

Notes of meeting of Guildford Residents Association

Comments in black are from the GRA

Comments in red are my thoughts and incorporate thoughts of other residents who have made their observations known

Reference was made to a useful background paper entitled “How many new homes”. This was on the Local Plan website referred to above.

Concern was expressed that proposals on the number of new houses will not be available for some time. It was commented that 322 new homes per annum which is the interim figure is based on the South East Plan, which has been scrubbed, but it was now clear that Guildford Planning Services have a much bigger number in mind. This is at odds with other nearby boroughs and there was concern that Guildford was now accommodating growth not only for itself but also overspill for London.

There was much discussion around exactly what was being proposed, what this means in terms of house numbers and also housing density, how this would impact the various areas of Guildford and the potential to adversely impact the nature and character of Guildford.

It was considered that housing dominates the I/O document and there is little in the document about protecting and enhancing the heritage and character of Guildford. It was noted that the scoring process is weighted against landscape and the existing Landscape Character Assessment produced at great expense and following very detailed discussion has been overlooked.

There was a general consensus coming out of the discussion that the I/O document lacks balance and is more a sales document to drive to a predetermined conclusion. Even the photographs in the document were thought to be misleading.

There was discussion about the importance of protecting the original intentions behind the establishment of the Green Belt as this was vital and should not be lost.

One objective is to produce a leaflet utilizing the 6 priorities/themes in the Aspirations Paper and to set the scene. The meeting noted that all local authorities are in a difficult position as funding is linked to growth and it is accepted that change is part of the natural order of life. However there needs to be good planning and appropriate infrastructure which safe guards the character of Guildford. There are thought to be few safeguards in the current proposal.

Key questions in Issues and Options paper and concerns arising there from

The meeting agreed it would be useful to use these questions to pull ideas together. EGRA will in the first instance draft responses and circulate to others. Not all the questions need to be answered and the proposal is that core questions are addressed by GRA as a whole and then individual RAs are able to add commentary specific to their own circumstances. It is hoped that consensus can be reached around key questions.

The text above was written before access to analysis by residents on brown field sites which demonstrates that Guildford CAN fulfill 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 permit this, with room to manoeuvre. If this is fully analyzed and holds up, it will negate many of the questions based around changes in policy to permit building elsewhere. Improved transport links would mean less housing is needed as equal numbers commute in and out of Guildford and there is no evidence to suggest that increased housing will change this.

The housing / employment balance is rather chicken and egg. The employment assessment is deemed to be flawed and this impacts other documents.

The meeting addressed each question in turn and the comments raised are captured below

Q1- Understanding the borough of Guildford

Do you agree with the summary in Appendix B?

If not, can you please explain why?

- Guildford cannot meet insatiable demand from London
- Problem needs to be shared
- Question shortage of land for business
- Question whether we have a good Park and Ride network
- Importance of Green Belt underplayed
- Need to look at last plan, very different tone around balance and social and economic factors
- Brownfield capacity - underplayed
- Importance of traffic congestion to economy - underplayed
- Success of cycling, overplayed
- Success of telehealth and impact of fast broadband underplayed?
- Guildford is substantially more affordable than London, there is confusion over what is meant by 'affordable and for whom?

Q2- Our research

Do you think the research listed in Appendix C appropriately covers what we need to know to write the new local plan?

If not, can you explain why

- It's a flawed approach doesn't address the importance of Green Belt and sustainability
- Attempts to de-value the role played by greenbelt in order to develop the land are manipulative and at odds with National Planning Policy.
- Concerns around bias in research, around attacks on AONB, "misleading use of photographic evidence, misleading to refer to 89% Green Belt
- No recognition of the character of different parts of Guildford
- Questions over retail expansion when sector going through radical change and infrastructure inadequate

