

Compton PC - Chairman's report

Local Plan

The latest draft of the Local Plan was published on April 5. It can be viewed at:

<http://www2.guildford.gov.uk/councilmeetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=264&MId=543&Ver=4>. It proposes the following:

- 1) 693 new homes to be built each year across the borough during the period of the plan. (There has been no reduction in the total housing number as a result of the constraints of green belt, landscape, flooding or infrastructure. This is despite reassurances from Paul Spooner at Compton Parish Meeting in May 2015 that we should not worry about the 693 figure because constraints would be applied to it.)
- 2) 70% of the new housing will be on the green belt and only 1,172 homes out of the total 13,800 are to be built in the town centre.
- 3) A reduction in employment land. Although the number of houses has increased compared with the previous draft of the Local Plan, the amount of employment floorspace B1 to B8 is down by 80%.
- 4) 45,000 square metres to be allocated for retail in the town centre. This is despite the fact that retail unit vacancy rates in the town centre remained unchanged in March for the third consecutive month (at 10.9%); and despite the British Retail Consortium forecasts, published in April, which show a decline in retail outlets and in employment in the sector, with up to 900,000 fewer jobs in retail by 2025. There is a concern that if more retail floor space is introduced, it will result in the closure of existing shops.
- 5) There are to be 5 "strategic sites", including Wisley Airfield, Gosden Hill, Normandy, Slyfield and Blackwell Farm (which spans both Compton and Worplesdon Parishes). The images below show: i) Guildford's proposed housing trajectories compared with neighbouring authorities; and ii) the number of development sites proposed for each authority. These figures are taken from the Surrey Infrastructure Survey (<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/environment-housing-and-planning/development-in-surrey/surrey-future/surrey-infrastructure-study>).

PHASING

Figure 3.18 demonstrates current anticipated phasing of housing in the period to 2030.

The phasing has been recorded alongside the trajectories at a site specific level allowing the growth in housing to be illustrated using GIS, as well as phased over time. The phasing is broken down into the following periods:

- 2015-2020;
- 2020-2025;
- 2025-2030.

The housing trajectories show the following:

- The greatest proportion of houses will come forward between 2015-2020, in which 17,000 units are proposed. This accounts for 36% of the housing across Surrey;
- Housing trajectories are lower in the long term as fewer sites have been identified for development

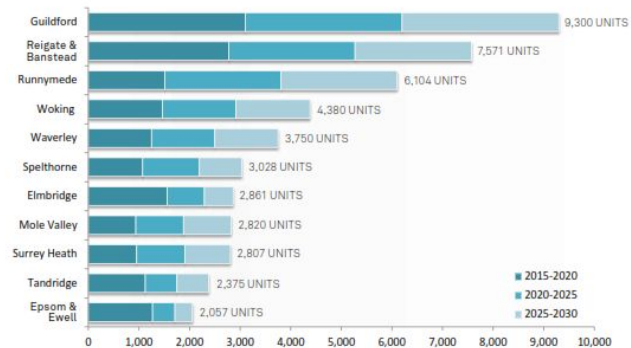


FIGURE 3.18 - PROPOSED HOUSING TRAJECTORIES PHASED OVER 15 YEARS
Source: Local Authority data provided for Infrastructure Study

