

Local Plan Sub-Committee report – January 2017

Local Plan

- GBC has announced that the draft Local Plan will be reviewed in the light of comments received (almost 32,000 comments – a 62% increase on the previous consultation in 2014) and any potential implications of Brexit for the housing target. Council Leader Paul Spooner has stated that a strategic site may be dropped. In a Facebook Q&A session on December 13, Cllr Spooner is reported to have said that the Normandy/Flexford site was under review, but that he was in favour of the Blackwell Farm development. There will be a further consultation this summer on any revisions in 2017. We will not have a new Plan in place until 2018.

Blackwell Farm

- On November 30, University of Surrey submitted a planning application (02/P/02505/S106/01) to remove the conditions imposed it when Manor Farm was taken out of green belt. This includes its request to overturn Clause 15 of the S106 agreement, which relates to Hazel Farm. Under this clause, the University was required to relocate students living on the Hazel Farm campus to Manor Park once 2,500 students' residences had been built, and to release the 132 residential units at Hazel Farm onto the housing market for refurbishment or redevelopment.

The University is now arguing that this obligation is no longer deliverable because of the change in policy relating to the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA), which does not allow residential development within 400m of the SPA. This is only partially true; whilst the Hazel Farm site would not be suitable for general residential development (presumably because of the impact of family pets on protected bird species), Natural England would allow the site to be used as a care home or home for the elderly.

If Hazel Farm were put to this use, it would reduce some of the housing need in Guildford by providing much needed accommodation for the borough's ageing population. Comments on the application need to be made before Jan 17.

- Blackwell Farm Developments (a subsidiary of the University of Surrey) has submitted a deposit relating to the public and permissive rights of way across its estate at Blackwell, Chalkpit, Wildfield and Manor farms. The deposits for Blackwell Farm can be viewed here: <https://online.surreycc.gov.uk/env/rights/row.nsf/9174a2cc33293a0280257537003c2c09/c9e56a218fb90bad80257e700046a7d2?OpenDocument>

Tim Harrold (Chairman of CPRE Guildford) has referred this deposit to Open Spaces Society and will keep us posted.

Highways

- Highways England is currently consulting on proposals for the improvement of Junction 10 M25/A3 and changes to the A3 from the Ockham/Wisley to Painshill junctions. The consultation ends in early February. Studies are also being carried out for Highways England on the section from A31 to A320 ahead of the proposed road widening.
- GBC has commissioned a study of capacity of the preferred scheme for Guildford town centre (identified in the Town Centre Master Plan) and a new river/rail crossing from York Road to Guildford Park Road.
- The Dunsfold Park development was approved by Waverley Borough Council on 14 December, subject to conditions.
- Solum is appealing against the refusal of its application for a major development at Guildford Station.

- The refusal of permission for the proposed development at Wisley Airfield is the subject of an appeal and this has been ‘called-in’ and will be the subject of a Public Inquiry. The appeal will be held in Guildford in September 2017 and is scheduled to last between 2-3 weeks.

Town Centre

- GBC plans to sign an exclusivity agreement with M&G for the North Street development. Discussions are in progress and eventually there will be consultation. The Council will be publishing a Town Centre Regeneration Strategy (probably in the first quarter of this year).
- The Guildford Vision Group will be unveiling its new Town Centre Plan on February 1, from 7-8.30pm at the Baptist Centre, Millmead, GU2 4BE.
- The issue of how best to provide for buses, given that the existing bus station will go, has been investigated by consultants Arup for SCC, with part-funding by GBC. The GBC Executive Committee considered recommendations based on the conclusions of the Arup study at its meeting on 3 January. The preferred way forward is a combination of on-street bus stops and bus layover facilities. The Arup reports can be found with the agenda for the 3 January meeting on GBC’s website. The intention is to engage with stakeholders on options and then commission further technical work to develop a solution.

GBC

- There have been several changes in personnel at GBC, including in the planning department. Tracey Coleman is the new Director of Planning and Regeneration. Zac Ellwood is now Major Projects Manager. Sue Sturgeon, Managing Director of GBC, will be retiring this spring, and Satish Mistry, GBC’s Monitoring Officer, has also left.