

## Compton PC response to Town Centre Master Plan

Compton Parish Council supports the principle of having a town master plan. However, we believe that the one produced by Allies and Morrison does not address a number of key issues, such as adequate provision for housing, requirements for office space within easy reach of public transport and a traffic system that addresses congestion and does not have a major impact on the surrounding villages.

**Comment 1** - We welcome the overall aim to regenerate some of the run-down urban areas and to direct development here rather than on the Green Belt. However, we believe that the housing number put forward for the town centre is too low and, with imaginative design, housing density could be increased significantly in the new residential areas without any adverse impact on the character of the town or on important views.

We note that the West Surrey SHMA suggests that 693 homes per annum are needed in the borough over the next 20 years (14,000 new homes). Under the Master Plan, just 16% of new housing is proposed for development within the town, leaving the suburbs, surrounding villages and countryside to absorb more than 83%. Given that the town centre is the most sustainable location for new housing (according to GBC'S Settlement Hierarchy (May 2014)), the ratio of houses proposed in the town centre compared with that proposed elsewhere lacks balance.

We are particularly concerned that building out of town will increase reliance on cars and add to the growing problem of congestion on our roads. Homes in the town centre are within walking distance of services, workplaces and transport links (rail stations). It is also recognised that bus operators generally require higher density housing in order to run cost-effective and efficient services.

**Comment 2** - We welcome the intention to reduce traffic volumes in the centre of town. However, traffic modelling would need to be undertaken to show where the displaced traffic would go, and we would need to be satisfied that this would not have a negative impact on the roads in outlying areas, particularly the B3000, which is already operating beyond capacity at peak hours and which appears to be experiencing high levels of pollution.

We believe that the Master Plan relies too heavily on a "modal shift" to reduce traffic volumes. Given the topography of Guildford and its aging population, we are not convinced that an increased uptake in cycling and bus services would be sufficient to bridge the gap between the proposed reduction in road capacity and the increase in housing across the borough, unless a realistic housing target is given (as a result of applying constraints and providing transparent analysis) enabling the majority of new housing to be built in the centre. Furthermore, any movement of traffic from a non residential area (town centre) to residential areas must be accompanied by a firm commitment to fund and support safety measures. We would strongly object to proposals that would increase safety risks for our parishioners, including increasing pollution levels. The B3000 is one such road where we don't believe safety measures would adequately accommodate increase in traffic.

We strongly oppose scenario 1 as this would effectively cut off the east-west-east route for several hours of the day, which would displace up to 57% of traffic. The result could be greater congestion within and outside the town centre. Given the 'out of town' position of the Research Park and the close proximity of the Royal Surrey County Hospital, it is vital that journeys to both are made easier, not more complicated, as they would be if Scenario 1 were implemented.

Furthermore, using RAC route Master and AA Route Planner and requesting routes between east and west Guildford, it is clear that the B3000 in Compton would be widely used as an alternative route in order to circumnavigate the south side of Guildford (along with Shalford and Artington). Other roads off the B3000, such as Down Lane, The Avenue and Binscombe Lane, would also be affected. Normandy and other villages on the west of the borough would not be helped by this proposal, nor would some of Guildford's busiest routes, eg the A25 section at Ladymead, with an average of 36,600 vehicles a day.

We cannot see any advantages to Scenario 2, which does not appear to improve river access. The weight of traffic crossing Guildford would be confined to Friary Bridge and it is difficult to envisage how this could work without causing further congestion.

The data available does not look at the impact of the future increases in traffic that would result from current growth plans. Traffic proposals for the town centre and the proposals for growth in the Local Plan need to be looked at jointly and with up-to-date data. The data provided appears to be from 2011 (the year traffic data was changeable due to the Hindhead tunnel opening).

When assessing the 12 traffic options put forward, all the assessment criteria appear to have been given equal weight. We believe the results might be quite different, for example, if the ability to reduce congestion was weighted more highly compared to other criteria (such as aesthetic advantages for example). We would also like to see the assessment undertaken without the cost/time/complexity criteria included as these will always eliminate the option of larger, expensive projects that might be more effective in the long term.