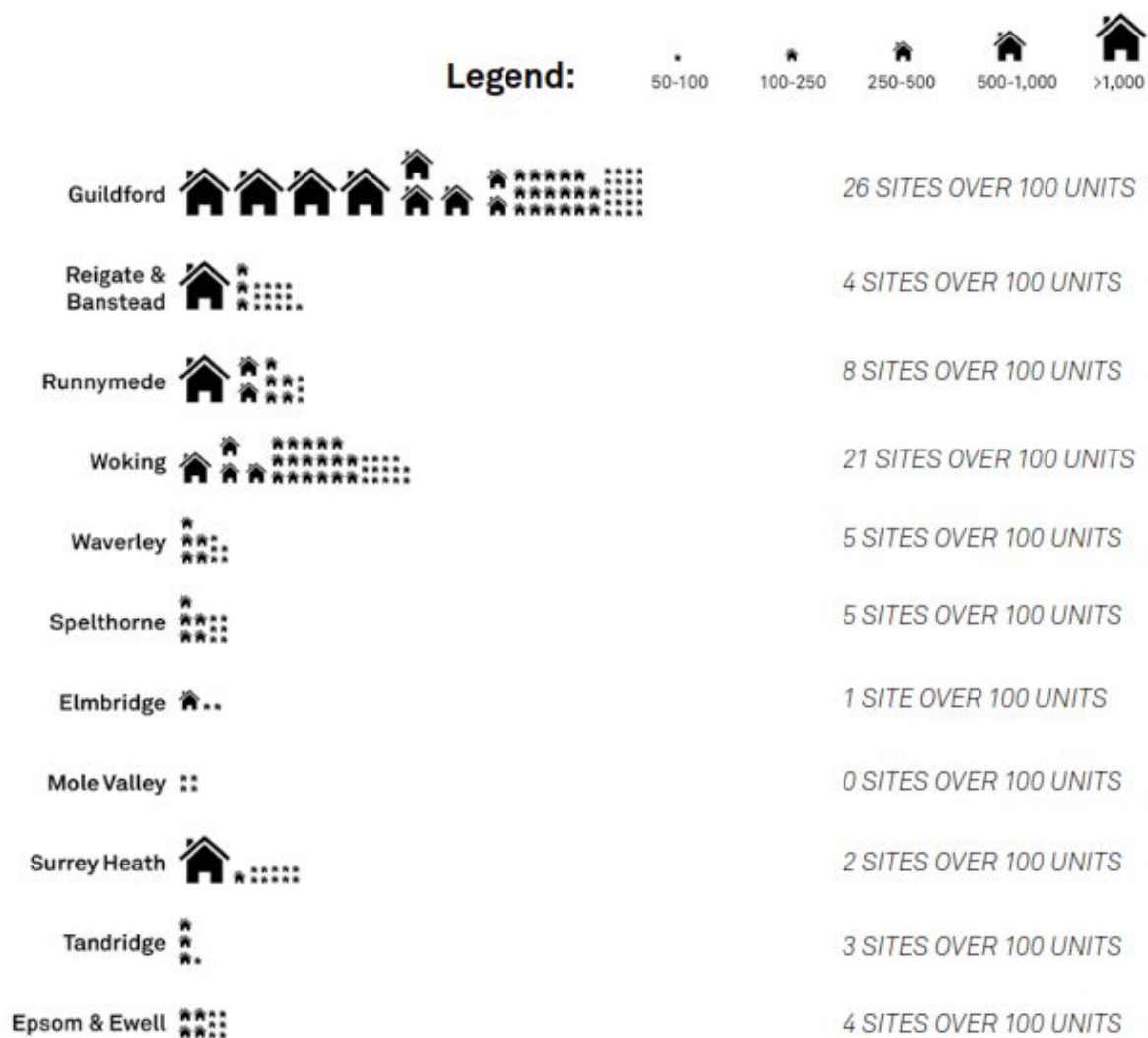


FIGURE 3.17 - NUMBER OF POTENTIAL SITES CURRENTLY IDENTIFIED FOR EACH AUTHORITY

Source: Local Authority data provided for Infrastructure Study

6) On Blackwell Farm, the following is proposed:

- 1,800 new homes
- an extension of the Surrey Research Park (10-11 hectares)
- a new traffic-light controlled junction on the A31 at Down Place, using the (widened) Down Place private lane as an access road to the site and linking with Manor Park via the ancient woodland
- secondary access at Egerton Road via Gill Avenue
- a two-form entry junior school, GP surgery and retail outlets
- 6 travellers' pitches
- The fields to the south and east of Down Place (largely within the Onslow Ward) are to remain within the green belt.

The Compton PC Local Plan Sub Committee has four key concerns about the proposal to develop this site:

- loss of nationally important landscape
- infrastructure problems surrounding the site - the traffic generated by the 1,800 homes and new school will have a choice of joining the daily tailbacks on the A31 or negotiating the already congested Tesco and Cathedral roundabouts. These problems will be exacerbated by the proposal to build another "strategic site" of 1,000 homes on the west side of Guildford between Flexford and Normandy, 1,300 new homes in the South Ash/Tongham area and 4,500 new homes in the Aldershot area.
- impact on the parish as a result of the increased traffic generated by these sites, with related concerns about safety and pollution.

Councillor Curtis and I raised two of these concerns - infrastructure and pollution - at GBC's Executive meeting on May 11. We did not feel that our questions were adequately addressed. I have written to Matt Furniss, Lead Councillor for Infrastructure, requesting a meeting to ascertain the following:

1. What assumptions are being made about where the development traffic will go, including how much will be assumed to stay within the area defined by the Research Park, Hospital and University before arriving at the Tesco junction
2. What level of traffic is expected to exit the Hog's Back junction and in what direction
3. The links where problems are anticipated to be exacerbated by the development, and in particular the impact on the Farnham Road into Guildford from the Hog's Back
4. How GBC's modellers have married the strategic Highways England and Surrey County Council modelling of Guildford's strategic traffic issues with the specific modelling of the links related to this development
5. What assumptions are being made about the reduction in traffic along the A31 as a result of the proposed new station at Park Barn

I have not yet received a response from Cllr Furniss.

Actions 1 - Members of the Local Plan Sub Committee will draft the Compton PC response to the draft Local plan and circulate this to councillors for their comments.

Action 2 - Chase Councillor Furniss re a meeting to discuss points 1-5 above.

Landscape evaluation survey

On April 28, Landscape Management Services carried out an evaluation of the land on the northern slopes of the Hog's Back between Flexford and Manor Park in the vicinity of Blackwell Farm, and submitted its report on May 11 (attached).

The conclusions reached in the report are as follows:

- Most of Blackwell Farm and the land in its vicinity is of a landscape and scenic quality, character and condition that should merit inclusion within a revised AONB boundary.
- The landscape is critical to the setting of the Hog's Back ridge and in the conservation of rural views to the north of equal, if not greater importance, than land to the west of Down Place, which has been included in the boundary proposed by the Surrey Hills AONB Board.
- Two fields at the eastern side of the Farm did not meet the AONB criteria. However, these were acknowledged to be important in providing the setting to Guildford and an important transitional landscape.
- The boundary put forward by Surrey Hills AONB Board between Mисley Copse and Down Place and between Down Place and the current AONB boundary does not follow any defined landscape features (such as a ridge line, woodland edges, or prominent field boundary) or reflect a decline in landscape and scenic quality or changes in landscape character that might justify exclusion.
- The proposed AONB boundary should be reviewed at this location and realigned according to Land Management's recommendations
- Failure to realign the boundary according to Land Management's recommendations could enable opportunities for development which would result in significant harm to the setting of the existing AONB and the loss of landscape which is of a character and quality which merits inclusion within a revised AONB boundary.

Action - To present the findings of the landscape evaluation to the Surrey Hills Planning Advisor with a request to amend realign the AONB boundary as per Land Management Service's recommendations.