

Authority rejects sites for schools

County expels Clandon and Salt Box Road proposals

By **André Langlois**

PROPOSALS outlined in the Guildford local plan for two new secondary schools have been rejected by the local education authority.

Green belt sites next to Clandon Railway Station and in Salt Box Road, Worplesdon, were earmarked by the borough council as suitable sites for the new secondary schools.

Both proposals were heavily criticised by residents for the strain they would put on roads and the impact on neighbouring communities.

In response to the local plan consultation, Surrey County Council, the authority for both education and the roads, added to the criticism.

Of the land to the south of

the station in West Clandon, Sue Janota of the county council's environment and infrastructure department, wrote: "The site is located in a village with relatively low population and potential for future expansion, and there would appear to be insufficient population within sustainable travel of the proposed site to warrant placing a major community facility here.

"A more preferable site for a new school in transport sustainability terms would be within the urban area that it is intended to serve, or within a new urban extension/settlement that it could serve as populations increase around it.

"With the exception of the presence of a railway station, there would seem to be little

justification in locating a school on this site.

"The fact that the proposed Guildford eastern urban extension at Gosden Hill Farm and the new community at Wisley might not in themselves be large enough to justify a whole new secondary school, should not be a reason to locate such a new facility away from them".

Ms Janota raised concerns about the lack of access on to a highway, meaning the main transport link would be the railway which serves only a few villages in the area.

She suggests development would have a significant impact on ancient woodland and be at risk of flooding.

The second site, north of Salt Box Road, is adjacent to Whitmoor Common - part of a Special Protection Area for birds.

Ms Janota wrote that the borough council would need to demonstrate that a secondary school would not have an adverse affect on the Common.

"There are likely to be access issues relating to visibility and safety for pedestrians

and cyclists, which could be difficult to resolve given that the road is fundamentally a rural road, the confines of the Common and the existing structure of the Salt Box Road bridge", she said. "The restricted headroom of the bridge would also prohibit double decker buses from accessing the school from the east.

"A site within the proposed urban extension at Blackwell Farm, with all necessary access infrastructure built in and a catchment surrounding the site would be a more sustainable location in transport terms for a new secondary school to serve the western side of Guildford".

Keith Witham, the county councillor for Worplesdon, said: "When I first heard about this crazy proposal from Guildford Borough Council in June, I said it was ludicrous. Salt Box Road is an entirely inappropriate place for a secondary school. It's a small rural road with no lighting, no pavements and a low bridge and no transport links, in between ecologically sensitive sites. I'm pleased Surrey has rejected the plan."

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