- A précis with rationale would have been helpful?
- The big variation in housing figures in various surveys is unhelpful.
- Employment land assessment is outdated and flawed on many levels
- Some 'potential sites' have physical constraints and it is hard to see how they can be classified as having potential? Additionally, conclusions reached include subjective analysis and inter-reliance, flaws at base level (economics and greenbelt studies) render the overall conclusions as flawed.
- The level of detail given to brown field site analysis, with emphasis based on 'need' to develop on greenbelt, raises questions over impartiality
- Reports are referred to that are not within the evidence base, but should be more easily accessible (ie listed under 'additional reports' on evidence based page)?
- The use of a single study for greenbelt analysis that omits impact on openness and visual amenity by a company that is pro development is not a balanced or impartial approach
- Protection of AONB is important to us all
- The justification given by GBC for using different approaches to analyse urban and rural scenarios reminds me of the old adage used in medical conferences that 'patients wearing one red spotted sock have a higher chance of surviving a major operation'. [*Patients are not allowed to wear their own clothes for major surgery and hence if one patient got away with this once and survived they represent 100% survival group*]
- Despite the fact that building on greenbelt is against National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) housing numbers are mentioned thorough out SHLAA and other documents which are only achievable by building on protected land.
- It is necessary to see an infrastructure report alongside the SHLAA and other reports to see what changes will be needed / proposed to meet the housing proposals

Q3 How do you want the borough to develop?

What are your views on a new vision for the local plan and the possible objectives?

- Need to register the limits and constraints of geography and maintain character which must be relevant to all plans
- Need to include risks associated with development
- Need to fully utilize brown field sites and retain village character
- Against 'merging villages' as per the GBC brief to Pegasus
- Make the most of our assets, Arts & Crafts, history, heritage, river, countryside, listed buildings, quality eateries, pubs, views, midway between London and coast etc
- The debacle that is the A3 and A31 / link is the result of cutting corners, let's not repeat this in future.
- Protection of AONB can benefit business ie tourism (inc. animal sanctuaries, fishing trips, National Trust visitors, parks etc - agricultural business such as organic farming, farm shops, trout farms, play farms. Some AONB villages and NT properties benefit from filming which is hard to do if there are modern additions and noisy roads.
- I would wish to see differentiation and quality. Shops you don't see 'on-line' and greater emphasis placed on good bars and restaurants near the river.

Q4 The mix and density of homes

Which approach to the mix and density do you think is appropriate?

- Concerns over density proposals
- Suggestion we include specific examples to illustrate our concerns
- Key questions, will it impact adversely character? Is it conducive to creating a healthy community? Is it a wise use of land?
- Need to distinguish between needs of London and needs of Guildford
- There has to be a limit to migration in from the outside
- Confusion over how 'affordable' housing can realistically be achieved and maintained
- How can executive style housing ever fulfill a 'special need'? By default, this cannot be considered as potential on greenbelt.
- Outer London uses density mixes of 64 units per hectare (u/ha) to 270 u/ha whilst GBC is working to 40 u/ha. It is not desirable to spoil the landscape (urban or rural) but some flexibility may exist here.

Qu 7

Which approach to rural exception housing do you think is most appropriate?

- Where local need is identified by village or neighbourhood plans or by individuals whose needs are subsequently verified, the parish (council or village planners) should be able to discuss the need with land owners and GBC so that the need can be met providing the village as a whole is not compromised. Many small villages lack the necessary services to support those in need (ie schools, shops, Drs) hence housing is only one of the considerations.
- If this is a strategy to encourage families to stay together to avoid putting additional pressure on the care of individuals as they get older, then there is no evidence that this will work and I think it is unreasonable for everyone or indeed anyone to expect to live exactly where they want to irrespective of circumstances. Creating this level of expectation is fraught with problems.

Q9 Homes for our ageing population, vulnerable members of our community, students , low paid workers and young working people

Which approaches to meeting the different accommodation needs of our community, including older people, students , low paid workers and young working people do you think is most appropriate?

- Need to have more student accommodation on campus
- More smaller, quality homes are required for the elderly which will also free up larger homes for young families
- Young people like city centre living, elderly need homes purpose built to suit their needs.

Q 10

Are there any other issues that you think we should cover in relation to tourism, arts and cultural development- if so what are they?