We believe that there needs to be a long-term solution to Guildford's traffic problems, such as a southern bypass to the A3 around Guildford (tunnelled to avoid impact on the high-quality landscape). Without significant investment in infrastructure, Guildford cannot accommodate further growth in business, retail or housing. Widening the A3 will create greater severance and will not address the problem of local traffic travelling east to west or west to east across the town; and junction improvements to the A3 will offer only temporary benefit and will not mitigate against the level of house building that has been suggested by the SHMA.

**Comment 3** - The plan focuses heavily on the need for people to use public transport, yet there is little detail about how this will work in practice. Further details are needed concerning the buses and how they will operate without a bus station as well as any development proposals for extended rail offerings and maybe a skeleton service at night. We believe the Park and Ride facilities are a long way from reaching their capacity and before further investment is made into similar models a review of these would be useful. It would

also help if examples could be provided of areas where modal shift, to the degree suggested, has been successfully implemented in a comparable area.

**Comment 3** - We would like to see the scope of the Master Plan extended to include the University's campuses and Research Park on the west of the town. We believe that there are opportunities to regenerate this area too, to open it up more and to use this land more efficiently. The Research Park is close to the employment centres at the Hospital and the University. It would therefore be appropriate to use this site for mixed development.

**Comment 4** - We believe that the area around the station could offer even greater residential, employment and retail opportunity if both sides of the railway were developed, with building over the railway line. This would bridge the severance between the east and west sides of the town and, with good design, would not require high-rise buildings that might obscure important views.

**Comment 5** - We welcome the mixed development on Walnut Tree Close as this means offices, hotels and leisure services will be located close to the station, to other businesses and to the area of highest population - all of which help to reduce car movements. However, We question the ratio of office to housing land, for example there are empty office/commercial spaces and warehouses yet there is a need for housing; we believe the ratio should reflect need.

We would like to see more efficient use of the land at Walnut Tree Close. For example, it is possible to provide 65,000 sq m of office space on a 2 hectare plot with a building less than 4 storeys. This is the same office space as is provided by the whole of the Research Park, which is spread over 28 hectares of land.

Locating offices in town means that you don't need all the associated infrastructure /space of a business park, which is occupied for just 40 hours a week.

**Comment 6** - We believe that the Master Plan allocates too much land to retail space (47,000 sq m) and do not see any evidence of the need for this, particularly with the rise in Internet shopping. With near full employment, do we need more jobs in retail? GBC seems to suggest that we need higher paid, knowledge-based jobs instead.

We are also concerned that shops attract traffic - not just out-of-town/out-of-borough shoppers, but workers and delivery vans.

**Comment 7** - We believe that more efficient use could be made of car parks. GBC car parking accounts for nearly 30 acres of land across the borough, yet less than 4 acres are multi-storey. We have identified using aerial maps that the University has more than 50 acres of surface-level car parking across the land it owns.

Creating a further 5 multi-storey car parks (on GBC land currently used for surface car parking ) would release 8-9 acres of potential development land in the town centre and, because it is Council-owned, this could be built within 5 years. If the multi-level car parking is provided underground, there would be the ability to provide further retail/office accommodation above. This approach is adopted in many towns and cities across the world.

Furthermore, if a regular hopper bus service linked car parks, then this would ensure access for all, including elderly.

Offices and flats could be built over the University car parks (using compulsory purchase orders if necessary). The WWF building in Woking is a good example of successfully building over an existing operational car park.

We believe that the Master Plan should ensure that all new buildings have provision for underground car parking.

Park and rides are land-hungry, and some (for example the Onslow Park and Ride) appear to be under-utilised. In addition to decking these P&R facilities or building them underground, we wondered whether other ideas could be explored for a rail halt or 'Park Way' station eg. at Artington, which is located adjacent to the rail line. Commuters from Godalming, Farncombe, Milford, Shalford could park up and jump on the train to Guildford/London. This would reduce the amount of land needed for parking at Guildford Station, freeing up further land for housing in the town centre, as well as taking pressure off the A3100.

**Comment 8** - We support proposals for a vibrant night-time economy, although steps would need to be in place to ensure this is open to all and that any negative impact to the wider community is minimised.

**Comment 9** - We support the idea of a Heritage Area and a focus on local history. It would be useful to understand how this will be both enhanced and developed. We strongly support the retention of the museum within the designated Heritage Area and left and right egress from Millbrook car park.