

Compton Parish Council Local Plan Sub-Committee Report - November 2018

Main Modifications

The Local Plan Sub-Committee submitted a response to the Borough Council's Main Modifications on behalf of Compton PC. This was the response circulated to parish councillors on October 11, 2018.

ONS figures

Just before the end of the consultation on the Main Modifications, new lower population and household figures were produced by the Office for National Statistics. These corrected flaws which inflated Guildford's housing figures, for example by overestimating how many students stay and have children after their course finishes.

Based on these revised figures, Guildford Residents Association's adviser, a leading national expert, has shown that Guildford could achieve ambitious economic growth with an extra 360 homes a year. This is still a big number, recognising we need homes, but is significantly lower than the 672 extra homes a year currently proposed in the Draft Local Plan. The new figure of 360 homes means development in the green belt on the scale proposed in the Plan can no longer be justified. The new lower figure would also make it more achievable to bring forward well-planned, sensitively-designed housing in the town centre in a timely way.

As a result of these revised figures, the GRA and other residents groups and parish councils (including Compton) asked the Inspector to reopen the Examination and to amend the Local Plan to take account of the new lower figures. Guildford Borough Council also formally requested the Inspector to reopen the Examination in the light of the lower figures. However, the Council has asked the Inspector only to consider removing those green belt sites which were added as part of the Main Modifications. Only one of these sites (Aaron's Hill in Godalming) impacts the AONB, and none of them would have as serious an impact on the local road network as Blackwell Farm.

Reopened LP Examination

The Planning Inspector has agreed to reopen the Local Plan Examination and has asked GBC to propose dates for another hearing session. The Guildford Vision Group and Guildford Society have written to the Inspector requesting that the reopened hearing considers the Council's proposed new town centre policy, not just the housing numbers. Both groups are unhappy with this policy and have lobbied for the town centre to accommodate much more housing (an additional 2,000 homes), thus freeing up one or more green belt sites currently in the frame for housing development. They argue that town centre homes represent more sustainable development than congestion-creating homes in the

green belt dependent on major A3 improvements as yet to be scheduled, and acknowledged by GBC to be outside its control.

As yet, no date has been set for the reopened Examination, and no agenda has been published. Although the Inspector might agree that the housing number can be reduced, the Local Plan Sub-Committee believes it is unlikely that he will open up the hearing to wider discussion about which sites should be removed from the Plan. However, should he do so, we would advise Compton PC to be professionally represented at this hearing.

Judicial Review

Whilst the reopening of the Examination may provide an opportunity to stop the Blackwell Farm development from going ahead (if the housing number is reduced significantly), it also pushes back the whole Local Plan timetable, with the Plan's adoption now unlikely to take place before autumn 2019. This will give the PC more time to find a suitable representative and funds to oppose the Blackwell Farm site allocation, should the site continue to be included in the Local Plan and should there be strong grounds for a legal challenge.

Worplesdon PC has agreed to contribute £2,000 towards an initial consultation with a barrister/QC to determine whether the PCs have a strong case for a judicial review. Like Compton PC, Worplesdon's final decision on whether to pursue a legal challenge will be made when it knows the strength of the case.

The Local Plan Sub Committee also plans to approach Wanborough and Puttenham PCs to see if they, too, will consider contributing to a legal challenge. It is likely that they, too, will want to know that the case is winnable before committing funds.

Strategic Development Framework workshop

A Strategic Development Framework workshop took place on November 16. This was intended to be an opportunity for early engagement with parish councils on work GBC is undertaking towards the Local Plan's Supplementary Planning Document (SDP). The focus was on constraints to development.

The SPD supplements policy, it does not create policy, but when adopted is a material consideration in planning decisions. The final document will undergo formal consultation for a minimum period of four weeks before progressing through the committee process.

Cllr Nagaty was able to attend the workshop on behalf of the PC, despite receiving very late notice of it, and he can give further feedback at the PC meeting.

Meeting between Worplesdon PC and University of Surrey

The Strategic Development Framework workshop coincided with a short meeting (one hour) between Worplesdon PC representatives and the University (chaired by Anne Milton MP) to discuss ground-water flooding relating to the Blackwell Farm site. This meeting was at the request of Worplesdon PC. Karen Stevens was also invited personally by Anne Milton to

attend the meeting and to widen the discussion to include AONB and traffic. However, Karen felt that this was premature when the Inspector had not produced his Local Plan report and the Local Plan (with finalised site allocations) had not yet been adopted.

JR of Waverley Local Plan

The legal challenge by the Campaign to Protect Rural England and Protect our Waverley against Waverley Borough Council's Local Plan has not been upheld by the High Court Judge. Compton PC's Local Plan Sub-Committee considers this decision to be unfortunate for Compton as the high level of new housing in Waverley is likely to have an adverse effect on traffic through the parish. The Dunsfold Aerodrome development, in particular, will result in increased congestion on the A281, which in turn will lead to drivers diverting along the B3100, the B3000 and Charterhouse/Priorsfield Road.