- Improve income potential of current tourist sites eg the 10/11 mile cycle route from Bramley to Cranleigh has no café or public toilet on route.
- Ramblers need lunch / loo breaks too! The most popular walks are on routes with tea shops or pubs, consider facilities elsewhere.
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Q11 Offices, industrial spaces and our rural economy

Which approaches to meeting the existing and new employment needs of our borough, including supporting the economy of the rural areas, do you think are most appropriate?

- Need to use existing land within the borough more effectively and protect our agricultural land
- Maximise space with underground car parking
- Complete review of employment assessment is needed. Current statistics used are selective, unbalanced, dated and use extrapolation of estimates. The document impacts the housing document and must be robust.
- Congestion is a major concern to employees and must be addressed before further there is development.
- Do rural businesses employ local people? Often not, developing rural economy is a false economy if it is designed to reduce commuting.
- Compton has 6 million vehicles a year using the Street alone, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for residents to cross the road. Pro-active Further development would make matters worse.

Q13 Supporting our local centres , our district centres and Guildford town centre

Would you support the proposed approaches to helping support our local centres ,district centres, and Guildford town centre?

- Lack of clarity around the designation local centres, district centres and city centres confuses the issue eg Burpham is 'edge of centre' and Ladymead is 'out of centre'
- Solutions to current congestion in and around the town centre must be addressed before any proposed impact to city centre development can be assessed.

Q14 Balancing development with traffic and congestion

Are there any other options we can consider to try and help balance development with traffic and congestion?

- We need some solutions to current traffic problems before we create even more.
- We must make growth conditional on new traffic infrastructure
- Signage taking traffic off A3 and other routes through B routes and villages is not an acceptable solution. A tunnel under Guildford maybe the only long term solution. Prevent building anywhere near A3 or possible entry / exit points.
- A tunnel would permit building overhead.
- Noise from A3 and B3000 and other busy roads through residential areas must be addressed with bund or quiet surfacing.
- River taxis?
- Review of effectiveness of park and rides, we hear the bus to Guildford from the Onslow park and ride is almost empty?
- May help if new developments are near a railway station
- Proper bus and wide continuous cycle lanes (proper parking facilities needed for bicycles)

Q15 Minimising the impact of traffic congestion, promoting alternatives ways of moving around and working with our partners

Which approaches to addressing access and transport problems do you think are most appropriate?

- Significant existing problems reflect under investment in infrastructure to date
- The backlog of investment needs to be cleared
- The infrastructure must be in place ahead of development
- Need for bus interchange
- Address issues of access to railway and bridges over river
- Support for tunnel from the meeting acknowledging that it will take time but we must start lobbying now to avoid land being grabbed for development that would be needed for a tunnel
- Need for more access points to A3
- There is a need to link the A31 and A3
- Commuter routes linking bus routes to railway stations on a regular basis at key times
- Safe, weather proof cycle routes that link key places
- Encourage working from home, skype / 1-1 tele meetings
- Incentivise use of bus to rail - bus needs to be quicker (bus lane) and / or free

Q16 Infrastructure and services provision

Are there any other options available to the Council for addressing infrastructure problems?

- New supporting infrastructure must be in place before development
- Comprehensive and detailed independent analysis is needed to fully understand housing needs (affordable / family) which goes hand in hand with employment (review employment land study). If retail is declining as opposed to growing resulting in less affordable housing being needed than originally anticipated then consider using CIL to improve transport links. [CIL Community infrastructure levy)

- 3/2 interchange route through Guildford section of A3 could permit a bus lane for short periods to speed up journey for commuters using public transport
- Compton is one of a number of villages that suffers regular power cuts.
- Residents cannot get their children into their 1st or 2nd choice of school and some must take children to different schools, demonstrating the pressure placed on local schools.

Q17 Green belt, countryside , green open spaces and habitat

Which approaches to the Green Belt, countryside, green open spaces and habitat are most appropriate and have we missed anything out?

