



Compton Parish Council

Guildford Local Plan Update



Blackwell Farm, Compton

Dear Compton Resident,

Guildford Borough Council (GBC) has published its draft Local Plan and is inviting comments on it from everyone who lives and works in the borough. It is important that Compton has a voice in this process and we would urge you to look carefully at the policies and proposals in the Plan and consider how they might affect you.

One of the most important changes for Compton is the proposal to take a significant proportion of the Parish out of the green belt for a large-scale development (2,250 homes, plus businesses, a supermarket, a school and travellers' pitches) on 139 hectares at Manor and Blackwell farms. This will result in the loss of nationally important views from the Hogs Back as well as a significant increase in traffic on the west side of Guildford, including along Down Lane and the B3000 (The Street). It will quadruple the population of the Parish and increase the footprint of Guildford Town by nearly 15%. To put this into context, 139 hectares is more land than was taken out of green belt across the whole of England in the 12 months to March 2012.

A much smaller development, just outside the Parish at New Pond Road, would result in a further 100 new homes and potentially more traffic.

Residents need to balance these factors with the GBC's wish for economic growth and new housing. The draft Local Plan is based on a housing figure of 652 new homes per annum, which many groups believe is too high. It's more than double the current housing figure of 322 pa that resulted from the objectively assessed need of 2009.

Alongside the draft Local Plan, GBC is consulting on a Town Vision Masterplan. This proposes to regenerate some of the run-down areas, and to make more of the river, creating a mixed development at Walnut Tree Close. The Masterplan also plans to "turn off" the gyratory system, reducing traffic in the town centre. Whilst there are obvious benefits to Guildford by reducing the reliance on cars for people travelling into, and using, the town centre, it is not clear what effect any displaced traffic might have on outlying areas, including Compton.



