



Notes of Guildford Residents Association Meeting on 25th January 2022 held on Zoom

Chair: Amanda Mullarkey

Notes of meeting: Emma Shaw/Jane Vessey

Present:

Amanda Mullarkey	CRARA
Keith Meldrum	Merrow RA
Catherine Young	West Horsley PC
Karen Stevens	Compton PC
Donna Collinson	Stoke next Guildford
Andy Clapham	Burpham CA
Anthony Jacques	Onslow VA
John Harrison	St Catherine's VA
Colin Mullis	Stoke next Guildford
Ian Durrans	Tyting Society
Martin Dowland	Save the Hog's Back
Sue Hibbert	Abbotswood Central RA
Michael Aaronson	Normandy AG
Esther Parry	FoSH
Alistair Smith	Guildford Society
Jane Vessey	Downsedge RA
Emma Shaw	Downsedge RA
Janet Ashton	Perry Hill
Jenny Wicks	West Clandon PC
Jennie Kyte	HTAG
Richard Jarvis	Tyting Soc

Apologies:

David Thorp	Tyting Soc
Beverley Mussell	Westborough BDRA
David Bird	WBDRA
Bob McShee	Wood Street VA
Bob Bromham	HTAG

1. Amanda Mullarkey (AM) opened the meeting and welcomed those attending, including Catherine Young as this was her first meeting.

2. AM asked how often members thought we should circulate GRA's accounts to members, and it was agreed by all present that once a year was sufficient.

GBC – organisation and communication

- AM discussion with Joss Bigmore (Council Leader and Lead Corporate Strategy and Strategic Planning) regarding possibility for improved communication between GRA, councillors and planning officers. Plan is that a meeting would be arranged including GRA representatives, councillors from across parties and opportunity to meet new officers. General agreement this would be a good idea and interest from number of members to be involved.
- Concern raised by Alistair Smith (AS) GSoc, that planning officers are not liaising with the town centre master-planning team.
- Character within the Masterplan a key issue and needs to be much better defined. Donna Collinson (DC) commented that the City Status bid documents contained a very good statement on character.

3. AONB extension consultation

Members' responses

- Overall view should not be constrained by the areas indicated by Natural England. Janet Ashton (JA) consideration of NW of Borough: Ash Range, Normandy, Worplesdon, Pirbright.
- Karen Stephens (KS) - Consideration of Compton and whole of the Hog's Back area.
- Keith Meldrum (KM) - Concerns over Clandon Golf Course (part of Onslow Estate) owner keen to remove from greenbelt. Feel area should be AONB. Concerned over difficulty with the submission systems available. See Richard Jarvis notes sent 26th Jan.
- Jennie Wicks (JW) - Fuzzy boundary at West Clandon does not make sense, and area should extend to the rail track, and on to the A3.
- Katherine Young (KY) - Looking beyond 'hatched area' re West Horsley to include whole village and possibly West Horsley Place. Other submissions likely from the Clandons and Ockham. Include all current AGLV area.
- Michael Aaronson (MA) - Need to resist use of hard boundaries. In Normandy need to go north of the railway line (fragmented heathlands area).
- JA - Not just hills! Blackwell Farm, Wanborough, Flexford, Brookwood cemetery and beyond.
- DC - Thorneycroft - ancient woodland, hills, canal, lake very rich wildlife similar to Shalford. If not AONB, then aim for upgrade from Site of Nature Conservation Interest to Site of Special Scientific Interest (Woodland Trust). Would provide protection of all ancient trees. DC and Andy Clapham (AC) to liaise over neighbouring areas.
- John Harrison (JH) - St Catherine's has little pockets under AONB. Main driver is legislation and the 'quality' of the landscape.
- KM - has a good map from Natural England for the boundaries as well as mobile phone app good for photos and location. Link to be shared.

GRA position and response

- Including all AGLV

- Including the larger estate areas (to the north and east)
 - Including the heaths etc to the northwest – Normandy, Ash ...
 - Including green fingers (where continuous) into the urban fabric, St Catherine's, Stoke Lock etc.
 - Including anomalies such as The Mount
- RAs submitting to send to GRA as well so can combine in their submission.
 - Existing boundaries do not follow actual lines of scenic beauty, a 'map of convenience'. Need to combine the fragmented areas.