- Words in I/O do not reflect the national framework as applied to Green Belt
- Many concerns expressed as regards proposals which adversely affect this aspect of the borough as once Green Belt is developed it is gone for all time and would damage the balance that now exists
- The analysis is not objectively assessed. i.e. University site, land off Hog's Back is deemed as not preventing urban sprawl. There is a visual loss of Open space as well as physical encroachment. The assessment is incorrect. The explanation given by GBC planning on encroachment, does not make sense.
- Pegasus who carried out the survey is pro development and past / current clients are developers. There were no other studies (CPRE) to balance the view.
- It is not appropriate to build in greenbelt or remove greenbelt whilst significant numbers of undeveloped brown field sites exist and whilst significant areas of land are badly utilized (ground level car parks). It would be necessary to show that all brown field sites had been fully utilized and the impact this would make on the housing need before assessing green field /belt.
- NPPF 116 - No major development in AONB
- A 'surplus of open space' is an oxymoron akin to a surplus of 'fresh air'

Q18 Built environment

Which approaches to the built environment do you think are most appropriate and have we missed anything out?

- Retaining the character of a gap town is so important
- Preserving the beautiful features of the local geography is essential
- As such the historical Green Belt designation is key
- All of the above are part of the community heritage
- There is a need to see the bigger picture which does not feature in the I/O document
- Consider building car parks above and below land to free up car parks for other purposes. Consider the same in business parks.

Q19

Climate change and sustainability

Which approaches to dealing with climate change and sustainability do you think are most appropriate and have we missed anything out?

- It is not appropriate to build on green field or green belt, to do so would result in loss of valuable agricultural land and can increase flood risk
- All new homes should be eco friendly and cater for telehealth/care needs of elderly / vulnerable to cater for the future
- Imposing consequences on those unable to meet energy savings is inappropriate if the reasons are due to planning restrictions. High energy costs will undoubtedly incentivise cautious use.

Q20 Settlement hierarchy

Do you support using the Settlement Hierarchy to help us decide where new development should go or is there other research that we should rely on?

- A useful document, but clarification around terminology and consequences of proposed classifications are widely misunderstood. Ie settlement, inset, washed over by greenbelt, rural exception and 'safeguarding'.
- Support rural exception sites for local need but not moving settlement boundaries and inseting villages unless facilities are provided to off set additional growth and it is the wish of the area in question
- There is more to sustainability than distance to existing services. If further analysis (based on optimal use) determines there are sufficient brown field sites for local needs for the next 16 years then there is no need for the question?
- No to building on AONB

Q21

Villages in the Green Belt

Do you support using the GBCS to help us decide whether we should identify new settlement boundaries for our villages?

- Unnecessary, if it is accepted that by maximizing use, there are sufficient brown field sites for local needs for the next 16 years
- Inclusion of reports from recognized experts in their field must be added ie National trust, Surrey Hills, Surrey Wildlife, CRPE.
- Information gives the impression that changes in planning policy mean we cannot keep all villages in greenbelt. This is misleading and gives a clear impression that GBC have already decided that there aren't enough brown field sites and that green belt will be removed (and double speak to this affect).
- Compton is in AONB and greenbelt and AGLV and is protected in parts by a conservation order. The wording implies that if a village is protected by one means it does not need protection by another (greenbelt). I am informed that the legitimacy of this statement has yet to be legally tested.
- The Pegasus report uses hedging and trees as 'natural barriers'. These are natural and hence do not detract from openness as suggested, but are not permanent like rivers or roads and should not be used as 'new boundary guides' as they can be removed.
- The way in which Pegasus interprets its findings varies and lacks consistency.
- Compton is home to a National Art Gallery a grade 1 Chapel and an ancient church plus 31 listed buildings, two characterful public houses and all connected to the beautiful North Down Way. The B3000 receives more than its fair share of traffic thanks to lack of cross border cooperation from

Waverly. This seriously detracts from improvements to tourism as visitors cannot safely walk or cycle from one location to another and there is a shortage of parking for residents as well as visitors.

- It would be useful to see 3 maps, one of the metropolitan greenbelt as it was when it was set out, another as it is now and another, if all the proposals succeed. I suspect the latter would raise alarm bells.

