

"The Magpies",
116 Westfield Road,
Mayford,
Woking
Surrey,
GU22 9QP

29th July 2015

Dear Sirs,

Woking 2027 DPD Consultation

I have been a resident of Mayford since moving here as a child in 1958 and, after a spell away, returned to continuous residence in 1996. I have been made aware of the Woking 2027 planning proposals that will impact Mayford and am extremely concerned about that damage to the area that adopting them would cause, for the following reasons. Please note that the following are not specific to any of the documents cited but will refer to explicit site references.

However, I will summarise all by saying that the council's proposal to remove the sites in question from the Green Belt is totally wrong. Such action will destroy the very nature of the currently semi-rural environment and, worse still, will pave the way to forming a continuous development between Woking and Guildford. There can be only one ultimate outcome, which is the integration of the two into one ghastly metropolis (which, by the way, would no longer require a Woking borough council).

The general welfare of the area aside, my specific comments are as follows.

Ref. GB7 (Ten Acre Farm, Smarts Heath Road)

I object strongly to the increase in the number of traveller pitches on this site because I believe this particular region already provides all of the borough's contribution towards the traveller community and there is no justification for further expansion within the Mayford area. No other solutions appear to have been considered, such as urban or brownfield sites, and this is extremely short-sighted.

Furthermore, the site's proximity to Smarts Heath Common threatens to undermine not only the character of what is currently an area of leisure activity for local residents but also the wildlife that inhabits it.

Ref. GB8 (nursery land adjacent to Egley Road), GB9 (Woking Garden Centre, Egley Road)
GB10 (land to the NE of Saunders Lane, between Saunders Lane and Hook Hill Lane) and
GB11 (land to the NW of Saunders Lane)

I object strongly to the proposals for housing on each of the above sites. Primarily, the reason for this is that Mayford is a distinct village with its own character and provides a retreat from the confines of the town of Woking and city of Guildford. Such locations have always been the intent of the Green Belt concept and Mayford fulfils this role perfectly. To remove this land from the assignment attacks the central idea of it and erodes the "lungs of London" that the Green Belt was set up to provide.

The very notion of building on the Green Belt is not only wrong in itself but is also unnecessary when there are urban and "brown field" sites that are not even being reviewed. Indeed, on 10th July Business Secretary Sajid Javid himself stated on BBC Radio 4, "There's no need to build on the Green Belt; there's plenty of land that's not Green Belt that we can build on that is suitable for housing and we need to get on with it." Given his clear and unambiguous statement, why are these proposals even being considered? Or was he simply attempting to placate the radio audience?

Furthermore, the infrastructure of Mayford simply can't support such an increase in population. The village has a small general store/post office only and no healthcare facilities such as doctors or dentists. Schooling is limited to the special needs service and public transport is sparse in the extreme. The nearest railway station is Worplesdon and a visit there on any workday will immediately show that car parking is full to overflowing before 8 AM, with no possibility to increase the size of the car park.

Even more limiting is the road network in the area which clearly cannot take any increase in traffic volume during "rush hour" periods. The route to the next nearest railway station, north to Woking on the A320, is already at saturation point and the same is true going south to Guildford; any significant increase in traffic is likely to create genuine gridlock. Moreover, the impact caused by the noise and the pollution from all the extra vehicles will add yet more to the severely detrimental effect that has already been noticed in the last decade or so.

I have been given to understand that that the Green Belt Review relied upon Google Maps to determine that the journey from Mayford to Woking takes a total of seven minutes. This is simply untrue for trips at any other time than strictly off-peak and doesn't even apply to the daytime on weekends. I would recommend that somebody within the body of the Council simply tries driving it; it won't take long in the traffic jam to realise what utter nonsense this is.

What is more concerning is that such a conclusion could be drawn from such a naïve method and, if true, it is beyond laudable. Indeed, it calls into question whether any serious research has been done for these proposals at all.

Infrastructure aside, the impact on the environment is another major consideration. Smarts Heath and Prey Heath are protected areas of natural beauty that currently offer an opportunity not only for local residents but for all of the Woking area to experience the nature of Surrey on its own doorstep. Many times have I encountered roe deer and other such fascinating examples of fauna and flora while walking in the area and these settings are available to all who wish get out of the town for a while and immerse themselves in the most wonderful countryside that the environs have to offer. Building on the sites in question will almost certainly deter the fauna, will most likely be hugely detrimental to the flora and will ultimately destroy the very nature of the area, both figuratively and literally.

And then there is the much bigger picture of how the whole programme will commence the process of uniting Woking and Guildford into one sprawling conurbation, as alluded to above. Make no mistake that this will happen once the removal of these sites from Green Belt designation has taken place. Should the proposals under discussion be pushed through, this will simply "start the ball rolling" on what will eventually devastate the character of both towns. What's more, the resultant metropolis will become an ugly mess and probably the subject of ridicule in a similar way to somewhere such as, say, Redhill. Do we really want another of these ghastly places?

In conclusion, I implore you not to adopt these proposals as their impact will surely destroy what is something of which the Woking area can currently be proud. Mayford is a beautiful, quite village whose character will simply be swept aside and whose infrastructure is simply unable to take the load. You would be destroying something that is very valuable to the borough and should continue to be for future generations.

This letter is copied to the Mayford Village Society who represent my views. Please direct any responses to them.

Yours faithfully,

R. E. Allen.