

Local Plan Sub-Committee Report - March 17, 2025

Solar Farm

The Secretary of State has rejected Compton Parish Council's request to call in the solar farm application. As a result, the Neighbourhood Plan Sub-Committee is recommending that the Parish Council seek initial advice from a barrister to find out the prospects of a successful judicial review. It was suggested that no challenge should be pursued unless the prospects of success were high (70% and above).

The reasons for exploring a judicial review are as follows:

- The solar farm will cause significant environmental harm.
- The solar farm will act as an enabler for the Blackwell Farm development and for an even bigger Blackwell Farm strategic site:
 - The solar installation could result in land that has recently been put forward for inclusion in the revised AONB/National Landscape (NL) boundary being withdrawn and not receiving the NL designation which it merits. This land, which is located on the new "urban edge" will therefore become even more vulnerable to development. NB, the University has a long-term strategy to develop its entire estate, which currently stretches west along the Hog's Back to Flexford.
 - Blackwell Farm, and especially an expanded Blackwell Farm, will result in more traffic through Compton, with the associated problems of noise and air pollution (part of The Street is already designated an Air Quality Management Area). The increase in traffic is not just linked to the potential future residents of the new housing estate, the new schools and new businesses, but to the new infrastructure that would be necessary to unlock the development.
 - Over the long term, the biggest risk for Compton is that a large-scale development on the west of Guildford, such as that at Blackwell Farm, will require a new road through the parish. During the 1960s, there were proposals to build such a road, but these were resisted by residents because the route proposed was too close to the village, it was felt that it would subdivide the village even further and that it would harm the landscape. Although a new road might provide some relief to the B3000, this would be temporary; transport studies show that creating extra road capacity would, within a short time, generate more traffic than there was before (induced demand).

A briefing document has been prepared for the barrister on the solar farm application.

Air quality

Illegal NO₂ levels have been detected along a section of the A3, and this has resulted in National Highways closing a section of the footpath along the Hog's Back/Farnham Road, from the Farnham Road/A31 Junction to Egerton Road (See Annex A). The high levels of pollution in this area, especially at Egerton Road (one of two access points to the proposed Blackwell Farm development) will be an obstacle to the development going ahead.

GRA meeting

The Guildford Residents Association (GRA) meeting took place on February 22. Although the Local Plan Sub-Committee members were unable to attend, we understand that the group discussed the implications of the proposed reorganisation of local government in Surrey. The issue of local representation was raised and the GRA has since written to the Leader of Guildford Borough Council, the Chief Executive and all councillors with requests to address the situation as a matter of urgency. A copy of the letter is attached (Annex B)