for the current consultation, but which could feature in a second round before the plan is finalised for submission in 2015.

Guildford Borough Council has itself published a number of significant reports over the summer including a transport assessment which forecasts the impact of proposals in the Local Plan on the transport network. Unfortunately there are no specific concerns for the Village highlighted. The Sustainability Appraisal gives some indication of other sites which may have been considered for development and rejected. Only one such Education site is included described as, "Land near Effingham Common Road, Lower Road and Water Lane". The Effingham site was rejected as, "The Land near Effingham Common Road, scores Red in terms of, surface water flood risk, its intersection with a designation of local importance and being over 2000m from a railway station."

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