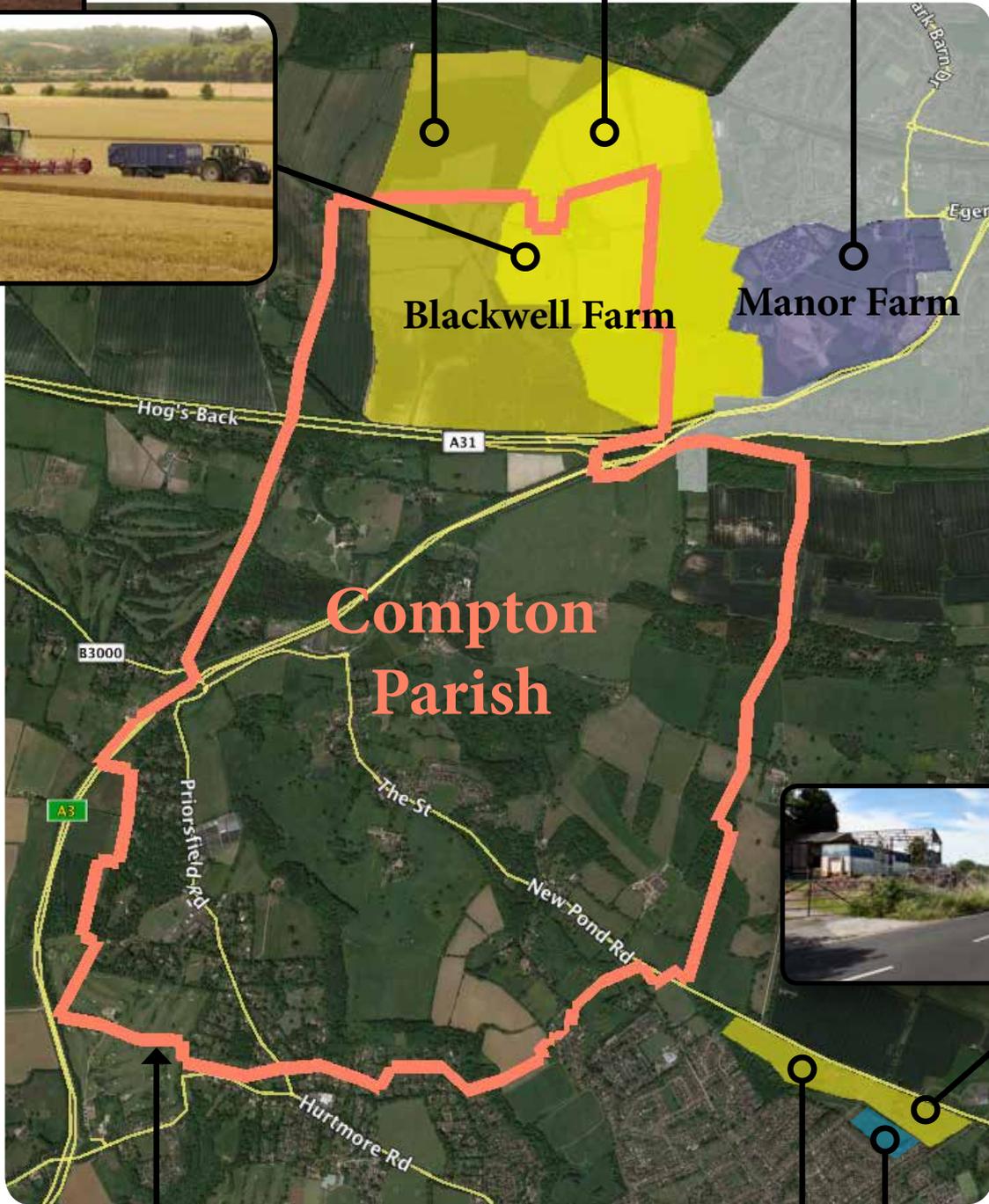
Green Belt (and part AONB) at Risk



Extent of the University of Surrey's proposed housing development (total of 3000 new homes).

Area identified in draft Local Plan for housing development (2250 new homes and 8 traveller pitches).

Manor Farm was removed from green belt in 2003 to allow for foreseeable University expansion for the next 50 years.



Compton Parish boundary

Area south of New Pond Road for more than 100 homes

Application for 50 homes with Waverley Borough Council (not as part of Guildford's Local Plan)

If you are unhappy with any of the proposals and wish to object, then the points you make must be based on planning issues. Below is a list of objections that were raised at the Local Plan Drop-in held on July 16, which will carry weight with the Planning Inspector:

1) Loss of visual amenity - Part of the Hogs Back site is located within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which according to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should be afforded the highest level of protection. The land that is not within the AONB, forms the views into, and out of, the AONB and should be given the same level of protection as the AONB under Government policy. The site is important as the western gateway to Guildford and also provides the only remaining view of the Cathedral, where it rises out of an entirely rural landscape. Any highways scheme built to access the site via the A31 would bisect the AONB. Additionally, it would be illuminated, which would cause light pollution, possibly affecting those in Down Lane/Compton Heights.

The New Pond Road site is also partly an AONB - it is well screened from the road.

2) Loss of recreational amenity - The Blackwell/Manor farm site is criss-crossed with public and permissive footpaths and bridleways, which offer residents opportunities for walking, running, cycling and horse riding.

3) Infrastructure

i) The road system on the west side of Guildford is congested at peak hours and cannot cope with another 4,000 plus cars entering the network. Minor traffic schemes will not result in the major improvements needed to reduce congestion. The B3000 already sees more than 5 million vehicles per year, has regular tailbacks at peak times with increased traffic on minor roads, such as Priorsfield Road and Down Lane. The Tesco and Cathedral roundabouts are also operating beyond capacity and additional traffic from Blackwell Farm would cause further problems and impede emergency vehicles travelling to/from the Hospital.

ii) Thames Water does not currently have the sewerage capacity to cope with a development on the scale of that proposed for Blackwell Farm.

iii) The huge increase in population planned for the borough will put pressure on public services. Schools, GP surgeries, dentists, paramedics and the police are already overburdened and unlikely to cope with growth on this scale.

4) Impact on wildlife - The Hogs Back is the only steep, north-facing chalk ridge in the SE and is home to rare plant species. It is also home to many protected animals and birds, including the skylark, yellowhammer, linnet and lapwing -- all of which are declining in number and classed as birds of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity.

5) Green belt - The Blackwell Farm site fulfils all five functions of green belt. The current green belt boundary here was established just 11 years ago when part of Manor Farm was taken out of green belt for the University's expansion. The NPPF states that boundaries should be defensible and permanent and "capable of enduring beyond the plan period" (Section 9, para 83).

6) Rural economy and loss of agricultural land - Blackwell Farm is a working farm. Forty per cent of food consumed in Britain is imported and this figure is rising. Every field concreted over will add to the need to import further, decreasing our self-sufficiency. Developing high-grade and versatile agricultural land (grades 2-3), such as is found at this site, is against Government policy.

The area is home to Hogs Back Brewery and Greyfriars vineyard, and Watts Gallery and Limerslease are also close by. Mane Chance, a sanctuary for vulnerable horses, is also on the slopes. A study to assess the impact of any large-scale development on our rural economy, taking into account pressures on services and on infrastructure, should be produced to inform any decisions.

This list is not comprehensive and you may have further points of your own for and against the proposals. NB. It is important that any comments you make are in your own words as standard responses will not be counted and you must include your address. Further information will be posted on the Compton Parish website at the end of next week. The deadline for response to the consultation is September 22. You can respond in the following ways:

Online through GBC's consultation portal:
www.getinvolved.guildford.gov.uk
Email: localplan@guildford.gov.uk
Post: Local Plan Consultation, GBC, Millmead House, Guildford, GU2 4BB

Compton Parish Council, September 2014.