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Jenji Jackson
Woking Borough Council
Civic Offices
Gloucester Square
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Dear Ms Jackson,

I am writing to inform you of my strong objection to the proposed developments in Woking Borough. In particular I have major concerns over the development of sites GB12 and GB13, on either side of Upshot Lane.

I believe that this is currently an area classified as Green Belt. Green Belt is an important part of our living environment and key to the quality of life for residents. It was a key reason for my recent decision to buy a property in the area and I am sure also for many other residents. If the proposal to destroy a significant proportion of the green space around our community is implemented, it will have a substantial impact on the charm and character of Pyrford. In Pyrford we are fortunate to have an area of unspoilt beauty, if this is used for urban development it will completely change the unique atmosphere of our village.

Residents, and future generations will also start to lose benefits of being able to access the outdoors and countryside. A fantastic asset of the local area is the access to the countryside paths and green space, with all the planned development in the area, there will be much less opportunity for residents to enjoy our unique and beautiful location for the purposes of recreation and sport.

If you allow development on these Green Belt sites then you will not be preventing the sprawl of built up areas, safeguarding the countryside from encroachment or preserving the setting and special character of Pyrford and other villages in the area. I am of the understanding that once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt. I am also of the understanding that as Green Belt across the UK has been established, new sites are unlikely to be approved except in exceptional circumstances. It seems therefore that these proposed developments are in contradiction to current government policy.

We have the environmental impact to consider. There will be a significant impact of development of both GB12 and GB13 due to the amount of tree clearing that would be necessary and also the elevated position in particular of GB13 which would completely change the landscape. We also have fauna to consider such as the family of deer that can often be seen in and close to these sites.

Having this area of rural landscape forms a partition between Woking and Pyrford and helps to prevent towns merging into one another and the sprawl of large built-up areas.

I also must raise issue with the way that the local residents seem to have been ignored over these issues, vital to our community. It seems that no considerations has been given to the letters of Pyrford Neighbourhood Forum raising concerns over the proposed sites. Could you please explain why the Council has approved the draft Site Allocations DPD without taking into account full representations received and the letter submitted by LDA design?

Specifically I, and other residents have concerns regarding the Green Belt review;

Sites GB12 and GB13 are consistently assessed in the Green Belt Review as not being suitable for release due to fulfilling two 'critical' Green Belt purposes, with poor sustainability and high landscape sensitivity.

Site GB13 was considered as being particularly sensitive due to the open, exposed, nature of the Site and its designation as an 'Escarpment and Rising Ground of Landscape Importance' (designated in the Woking Local Plan 1999 under Policy NE7 and carried forward into the Woking Core Strategy 2012 by Policy CS24 - Woking's Landscape and Townscape). GB13 was considered unsuitable for residential development.

The Green Belt Review selected a number of sites as unsuitable for development based on a combination of Green Belt, environmental and sustainability factors. GB12 and GB13 are included in these sites. It seems then that GB12 was considered due to land availability. My understanding is that land availability should not be a key a factor in deciding the suitability of a proposed site.

We also already live with an infrastructure that struggles to cope with the size of the population. The rail service from the nearest station, West Byfleet is limited, particularly at peak times. Considering the roads, the A245 is already incredibly congested at peak times in both directions, and the B367 has a limited capacity due to the single lane bridge and the build-up of traffic around Ripley. The alternative route to the A3 through Wisley is a rural road and also barely cope with traffic at current levels, being in a poor state of repair. With the introduction of a significant number of residents, what are the council plans to cope with the increased demand on the transport network?

We are about to commence construction of a new school in Pyrford with a 50 year lifespan however as far as I am aware there are no plans to increase the capacity. We already have strong demand and a lack of available places at the other local schools, The Marist and West Byfleet. Are you able to clarify the plans to cope with the increased demand for school places? Also, availability of other vital services such as doctors is also at capacity.

I am fully aware of the shortage of available house in general and this will certainly affect my children who I hope will still want to live in the area when they have grown. However, we have a responsibility to respect and protect our environment. Green Belt land has been protected for good reason and we should be doing all we can to protect our precious green space. I understand that there are pressures on the planning team to create more areas for development but I would implore you to carefully consider the views of the residents who care deeply about our community and our environment.

Yours Sincerely,

Jonathan Cassidy