

Chairman's Report November 2013

Watts Gallery Agreement

Further to previous reports, meetings took place with Perdita Hunt from WG and me and with Perdita, Nicholas Truman (Curator WG) and the Cemetery Committee. All came away from the meetings reassured that the resources would be put into place to ensure the Chapel and Cemetery would be conserved and maintained to the standards residents are used to under Parish Council management and to those we have come to expect from WG. It was also agreed that the key function of the premises as a mortuary chapel, would be maintained.

The outline details of the agreement approved by the Parish Council are as follows;

The Gallery will lease the Chapel from Compton Parish Council (CPC) for £5k a year on a long-term basis (99 years).

The lease is a full repairing lease and they have agreed to raise funds to fulfill a plan of works to conserve as well as maintain key structures. Details to be circulated.

The Gallery will lease the Cottage from CPC, again on a long term full repairing lease, the rental equates to the same amount payable for cemetery maintenance and as WG will manage the maintenance, the transaction needed will be as simple as possible but, will need to take place to comply with VAT regs.

The break clause was reduced to 25 years. (approved earlier in the year).

Either party can break the agreement if the objectives cannot be met or are not being met, although there is a process to follow, to ensure every effort has been made to enable a successful outcome.

WG will be fully responsible for the above and will insure and manage these on behalf of the Parish Council who retain the assets. In return WG will market the Chapel and key structures as part of the Watts Estate, they will receive the donations made by members of the public via the donations box, will benefit from sales made at the Chapel from tours and all activity relating to the Chapel. WG can apply for the funds currently held by the Restoration Trust and will need to liaise with Thea Adair, Chair of the fund on the logistics.

The agreement has been approved in principal by the Parish Council and WG and we are now fine tuning details, such as how the transaction will be carried out, how WG will interact with CPC / the Cemetery Committee and I will also write a letter to confirm that there are no known works needed that we are aware of, other than those listed in the various published surveys.

CPC will remain the burial authority and will, via the Cemetery Committee and the Clerk, manage all matters relating to burials. CPC will continue to receive income from burials.

Providing no major / material changes are proposed by WG I am asking for approval to finalise the arrangement in order that an article explaining the rationale can go into December's /January's NEWS.

Local Plan / Issues and Options

The Local Plan sets out plans for Guildford until 2031 and includes housing, employment, infrastructure, services, etc.

It is developed in stages, and a government inspector must approve the final plan. If the inspector doesn't approve the plan Guildford will remain without a plan and we have been informed that planning will then be by appeal.

(Waverley's plan was recently turned down, for although we are told there are no housing figures that must be achieved, it was felt that Waverley fell short of their capacity).

The following will also be sent out as an email to residents, following clarification or addition by Cllr. James Palmer

Someone once told me (probably a long time ago) that the difference between Oxbridge candidates and other Universities was that when faced with a question, 'other candidates' use their knowledge to answer the question as fully as possible, whereas an Oxbridge candidate will question the validity of the question and provide an answer in line with what the question should have been! Or words to that affect.

In line with this thinking I am using the introduction to the Local Plan, to explain:

Guildford's new Local Plan will set out the vision for the borough and the approach to development between now and 2031

GRA and many others who have consulted amongst peers, are questioning the 'vision' which is to grow the economy by removing barriers to build.

It will look at finding positive solutions for the growth needed including providing enough jobs, new homes, improving transport and creating better local facilities.

Big question over 'growth needed' , use of selected rather than balanced surveys and use of hypothetical figures (i.e. asking whether people know of anyone who might like to live in the area and inappropriate use of the term 'sustainable' to either promote or deter proposals and use of extrapolated estimated figures in dated papers which are then used to support housing and other arguments.

The government says that all areas have to grow – and all councils need to find ways to manage this growth. The new Local Plan is our strategic response to help meet that growth agenda

To make sure we can support the right type of development, of the right scale and in the right place, our Local Plan needs to recognise the different and sometimes complex local requirements. Our priority is to help the borough evolve to meet changing needs. We also need to protect our culture and environment to provide the best choice for future generations.