Q 23 Duty to cooperate

Do you agree with this analysis? Are you aware of any other strategic cross boundary issues you think that we should be considering?

- All traffic is currently signed off the major A route, A3 to Godalming via Compton and a B route, which is against national recommendations. Despite a costly survey and 7 years of meetings and recognition of the 'anomaly' the duty to cooperate has not resulted in change. Highways state they are powerless to act without cooperation by SCC and the Waverley contingency have to date refused to cooperate?

Q24 Spatial options

Which of these options do you think are most appropriate and are there any others we should be considering?

- None. The closest is 1, but this excludes remodeling of existing land that does not make good use of space (ground floor car parks). I do not agree to removal of barriers to build in any form (boundary review, AONB review, settlement review, inseting) unless all options have been exhausted. Cost is not an acceptable reason for exclusion.
- Brown field sites should be used sensitively developed to maximum capacity
- Examples of new developments / housing styles and densities, superimposing plans to maps, would help, for future consultations as well as workshops.
- Is there an opportunity for enhancement and redevelopment at Park Barn?
- The meeting was unsure whether GRA should be involved with the new village issue. We can look at this again in light of the draft answers to the I&O paper
- Far too many brown field sites designated as 'good' have been given industrial allocation rather than housing, thus raising the question how serious is the need the need for housing if offices have been given preference?

It is impossible to see the impact of encroachment from borough to borough as only Guildford's sites are included on the map (fig D) and proposals close to the boundary borders could impact one another

- If re-using previously developed land in the countryside, there are presumably cut off points as to how far back one can legitimately go?
- Extending boundaries around Guildford contravenes the whole purpose of greenbelt, to prevent urban sprawl and is therefore against NPPF
- Expanding villages to support the rural economy is unnecessary in an area with 4.7% unemployment. This would however increase traffic problems which are already way above the national average.

- There is nowhere in Guildford where a significant new village, complete with infrastructure could go without serious detrimental impact to greenbelt, residents, environment etc. There is no evidence to support the need for 21000+ homes (SHLAA) which would involve removal of large swathes of countryside and this destruction of our country can never be restored.

Q 25

Are you aware of any other land in the existing urban areas of Guildford, Ash and Tongham, within the existing boundaries of our villages or previously developed land in the countryside that could meet our future needs?

There is currently unused office / business space and it is therefore inappropriate to reserve brown field sites for such purposes if there is a housing need.

Housing density levels need further examination, to avoid building on green belt.

The following is an excerpt from a quick calculation by a resident, it demonstrates that enough land can be found on brown field sites if the brief looks for this rather than actively looking to build on green belt.

If the sites 1-26, provisionally excluding 13 (Land at Guildford Cathedral) 18 (Guildford College) 24 (land around Merrist Wood) and 25 (land around RHS Wisley), are utilized at 40 homes per hectare, then the housing provided would be 7335 homes. This would be more than sufficient to meet the requirements for the duration of the plan. Current interim utilisation is at a level of approximately 300 homes per annum, which for the duration of the plan (16 years) would be 4800 homes.

If these existing sites were utilized at the level of terraced housing, including parking, then there would be 11600 homes generated.

If these existing sites were utilized to provide 3 storey housing, then they would generate 11769 homes.

If they provided 4 storey housing, they could provide 21 147 homes.

Even at the level produced by the study where up to 21 456 homes are indicated as an illustration, it is demonstrable that ALL the land required can be provided on existing brownfield land within Guildford, provided the density is appropriate. If there is a choice to be made between using the Green Belt and marginal increases in housing density, then, in the interests of wider society, housing density should increase.

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27 New Green Belt land

Should we alter the Green Belt boundaries to make the changes detailed?

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- Greenbelt is permanent; changes should therefore not be detrimental to existing greenbelt land and properties therein.

- The answer to this question has been given in 24,25 17

Q31 Significant expansion of existing villages

Do you think we should do more work to assess potential development areas such as those outlined in the I/O and is there any other land we should be considering?