4. Local Plan – Development Management Policies consultation

- Deadline 18th Feb. Meeting with councillors and officers - how to raise main issues of concern. Media? Direct communication between individual RAs and their ward councillors. Councillors on the planning committee can hear concerns without becoming pre-determined, as long as they are not expected to express views.
- Priorities
 - Height - narrow roads predominant in Guildford do not allow for significant increase in height. (ES note after meeting; there is a section on ratio between building heights and road widths for different types of roads within the National Model Design Code Part 1, pg 25, Debenhams would fall foul of this guidance).
 - Bulk and massing
 - Landform
- AS - Webinar comment from Councillor Rigg - planning dept wish to avoid set height restrictions/guidance so that specific sites will not be 'constrained'. Brighton has a very good heights policy. Guildford needs a height policy for the town.
- AM - planning officers' view prevailing. JA - is there a legal basis for having no limits? Comment - National move towards lack of height/density constraints but councils able to protect character and sense of place within policy.
- AC - tall buildings along narrow streets causes a problem with air pollution
- CY - National Design Guide specifying tree lined streets, yet often not enough space for trees allowed by developers' applications. See SCC and Create Streets report.
- ES - Should there be a link with the Local Plan part 1- housing mix requirements and the Masterplan, for distribution and type of new residential accommodation (i.e. not just 1 and 2 bed flats but also homes suitable for families), in different areas in the town centre? Blocks of flats above 5 stories evidenced to be unsustainable from a community value point of view. Need to ensure there are adequate family homes as well as small flats in the town centre.
- AM - Green planting and character needs to be designed within the application site, and not just rely on the landscaping provided by neighbouring plots. Opening up the Wey corridor must be green, with space for planting, not just tarmac pathways.
- Esther Parry - London clay type in Guildford area not good for tall building or basements.
- KS - Choice of materials for new development must take into account the contribution of the site to various key views in the town.

- AM - Although response by planning dept to 1st consultation poor, it is important to respond to the 2nd consultation, in order to 'get a place at the table' when the Inspector comes to review the Reg 19 DMP. Also consider passing comments to ward councillors.
- AS – Guildford Society will focus on getting a height policy.

GRA will respond focusing on priorities identified in the slides. RAs are encouraged to respond too.

5. Planning Matters

Debenhams/St Mary's Wharf: the key issues with the application were summarised

- The enormous footprint and height
- SE corner of taller building very close to the river
- View from High Street to river will be blocked
- View from Boots to Surrey Hills will be blocked

AM fears the developers and officers who support the application are dominating the debate and are also introducing the threat of it remaining a dormant site if the application is not approved. She encourages Residents Associations to talk to their Ward Councillors. Alistair Smith (AS) said the argument 'we need housing' is not true, given other developments in Guildford and housing numbers. It was noted that the architect for the development (Squires) has had five similar schemes turned down in London. Donna Collinson (DC) said it is possible to get plans turned down, such as the original plans for Stoke crossroads, where the Barker and Stonehouse showed new buildings can be dynamic. Keith Meldrum (KM) reiterated that we should contact our ward councillors.

Cathedral Close Housing: Esther Parry (EP) said the deadline for comments is this Friday, so far 64 objections have been received and more are needed (note - by the Friday after the meeting there were 179 objections). The proposal is for 124 dwellings including 4 storey apartment blocks which will provide 24% more housing than the allocation in the 2019 Local Plan. The plan will lead to trees being cut down and is not in keeping with the area. The topography will be changed by the higher building at the bottom of the slope and the access road is a problem for local residents. For more details see www.friendsofstaghill.com. Concern that the impact on views is not assessed adequately, given the importance in the landscape.

Shaping Guildford's Future and town centre master plan: GBC are providing 4 virtual seminars on the topic. AS noted that it has been announced that the 2014 housing numbers don't need to be changed to the 2016 numbers. Karen Stevens (KS) commented that the environmental damage of pulling down buildings, such as Debenhams, should be given greater consideration. Reuse and insulation of buildings can be more carbon friendly than replacement because building materials require a lot of carbon.

AOB – nothing raised.

AM then closed the meeting.