Local Councils have been directed to support and achieve this. It is not entirely clear whether they actually believe this to be the best way forward, but if every council can find a way to meet local needs and if transport infrastructure is improved, so that centres of employment are not disadvantaged, then we can 'grow from within' (urban regeneration) however this is probably more costly and complex than simply spreading out onto virgin territory (greenbelt).

The result of the consultation process has been interesting! Communities have come together (albeit in opposition to the main proposal). I very much hope that Central Government will see the outcome of the exercise as a plus for Localism. Alternatively if we give the topic the level of consideration needed, with time for amendment and redress, they may send the Inspector round (so we are told) to approve plans put forward by developers and then we / GBC will have no say / control. Given the emphasis placed on building on our greenbelt by GBC, I am not sure the threat is much worse than the current proposals?

*It seems that WE need to protect our culture and environment against back door policies that result from lack of understanding caused by peculiar jargon (such as insetting, washed over, boundary realignment, merging villages etc and WE need to help the borough / government understand our needs by **taking part in the consultation** and indeed any other means that will demonstrate to those representing us, that community spirit is alive and well!*

The key arguments

What growth is really needed (housing)? Aim to meet actual local need leaving room to manoeuvre if exceeded. GRA & other groups adopting figure of 300 homes a year, in line with GBC's original figure.

What growth is needed (employment)? I refer to a paper by Roland Mckinney, which points out that the GBC reference doc was written in 2006 (note their own housing market assessment of 2009 is deemed to be out of date). Evidence used assumes that both retail and internet shopping will grow (not supported by other docs) and by a Q&A study carried out in 2008 with employers where the overriding issue was transport / congestion.

Evidence of a growing economy (ONS stats 2010) was dismissed as an anomaly and solutions to almost all comments / surveys, etc is to build more premises rather than to consider other growth options widely adopted throughout Europe.

Do we want to engineer growth? This is a chicken and egg situation! Business will attract people who need homes, if homes are built without jobs, the economy will decline...If funding from local / natural growth is used to improve transport infrastructure across the South East, this question could be redundant?

Do we need to build on Greenbelt? Refer to papers by Sue Parker and Ronald McKinney. In short NO. We do need to pinpoint the reasons why and the flaws in the arguments presented as part of the consultation. These are that GBC's local needs of 300 homes and new employment sites can be met by intelligent use of brown field space and underground car parks. This maybe more expensive and therefore less profitable than building on open space, but profit is not a 'special circumstance'.

How does this impact Compton? It effects everyone.

Compton is in greenbelt

The oldest part of The Street and parts of Eastbury are 'Inset' and classified as settlement. As such they are subject to 'infill' of property in character with village (note this is very limited and these same areas are covered in part by conservation order)

What of the remaining areas of Compton? What of the AONB? How are decisions made as to whether green belt should be 'rolled back' / removed? What is safeguarding, if it isn't safe?

What use is 'safeguarding' land taken out of greenbelt if ' when land is "safeguarded" that the schedule for its use cannot be guaranteed'?

To assist with any submissions made, I am attaching the short version put together by GRA (Guildford residents Association). Note this is an 'overview' and points relating to Compton / have been added by me in red, but please do omit/add your own comments. As with ALL docs, we have been advised that these will carry more weight if you use them as an aid rather than cutting and pasting.

I also attach docs put together by 2 residents. Sue Parker has carried out a quick analysis of brown field sites (which should be used first before any consideration is given to greenbelt) and housing density and concludes that Guildford CAN fulfil local or minimum housing needs by intelligent use of brown field sites (making all reference to greenbelt development unnecessary. Adjustments to housing density and excluding any contentious brown field sites still permits this, with room to manoeuvre.

Ronald McKinney has produced a considered analysis of the employment land assessment and concludes that this is seriously flawed, which has

repercussions on other documents.

DEADLINE IS 5.00PM FRIDAY 29TH NOVEMBER