- No support for increase in the villages in the AONB
- No support for removal of greenbelt under any circumstances unless all brown field sites have been fully utilized, car parks have been re-constructed to underground / multi story and there is a demonstrable local need
- If there is a demonstrable local need (in line with village and neighbourhood plans), land owners may be willing to give up land support their community

Q32

A new settlement

Do you think we should do more work to assess a potential development area, large enough to be a new settlement, at the former Wisley airfield and / or elsewhere?

- The area abuts sites of scientific interest at Wisley and Ockham Common and is in greenbelt. No support for removal of greenbelt under any circumstances unless all brown field sites have been fully utilized, car parks have been re-constructed to underground / multi story and there is a demonstrable local need

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Q33 Land for park and ride sites

Do you support a new Park and Ride site in the Worplesdon area or is there other land we should be considering?

- Support for Park and Ride at Worplesdon; it could be sited near railway station
- If possible parking should be subterranean
- Would prefer to see a subterranean park and ride at Wisley with bus lane to Guildford during peak times (there is no incentive to get a bus, if it cannot reach target area any quicker).
- Review needs to be carried on effectiveness of current park and rides and impact on traffic before building more.

Q35 Land for burials and cremations

Do you support the use of this land to help meet our future burial and cremation needs or is there other land we should be considering?

- Land for burials should ideally be within the area it serves, permitting visitors (particularly elderly) to walk there. It should be peaceful and landscaped and be poor agriculturally.

Q36 Allotments

Do you support the use of this land for allotments or is there other land we should be considering?

- Support for existing allotment areas and provision of new ones

Q39 Detailed policies

Do you think there are other issues we should be looking at as part of the Local Plan Development Control Policies document?

- This is really important opportunity to ensure we retain and enhance the best features of Guildford as regards character, distinctiveness and community
- A wide number of issues and options are being considered, housing seems to be an overriding priority, one would hope that infrastructure, particularly traffic and transport are given the same weighting.
- There should be non GBC and SCC members on the scrutiny committees.
- Further work needs to be carried out on housing density
- Further work on sustainability using ALL parameters and not just distances.
- Clarification is needed on real needs and housing mix
- There is doubt over the validity of the employment land assessment.
- Support local councils in mapping their own areas so that land is mapped by type and owner, Discussions can then take place with owners of land deemed to be suitable.
- Consider the benefits of AONB & well maintained NT land for tourism. Consider the benefits of leisure use of open space, woodlands, a joined up approach to key historic sites & places of interest
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Q40 Implementation and monitoring

Do you have any comments on the delivery information , including the future work to develop our CIL?

- Need to review SHLAA and GBCS & employment land assessment.
- Some would like to see CIL used to improve infrastructure and transport particularly in areas where the need for affordable housing is limited
- When considering results from workshops, it is essential to know how many developers or people with an interest were present and whether they were strategically placed at each table, as many attendees have reported. One resident enquired about this at a workshop and was told categorically that there were no developers or anyone with an interest from Surrey University, only to find herself sitting next to someone wearing both hats!
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Q41 Is there anything else?

- Need to include “Aspirations” document as a submission
- Need to provide an in depth analysis of use of brown field sites
- Need to see the traffic survey before any decisions can be made
- Need to ensure that all evidence based docs are unbiased and balanced (the greenbelt doc is geared towards development, in line with the brief given by GBC and is not balanced by comparative data (by CPRE for example).
- The consultation period is relatively short given the volume of material. There is a good chance that working people will not have the time to fully consider the material in the time given.
- Need to include a report on car parks, the space given to them, whether land type would permit re-development to subterranean and possible use as flood protection zone and suitability of the same land for other uses?

- In the interests of impartiality, anyone with any interest in any of the development sites or organizations, should not be involved in the analysis or decision making process, this includes the use of students from Surrey University.
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- The new cross rail service will result in shorter commutes to London for many more towns (from Maidenhead to coastal Essex) which will result in more commuters wanting to live there. Property values in those areas have already increased. Improving rail services would reduce the number of cars, but more needs to be done to 'spread the load' and take the burden off the South East.